



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

3 November 2015

THE PRIME MINISTER

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Dear Alex,

Thank you for your letter of 11 September, concerning the relocation of child refugees in the UK. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

I appreciate your recognition of the measures we have taken to provide aid to those affected by the conflict in Syria and our offer to resettle an additional 20,000 refugees from the region.

Our focus will remain on helping the most vulnerable people in the region. The UNHCR have made it clear that, in most cases, the interests of children are best met in the region, where they can remain close to surviving family members. Any decisions regarding the resettlement of unaccompanied Syrian children will only be made when the Government, UNHCR and relevant NGOs agree that these cases would benefit from resettlement. The Home Office is working very closely with a number of NGOs, including Save the Children and Barnado's, to determine which children in the refugee camps around Syria might be suitable for resettlement.

As you are aware, we do believe it is right to focus on resettlement from the region rather than from within Europe. The Government does not underestimate the challenges faced by some Member States in Europe and by migrants that have arrived. It is right to avoid doing anything that could inadvertently help people smugglers who want to incite migrants, including unaccompanied children, to risk their lives by making perilous sea crossings. We are acutely conscious of the scale of the humanitarian challenge in the region, which is of course where the substantial majority of refugees, including unaccompanied children, remain.

If an unaccompanied Syrian child is resettled in the UK, they will be granted Humanitarian Protection for five years. At the end of that period, if they have reached the age of 18, they can qualify for indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Anyone who needs protection will certainly be granted it and I am happy to provide that reassurance.

As I have said previously in the House, the rationale for this approach is that we want to be able to grant humanitarian protection visas to refugees immediately on arrival. Making these vulnerable Syrian refugees apply for asylum on arrival in the UK would potentially add to their distress and leave them in an uncertain position. I do not believe this would be the right approach.

Thank you, once again, for writing.

Yours,
David.

Mr Alex Cunningham MP