



Home Office

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 24 August to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about recent Channel crossings and the provision of safe and legal routes for people wanting to come to the UK. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts.

The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it, for as long as it is needed, in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. However, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. Whilst we sympathise with people in difficult situations, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

The crossing of the English Channel in small boats by people looking to enter the UK is illegally facilitated and dangerous and no one should either be enabling such activity or attempting it themselves. France, from where these crossings originate, is a manifestly safe country with a fully functioning asylum system, with over 100,000 asylum claims lodged there last year. Migrants in France who need protection can and should claim asylum there and have no excuse to refuse the chance to do so and travel illegally and dangerously to the UK instead. Returns to France are made in compliance with the Dublin III Regulation, which is the EU law that determines which EU Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application; the UK is bound to the Regulation for the duration of the transition period.

The UK has a long history of supporting refugees and is one of the world's leading refugee resettlement states. Our resettlement schemes have provided safe and legal routes for tens of thousands of people, who have been given the chance to start new lives in safety. Since 2015, the UK has resettled more than 25,000 refugees, more than any other country in Europe. We can be proud as a country of our ambitious commitments and achievements. But numbers alone are not the only measure of impact – the UK's resettlement schemes focus on those who are most in need of protection including people

requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. We purposefully resettle refugees directly from regions of conflict and instability, those who can no longer be effectively supported in their host country.

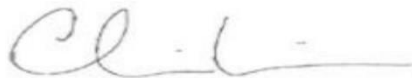
Specific examples include our 2015 commitment to resettle 20,000 vulnerable refugees who had fled Syria by 2020, of which over 19,750 people have now found safety in the UK.

The UK has also resettled more than 1,800 vulnerable children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa through the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). This is in addition to those we have resettled under our Gateway and Mandate schemes, and the thousands who receive protection in the UK under asylum procedures.

While resettlement arrivals are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will resume them as soon as conditions allow, and meet our full commitment to those fleeing the Syrian conflict.

A new UK resettlement scheme, replacing the previous resettlement schemes (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, VCRS and Gateway), will commence operations when circumstances allow. In addition, there are safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK should they wish to join family members here, work or study. They would need to meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rules under which they were applying to qualify for a visa. Details about the criteria and how to apply are available on the GOV.UK website at: <http://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa>.

I trust this clarifies the Government's position.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Philp MP