

Where are refugees coming from?

In 2008 31,315* people sought asylum in the UK. Most came from the following ten countries, all of which have a history of ingrained conflict and endemic human rights abuses.

In Scotland, 2,930 people were being supported through the asylum process in 2008. Only a small proportion of these claimants will have had their bid for safety accepted by the UK Government; some may be refused asylum, whilst others are still awaiting a decision.

**Figures are from the UK Border Agency and include dependants. Please note these figures refer to 2008 data.*

Eritrea – 90 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Eritrea is still in a border dispute with Ethiopia, following the 1998–2000 war. Almost half of the population is dependent on food aid. It is a highly repressive state, where more than 2,000 members of the minority religions remain in detention without trial.

Somalia – 250 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Lawlessness and tribal warfare have been rife since a military government collapsed in 1991 leaving a humanitarian crisis that continued to worsen throughout 2008. More than 16,000 civilians have been killed since January 2007. More than 1.2 million people were internally displaced in southern and central Somalia.

Zimbabwe – 215 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Despite a change in leadership the human rights situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate sharply, with continued human rights violations, organised violence and torture. About five million people required food aid by the end of 2008.

Iraq – 250 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Though violence has reduced, thousands of civilians, including children, have been killed or injured in the continuing conflict. Reports of human rights abuses routinely committed by all sides continue to emerge, with thousands of detainees being held mostly without charge or trial

Iran – 295 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Freedom of speech is severely restricted, with authorities cracking down on civil society activists and suppressing dissent. Journalists, writers, scholars, women and community rights activists are subject to arrest, detention and torture, and even execution.

Democratic Republic of Congo – 130 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Since conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo began in August 1998, it is estimated that the fighting and its aftermath – including poverty, disease, and malnutrition – have claimed more than five million lives. Political and military tensions have deepened with mass outbreaks of violence including arbitrary killings, torture and rape.

Afghanistan – 145 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Afghanistan has suffered from such chronic instability during its modern history that its economy and infrastructure are in ruins. Increasing conflict and insecurity, aggravated by drought and floods, has led to large-scale displacement of people. Human rights, especially for women, are threatened by resurgent Taliban forces and re-armed war lords. Three million Afghans are in Pakistan and Iran.

Pakistan – 365 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Lawyers, journalists, human rights activists and political workers are arbitrarily tortured and detained. Though a civilian government is in place, it has failed to release prisoners detained during the 2007 state of emergency, or make good on promises to improve the country's human rights record. Honour killings and violence against women continue with impunity.

China – 305 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Growing numbers of human rights activists are imprisoned, put under house arrest or harassed. The run-up to the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 was accompanied by reports of tightening controls on human rights defenders, religious leaders, ethnic minorities, lawyers and journalists even further. Women and girls continue to suffer violence and repression.

Nigeria – 155 people supported through the asylum process in Scotland in 2008

Despite being one of 14 supposedly safe countries on the UK Government's 'white list', Nigerians are subject to human rights violations including police torture and extrajudicial executions of detainees. Three out of five prisoners in Nigeria are untried and spend many years in terrible conditions. The situation in the Niger Delta is particularly unstable.

Country information supplied by Amnesty International and BBC.

