

## **Introducing Immigration : a Comparative Study of Metaphors in Two British Online Newspapers during the European Migrant Crisis**

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**Diplôme :** Master en communication multilingue, à finalité spécialisée en communication interculturelle et des organisations internationales

**Année académique :** 2020-2021

**URI/URL :** <http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/11283>

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## Refugees

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# 1.7m Syrian refugees face food crisis as UN funds dry up

**Sam Jones**

🐦 @swajones

Mon 1 Dec 2014 20:13 GMT

More than 1.7 million Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt are facing a disastrous and hungry winter after a funding crisis forced the UN's World Food Programme to suspend food vouchers to hundreds of thousands forced into exile by the conflict.

Since the war began in March 2011, the WFP has brought food to millions of Syrians inside the country, and has used the voucher programme - which allows refugees to buy food in local shops - to inject about \$800m (£500m) into the economies of those countries hosting them.

But after finding itself unable to secure the \$64m it needs to support Syrian refugees in December, the WFP announced on Monday that it was halting the scheme. Severe funding shortfalls have already led the UN body to reduce rations within Syria, where it is trying to help 4.25 million people.

Its executive director, Ertharin Cousin, issued a blunt and urgent appeal to donors, asking them to honour their commitments and warning that the suspension would have a devastating effect on the lives of more than 1.7 million people.

She said: “[It] will endanger the health and safety of these refugees and will potentially cause further tensions, instability and insecurity in the neighbouring host countries. The suspension of WFP food assistance will be disastrous for many already suffering families.”

She added that Syrian refugees in camps and informal settlements throughout the region were ill-prepared for another difficult winter, especially in Lebanon and Jordan where tents are drenched in mud, hygiene conditions are poor and many children lack shoes and warm clothes.

Muhannad Hadi, WFP regional emergency coordinator for the Syria crisis, said the consequences for both Syrian refugees and host nations could be devastating.

“We are very concerned about the negative impact these cuts will have on the refugees as well as the countries which host them,” he said. “These countries have shouldered a heavy burden throughout this crisis.”

Greg Barrow, spokesman for the WFP’s London office, said the precise effects of the suspension would be hard to gauge because refugees’ circumstances varied from country to country.

As many of the refugees were living outside camps, he said, there would be opportunities for them to look for informal work that would enable them to earn money for food. Others, in big camps such as Zaatari and Azraq in Jordan, are still receiving rations.

He added: “Often members of local communities and, in some cases, local authorities, provide some assistance – but the WFP is by far and away the biggest provider of food assistance and there are no other organisations that have the scale and reach to cover the food needs of the more than 1.7 million who have been affected by this suspension.”

Like many other international agencies, the organisation is having to contend with five simultaneous level-3 emergencies – the UN’s most serious crisis designation – in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Central African Republic and those west African countries caught up in the Ebola outbreak.

Despite the competing demands, said Barrow, the WFP could not simply divert money from one crisis to another at will.

“Because many donations are allocated to specific programmes and cannot be used elsewhere, there is a lack of flexibility in the system,” he said. “This has been exacerbated by the high number of complex emergencies we are facing and some programmes such as those for refugees are underfunded.”

The voucher scheme’s suspension comes nearly **three months after the WFP first warned it was running out of money** and weeks after it said it had reached a critical point in its efforts to help Syrian refugees because of a 89% funding shortfall.

“For the next six months, the WFP requires \$412.6m to support almost 3 million Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries,” the UN body said in an operational resourcing update in November.

“Any reductions or halt in WFP assistance are likely to cause widespread food insecurity and further population movement and increased protection concerns.”

In the same bulletin, it warned that the first “critical pipeline break” in its Syrian operations was expected in January 2015, adding: “Considering commodity lead times, additional resources must be secured by early November to ensure procurement and arrival of supplies in time for January distributions.”

Despite Monday’s announcement, the WFP said it would be able to resume the electronic voucher scheme immediately - if December’s funding were to come through in time.

Syria’s three-and-a-half year civil war has killed more than 200,000 people, displaced 6.5 million within the country and forced more than 3 million to seek refuge beyond its borders.

Last month, **another funding shortfall compelled the WFP to halve rations to half a million refugees**, mainly from Somalia and South Sudan, who are living in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps in remote areas in northern Kenya.

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# The Guardian



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## Winter brings fresh threat to Iraq's refugees who fled the Isis advance

**Two million Iraqis and Syrians displaced by Isis fighting face misery in teeming camps, as Kurds appeal for more help**

**Fazel Hawramy** in Dohuk, Kurdistan

Sat 6 Dec 2014 22.32 GMT

Christmas is approaching, but Christians displaced in northern Iraq are in no mood for festivities. "We won't celebrate this year," said 24-year old Randa Khaled, balancing a baby on her hip. "How can we celebrate? We can't even wash."

Khaled and her family are among several hundred who have been living in the concrete skeleton of a three-storey shopping centre in Iraq's Kurdish region since Islamic State (Isis) militants overran their home town of Qaraqosh, east of Mosul.

Of the two million people displaced within Iraq, nearly half have fled to safety in Kurdistan, putting huge pressure on the region's resources, which has led the United Nations to designate the situation as a level-three emergency, the highest classification of a humanitarian crisis.

Murad Garesh knows the vicious winter in Iraq's Kurdish north could prove fatal for his five young children, but there is little he can do but wait to be moved into a camp being built nearby. His and three other Yazidi families - another faith facing persecution by militant

Islamists - with more than 20 children between them, have settled on a hill outside the city of Dohuk, near the Turkish border, after fleeing the Isis onslaught in August. "We have no electricity or running water, and we have not washed in days, but at least we are safe from Da'aesh," said 35-year-old Murad, using a derogatory term for Isis while, a few metres away, children gather around a fire to keep warm.

Garesh is one of thousands of minority Yazidis who fled their homes in northwestern Iraq after Isis attacked them in August, killing or capturing hundreds and hounding the rest up a mountain in the scorching heat of summer.

"The current and most pressing challenge is the onset of winter. We need to provide proper shelters, heating, winter clothing and blankets. We're still receiving people from Syria and places like Anbar. The crisis isn't even stabilising," said Bayan Rahman, high representative to the UK for the Kurdistan regional government (KRG). The mountainous Dohuk province is hosting more than 50% of all the displaced in Kurdistan, on top of about 100,000 refugees from Syria, a total equal to almost half the province's own population.

Streets are clogged with traffic, living costs have risen and there is not enough water or electricity for everyone. Before the internally displaced persons (IDPs) were moved to new camps on 1 December, most were being housed in schools across the province, which meant local students missed out on two months of this year's education.

Ismail Mohammad Ahmed, assistant to the governor of Duhok for IDP affairs, said the province had gone from being the least populous in Iraq to the fourth most crowded in the space of six months. "We desperately need fuel, clothing, foodstuffs and other services for the IDPs."



A makeshift sandwich shop at Khanke camp, Dohuk, in northern Iraq. Photograph: Fazel Hawramy/Observer

Ahmed said seven IDP camps had already been built and 13 others are under construction, but emphasised that more needed to be done to save the IDPs from the winter.

Kurds know just how deadly winter can be. During an uprising against the Baghdad government in 1991, the Iraqi army attacked Kurdish areas to quell the revolt, including Dohuk city, sending around 2 million people fleeing to the Turkish and Iranian border areas. With no adequate help from the international community, thousands of civilians, mainly children, perished from the cold.

"When it rains we have no life in this tent - everything becomes damp," said Hayat Semo, a 21-year-old mother of two children in Khanke camp, which houses more than 18,000 Yazidis from Sinjar. "The situation for the children is worse. When they get up in the morning, their tiny bodies are so stiff from the cold they can't move. We have no proper clothing for them." Rain

has turned the ground to mud, and the singed remains of a burnt-out tent are testament to the dangers of the overcrowded camp.

Despite the Kurdish authorities' best efforts to provide for the displaced, the region has been suffering since Baghdad cut funding early this year, bringing an oil-fuelled economic boom to an abrupt halt. That has left hundreds of would-be apartment complexes, office blocks and supermarkets unfinished – now used as shelter by the displaced.



Children play in a half-finished building in Duhok. Photograph: Fazel Hawramy/Observer

While many of the IDPs are all but penniless and cannot afford accommodation in the city, a tiny minority are spending their savings on renting flats because they say they cannot live in the camps. Salam Juma, a science teacher from eastern Mosul, is paying \$600 a month to stay in a small flat. “My wife has sold her gold in order to pay the rent, but we are running out of money and I don’t know what to do,” said the father of five. “Only God and Obama know when we will be able to return to our homes. I want the Americans to continue bombing Isis, but send us foodstuffs too.”

Syrian refugees who have been in Iraqi Kurdistan since the civil war broke out in 2011 appear to be better established, working in the bazaar polishing shoes, selling cigarettes and telephone cards and working across the Kurdish region in cafes and restaurants.

Aid agencies are also struggling to meet the needs of the displaced. “Winter is the devil right now,” said the UNHCR’s external relations officer, Jessica Hyba. “It’s a time issue; we are all working around the clock to make sure we reach everyone. This is a protracted situation. There’s really no end in sight.”

On Monday 8 December the KRG will launch the Kurdistan Emergency Appeal at the House of Commons in London to raise money and awareness about the plight of IDPs and refugees. “We need the international community to step up its funding for the UN and to take proper responsibility for its fellow human beings, who have become homeless, traumatised paupers because of the Islamic State. The humanitarian response has to be a part of the international community’s overall approach to the crisis created by Isis,” said Bayan Rahman.

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## Syria

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# Take in Syrian refugees, aid agencies tell rich countries

**Harriet Sherwood**

🐦 @harrietsherwood

Mon 8 Dec 2014 00.01 GMT

A coalition of 36 international organisations is calling on rich countries to resettle tens of thousands of Syrian refugees within their borders, saying the immediate neighbours of the war-ravaged country can no longer bear the burden of one of the worst crises of displaced people since the second world war.

By the end of 2015, other countries should admit at least 5% of around 3.6 million people who have been forced to flee their homes in Syria as a result of the civil war, say the humanitarian and human rights organisations. Their call comes in advance of a UN conference in Geneva on Tuesday aimed at getting states to pledge to take more Syrian refugees.

Among the organisations making the demand are Oxfam, Amnesty International, ActionAid, Save the Children and Islamic Relief.

“This is one of the worst refugee crises since world war two, displacing millions of civilians, mostly women and children. We’re counting on governments in Geneva to move quickly to demonstrate the kind of international solidarity that is desperately needed to transform the lives of the most vulnerable refugees,” said Mark Goldring of Oxfam.

The vast majority of those who have fled Syria since the spring of 2011 have been hosted by five countries in the region - Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt - whose resources have been stretched to breaking point by the influx. According to Amnesty, only 1.7% of the total number of refugees have been offered sanctuary by the rest of the international community.

“The shortfall in the number of resettlement places for refugees offered by the international community is truly shocking,” said Sherif Elsayed-Ali, Amnesty’s head of refugee and migrant rights.

In Europe, Germany and Sweden have received almost 100,000 asylum applications from Syrian refugees. The UK, France, Italy, Spain and Poland have pledged to admit just 2,000 refugees between them.

Britain declined to join the UN’s resettlement programme, instead setting up its own Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme for Syrian refugees. According to Amnesty, only 90 Syrians have been resettled in the UK. The Gulf states have not offered to take any refugees so far. “The complete absence of resettlement pledges from the Gulf is particularly shameful. Linguistic and religious ties should place the Gulf states at the forefront of those offering safe shelter to refugees fleeing persecution and war crimes in Syria,” said Elsayed-Ali. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have sought to impose restrictions at their borders with Syria in recent months in an attempt to stem the flow of refugees, leaving desperate families unable to escape the war.

The UN has invited governments to send ministers to Geneva this week to pledge higher targets for the resettlement of refugees. The UN high commission for refugees set a goal of 30,000 Syrian refugees to be accepted by the international community in 2014, which has been exceeded. However it is now calling on states to provide resettlement or other forms of admission for an additional 100,000 by the end of 2016.

Last week [the World Food Programme suspended the distribution of food vouchers to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees](#) after it failed to secure the necessary funding from the international community. It warned that the impact could be devastating for a displaced population facing the rigours of winter.

According to Elsayed-Ali, this week’s UN conference “must be used to turn the tide. It is time for world governments to take the courageous steps needed to share the



responsibility for this crisis and help avert further suffering ... The apathy we have witnessed from some of the world's wealthiest countries has been exacerbated by scaremongering over rising immigration levels across Europe. Those with the economic means to do so must play a greater role."

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## At least 15 migrants died in 'shameful' Calais conditions in 2014

**Guardian investigation reveals death toll over 12 months with many desperately trying risky routes into UK to escape makeshift camps without sanitation at French port**

**Matthew Taylor and Guy Grandjean**

Tue 23 Dec 2014 17:14 GMT

At least 15 migrants in and around the French port of Calais have died in the past year as an influx of young men and women from east Africa take ever greater risks to get the UK, according to an investigation by the Guardian.

Growing numbers of young families, some with children as young as three, have also arrived in the French town in the past few months and are living in makeshift camps without sanitation or running water.

The European director of the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) described the situation as shameful and warned more people will die in the refugee camps in the coming weeks as temperatures plummet.

"The conditions are totally unacceptable and are not consistent with the kind of values that a democratic society should have," Vincent Cochetel from the UNHCR told the Guardian. "This is a shameful situation to witness in the heart of the Europe Union."

The French authorities do not generally keep a record of the migrants who die in Calais, but local charities and the UNHCR say at least 15 people, including young women and teenagers, have died in the past 12 months.

Last month one man died after attempting to jump from a motorway bridge onto a moving lorry, and two more were killed in nearby Dunkirk when the truck they were hiding in caught fire. Earlier this month an Eritrean man was knocked down and killed as he looked for a lorry to board.

Cochetel said he believed conditions in Calais were now worse than those at refugee camps in Turkey, where hundreds of thousands of people arrive each month to escape the bloodshed in Syria. He said the British and French governments had yet to appreciate the severity of the situation.

"You will have people dying of cold and even more desperate people taking even more risks," he said. "Some of the people there are becoming so tired and desperate that they are ready to do very dangerous things."

The French port has repeatedly hit the headlines in the past year, amid an increasingly hostile debate in the UK around immigration and asylum. As more people arrived in Calais - and

conditions deteriorated - clashes erupted between different groups of migrants and politicians on both sides of the channel called for ever tougher measures to secure the port.

Despite this the harsh reality of life for the people in the camps has been largely ignored. Today a Guardian investigation also reveals:

- . More and more teenagers and young children - some just three years old - have arrived over the past few months, mainly from East Africa.

- . Young women living in the camps are being sexually exploited often by trafficking gangs which are offering a route into England in exchange for sex.

- . New camps are springing up along the coast and around the entrance to the Euro Tunnel as French and British authorities step up security at the Calais port.

Juliette Delaplace, who works for Secours Catholique, a charity that has been assisting migrants in Calais for 10 years said: "No other year has seen as many migrants die. They are jumping on lorries and taking more risks." Most - but not all - of these deaths in the Calais area happened as migrants attempted to make the perilous journey to the UK.

In the event of a migrant death the charity helps to raise money from local community groups to repatriate the body. The charity receives no support from local authorities in this process. Those families and friends who can not raise enough money to repatriate their bodies are buried in unmarked graves in cemetery plots usually reserved for the homeless.



Migrants, mainly from Eritrea, have gathered their tents in an abandoned warehouse in Calais. Many try to hop on trucks to get to England. Photograph: Etienne Laurant/EPA

Hussain, an agricultural engineer who left his wife and two young children in Egypt to try to find work to provide for his family, said a friend of his, a 32-year-old from Sudan, died earlier this year after holding onto the underside of a lorry for three hours. "He just couldn't hold on any longer," said Hussain who has been in the camp nicknamed "the jungle" for two months and tries every night to get onto a lorry bound for the UK.

Cochetel said it was typical of the growing risks people were prepared to take.

"We are seeing more and more people taking crazy risks because they feel they have nothing to lose so they take whatever chance they can to get to a place where they feel their life is going to be better or to where they think they will be protected."

Migrants also told the Guardian that trafficking gangs were openly operating in Calais and offering to smuggle people into the UK for between £800 and £2,500. Some said traffickers were coercing vulnerable young girls into having sex in return for being smuggled into the UK.

Cochetel said: "We know that it is going on. For a few of them it might be what is termed "survival sex", a sort of strategy, for others yes it is in-kind exploitation by smugglers in exchange for getting them on the back of a truck."

A 23-year-old Eritrean woman who has been living in Calais for two months told the Guardian she was fearful: "I am not safe living in the jungle. There is a lot of drinking in the camp and this creates problems. It is very dangerous for a woman living here."

Earlier this year more than 100 migrants broke through port security in an attempt to force their way onto ferries bound for the UK. There have also been clashes between different groups of migrants in the town. The UK government has pledged £12m to help secure the port but Cochetel said that was not enough, arguing that people would "always find a way around fences".

He said the UK - along with other northern European countries - had to "provide a mechanism" that allows those with legitimate claims to seek asylum when they first arrived in southern EU countries.

And he warned that until there was concerted EU-wide action the situation in Calais was likely to deteriorate further. "There will be more deaths and more tension... in the mid term it is just bad news coming for these people," Cochetel warned.

*. Additional reporting: Anne Penketh*

## **Escaping from Calais camp: 'I risk my life - whatever it takes'**

With his face lit by the flames from the small campfire Mohammed, a 23-year-old who fled the conflict in Gaza earlier this year, quietly explains how he ended up in a squalid camp just 20 miles from the English coast.

"I had no choice but to leave and try and find something better," he says. "Our house was destroyed ...we had nothing, I just wanted to feel one moment of safety, one moment when I am not cold, when I am not treated like an insect."



Migrants in Calais gather food and supplies during the day, waiting for the night or a traffic jam to hop on trucks on their way to England Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

Tonight, as on every other evening for the past month, Mohammed and his four friends - two Syrians and two Egyptians, who met on a smugglers' boat crossing the Mediterranean - will set off on their nightly quest; pitting themselves against the French police and private security guards protecting Calais's lorry parks and motorways in an attempt to find their way onto the back of a truck and what they hope will be a better life in the UK.



“It is dangerous and difficult when you have not had food or sleep but every night we must try,” Mohammed says with a smile as he pulls his hat down against the biting cold. “We have left our homes to find a better life. We can not stay here and put up with this.”

He gestures behind him to the muddy field stretching into the distance, spotted with campfires and covered with makeshift shelters. Beyond the tents are piles of rubbish, and beyond that, the strip of wasteland used by the hundreds of people who live here as a toilet.

Mohammed and his friends are among thousands of people who, having fled war, persecution and poverty beyond Europe’s borders, are living in increasingly precarious conditions in makeshift camps across northern France - waiting and hoping for their chance to make it to the UK.

Many more people seek refuge in other European countries but the concentration of those waiting here and the conditions in which they are living set Calais apart.

According to local charities and the UN’s refugee agency at least 15 people, including young women and teenagers, have died in the past 12 months.

As first light spreads over the largest camp in Calais - known as the jungle - Mohammed and his friends make their way back to their shelter along a disused railway track after another fruitless night. During the early hours they were chased by police and one of Mohammed’s friends, Hussain from Egypt, was pepper sprayed, before falling into a ditch. His plight prompts gentle mocking from his friends but the atmosphere is sombre. The men have just been told another of their friends - a 32-year-old from Sudan - has died.

The group, exhausted and cold from a night tramping the dual carriageways and lorry parks that surround the French port, falls silent. They know it is a fate that could befall any of them.

Over the past few months it is not just the numbers of people arriving in Calais that have caused alarm among politicians and aid workers - it is their age. Following the chaos in Libya since the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime thousands of young people have used the failed state to flee oppressive regimes in east Africa in search of a better life in Europe.

Among the dirt and makeshift shelters of the jungle, three-year-old Adiam watches her mother Winta, 18, cooking over a small fire of twigs. In one pan are two potatoes, in the other coffee. Adiam plays on a filthy plastic trike as her father Ataklti, 24, explains how he left Eritrea to escape compulsory military conscription and a brutal regime that Amnesty says is responsible for widespread human rights abuses.

He takes a battered picture from his wallet of himself smiling next to another man. “He killed himself rather than stay or get locked up and so I knew I had to leave,” says Ataklti quietly.

The family left their home in Eritrea a year ago, heading first to Sudan before paying smugglers to take them across the Sahara desert, through Libya and onto another smugglers’ boat bound for Europe.

Like many of those in the camp he is reluctant to reveal too many details in case the Eritrean authorities take action against his remaining family. But in a halting voice he says the worst part of the journey was crossing the Sahara, where they had little water and seven of the people they were with died. He says the gangs in Libya “treated them like dogs”.

And now sitting in the camp in northern France in the cold he admits he faces a fresh challenge: getting onto the back of a lorry with his three-year-old daughter and young wife. If



he does not succeed, the family - who have never experienced a north European winter - face months of freezing conditions sheltering in a derelict sports hall at the centre of the jungle with little food.

"It's very difficult here with a young child because we are trying to get onto lorries which is very dangerous, but I would do anything for her, for her future. I will risk my life whatever it takes," says Ataklti.

According to the UNHCR Adiam and her family are among about 3000 migrants in and around Calais - three times the number at the beginning of the year - who are taking greater risks to try to get to the UK. Most of them live in makeshift camps like the jungle or in squats scattered around the town and survive on one meal a day provided by local charities.

The French authorities have pledged to open a new day centre in January to help the most vulnerable people. Opponents have claimed this will only attract more migrants to the town. Those in the camps are sceptical it will ever open and say even if it does it will be too little, too late.

Whether the centre does help or not it is clear the problem is no longer confined to Calais. The Guardian spent time with truck drivers who say their lorries are regularly targeted by smugglers in car parks more than 125 miles (200km) from the French port. Migrants have also set up smaller camps across the region from the fields near the entrance to the Channel tunnel to a small wood near a shopping centre in Dunkirk.

At one lorry park about half way between Calais and Paris, Matthew, who works for a UK-based furniture removal company, checks his lorry for the final time before turning in for the night. He seems overly paranoid as he points to the hedge surrounding the car park. "They will be in there now watching and waiting to see which lorries look the best bet."

But as dusk settles he is proved right. There is a movement in the hedge and Matthew goes for a closer look in time to see three young men in their late teens or 20s sitting in the bushes.

"Even here so far from the coast they are trying to get on now. It is getting beyond a joke." Two weeks later his firm decide to stop using Calais altogether.

For many UK politicians the answer to the unfolding crisis in Calais seems to be two-fold: build bigger and higher fences and make life for those who do make it through to the UK as uncomfortable as possible. Others suggest that only closer co-operation at EU level - with countries from northern Europe working much more closely with those in the south to offer asylum to refugees and return others when they first arrive - can the problem be addressed.

However, as record numbers of people flee poverty and war in the Middle East and Africa it seems unlikely that people will stop leaving their homes in search of a better, safer life in Europe for the foreseeable future.

"When I get to England I will study and then get a job and work so my daughter can have a better life," says Ataklti, who a few weeks after we spoke discovered his wife was pregnant with their second child.

As he settles down to his one meal of the day as the night closes in on the Jungle he remains sure he is doing the right thing, despite the risks. "We did not have a life at home and we do not really have one here. So we must keep trying."

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## It's finally 2021 ...



## Opinion

🕒 This article is more than 5 years old

# Arab spring prompts biggest migrant wave since second world war

**Patrick Kingsley in Cairo**

Sat 3 Jan 2015 20.42 GMT

The two “[ghost ships](#)” discovered sailing towards the Italian coast last week with hundreds of migrants – but no crew – on board are just the latest symptom of what experts consider to be the world’s largest wave of mass-migration since the end of the second world war.

Wars in Syria, [Libya](#) and Iraq, severe repression in Eritrea, and spiralling instability across much of the Arab world have all contributed to the displacement of around 16.7 million refugees worldwide.

A further 33.3 million people are “internally displaced” within their own war-torn countries, forcing many of those originally from the Middle East to cross the lesser evil of the Mediterranean in increasingly dangerous ways, all in the distant hope of a better life in [Europe](#).

“These numbers are unprecedented,” said Leonard Doyle, spokesman for the International Organisation for **Migration**. “In terms of refugees and migrants, nothing has been seen like this since world war two, and even then [the flow of migration] was in the opposite direction.”

European politicians believe they can discourage migrants from crossing the Mediterranean **simply by reducing rescue operations**. But refugees say that the scale of unrest in the Middle East, including in the countries in which they initially sought sanctuary, leaves them with no option but to take their chances at sea.

More than 45,000 migrants risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean to reach Italy and Malta in 2013, and 700 died doing so. The number of dead rose more than **four times in 2014 to 3,224**.

“We know people who died – they used to live with us,” said Qassim, a Syrian refugee in Egypt who now wants to reach Europe. “But we will try again to cross the sea because there’s no life for us Syrians here.”

In Egypt, up to 300,000 refugees from the Syrian war were initially welcomed with open arms. But after Cairo’s sudden regime change in summer 2013, the atmosphere turned drastically, leading to **rampant xenophobia against Syrians** and increased arrests and detentions of those who, for understandable reasons, did not carry the correct residency paperwork.

The situation is even worse in Jordan and in Lebanon, which now houses more than 1 million Syrian refugees – more than a fifth of the country’s total population.

Their presence has created an unprecedented strain on national resources, leading to the Lebanese government tightening restrictions last week on Syrians entering the country. And while Turkey has simultaneously moved to strengthen refugees’ rights, Turkish shores are likely to remain a popular launch pad for migrants looking to reach Europe because of both the comparatively high cost of living, as well as rising xenophobia, particularly in the country’s south.

Libya, another major point on the migration route from the Middle East and north Africa, is also no longer a safe haven after a civil war erupted there last year. The plight of refugees there, as well as across the region, makes a mockery of those who suggest the wave of migration is caused simply by economic migrants.

“If they’re economic migrants,” asked Doyle, “then how do we explain that after every outbreak of violence and repression we get a new wave of people from the area that’s just had that outbreak? Why was it that, in the huge September **disaster in the Mediterranean**, the people who drowned were Palestinians, just a couple of weeks after the war between Gaza and Israel? And why is it that since last year there

has been a steady flow of people from Eritrea, when we know there are serious problems in that country?”

But such arguments have yet to convince the British government, which refused last October to help [Mediterranean rescue operations](#), and which by last June had admitted fewer than 150 Syrian refugees.

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## Lebanon

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# Lebanon restricts free entry of Syrian refugees to limit Sunni inflow

*Associated Press in Beirut*

Mon 5 Jan 2015 18.44 GMT

Lebanon has begun imposing unprecedented entry restrictions on Syrians as the tiny country with a fragile sectarian balance struggles to cope with more than a million refugees fleeing the civil war next door.

The new policy requiring Syrians to obtain visas that sharply limit the time they can remain in Lebanon came into effect on Monday and effectively narrows one of the few escape routes left from a war that has displaced a third of Syria's pre-war population.

More than three million people have fled Syria, mainly to neighbouring Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. Western countries have accepted only small numbers of refugees, and hundreds of people have drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean on rickety smuggler ships.



Lebanese officials say they simply cannot absorb any more. The government estimates there are about 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon, about a quarter of the total population. Some 1.1 million are registered with the UN refugee agency.

“We have enough. There’s no capacity any more to host more displaced,” interior minister Nohad Machnouk said in a press conference carried on local television.

Lebanese security officials said many Syrians were turned back at border crossings on Monday but they had no exact figures. The flow of Syrians through one popular crossing appeared lower than normal on Monday.

There are no plans to forcibly repatriate Syrians already in Lebanon.

The changes that came into effect on Monday establish new categories of entry visas for Syrians including tourism, business, education and medical care and sharply limit the period of time they may stay in Lebanon.

For decades, Syrians were freely given six-month visas and many simply crossed the porous border without any paperwork.

But when the 2011 uprising collapsed into civil war, hundreds of thousands poured into Lebanon, overwhelming the country’s water and power supplies, pushing up rents and depressing the economy in rural areas, where Syrians compete with impoverished Lebanese for scarce jobs.

Tent cities have sprouted in rural areas, with many refugees confined to flimsy shelters battered by winter rains and snow. Public opinion has sharply turned against the Syrians, whom many see as threatening the sovereignty of Lebanon – long dominated by its larger neighbour.

Lebanon has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees since the creation of Israel in 1948, and their presence was a central factor in the 1975-1990 civil war.

The war in Syria has escalated tensions between Lebanon’s Shias and Sunnis, and many fear the influx of the mainly Sunni refugees could disturb the tiny country’s delicate multisectarian balance.

Lebanese border officials began informally restricting the entry of Syrians in October, which has already caused a 50 percent drop in people seeking to register with the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR.

“We are looking at these new procedures with some interest, because those procedures don’t make mention of the agreement of the government to continue to

allow the most vulnerable cases to come through,” said UNHCR’s regional spokesman, Ron Redmond.

He said even after informal limitations were introduced last year, the Lebanese government was still allowing in Syrians it deemed “urgent cases” – single women fleeing with their children, those needing urgent medical care and children separated from their families.

“We didn’t see any reference to that in these new regulations,” Redmond said. “We want to get some kind of official documentation and description of how that’s going to work.”

A Lebanese security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak to the press, said urgent humanitarian cases could still enter, Syrians could make use of a medical care category, and a 48-hour visa that would allow them to apply for asylum at foreign embassies.

On Saturday, the Syrian ambassador, Ali Abdel-Karim, called on Lebanon to coordinate its new measures with Damascus.

Amid wide approval in Lebanon for the restrictions, an editorial in a prominent newspaper urged Lebanese to act humanely. “We know that the burden of the Syrian crisis, open to an abyss, is greater than what Lebanon can bear,” Talal Salman wrote in *As-Safir*. “But it is able, certainly, to carry some of its weight.” The refugees, he added, “left with their faces etched in worry, to the closest asylum they know.”

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## Politics

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# European commission set to reject David Cameron's migration demands

**Nicholas Watt**, *chief political correspondent*

Mon 5 Jan 2015 21.28 GMT

David Cameron is to be warned by the [European commission](#) that a central demand in his renegotiation of Britain's EU membership terms is likely to be rejected as unacceptable on the grounds that it risks infringing the founding principle of the EU on the free movement of people.

As the prime minister prepares to explain his plans to curb EU migration to the German chancellor, [Angela Merkel](#), in London on Wednesday, the commission is set to tell No 10 that it cannot demand EU citizens have a job offer before they travel to the UK.

Cameron will use his talks with Merkel in Downing Street, following a joint tour of the British Museum's exhibition on Germany with its director, Neil MacGregor, to give his most detailed explanation of his plans to cut the number of migrants from the EU.

The talks are officially designed to cover the G7 summit in Bavaria in June, to be chaired by Merkel. But Downing Street confirmed on Monday that the prime minister would discuss his EU reform plans, which are designed to form the basis of a renegotiation of Britain's EU membership terms before a referendum that will be held in 2017 if he wins the general election in May.

The prime minister toned down a [speech on immigration at the end of November](#) after the German chancellor said that she would not accept a rewriting of the founding EU principle, laid down in the 1957 treaty of Rome, that guarantees "freedom of movement for persons" as well as for "services and capital".

Cameron abandoned an expected attempt to limit free movement of people - there had been suggestions that he would propose an emergency brake on EU citizens - and instead focused on toughening rules on welfare.

But the commission, the official guardian of the EU treaties, is concerned by the prime minister's call in his speech for EU citizens to have a job offer before they travel to the UK. In his speech on 28 November, the prime minister said: "So let's be clear what all these changes taken together will mean. EU migrants should have a job offer before they come here. UK taxpayers will not support them if they don't."

The commission is preparing to let No 10 know that the proposal would be unworkable because it would be impossible to distinguish between EU jobseekers and tourists entering the UK. It would also infringe the free movement of people which allows EU citizens to travel and settle freely around the EU.

Cameron made clear in an [interview on the Andrew Marr Show on BBC1 on Sunday](#) that he is determined to embark on a revision of the Lisbon treaty, the EU's governing document, if he wins the general election. He is saying that he will reform - though not rip up - the principle of free movement of workers in two ways through treaty change.

In the first place he will aim to reverse a 1991 ruling by the European court of justice to ensure that an EU jobseeker would be deported after six months if they have failed to find a job. Secondly, the rules on benefits would be changed to ensure that the EU jobseeker would not be able to claim any benefits during those six months, making it impossible for them to remain in the UK. The changes are designed to create an expectation that an EU citizen would not come to the UK without a job offer.

The European commission has a seat at the table in the European council - the collection of EU heads of government and state - where EU treaties are revised. But it does not have a vote in treaty revisions.

The commission declined to comment. A spokesman pointed to remarks by Jean-Claude Juncker, the European commission president, [to the Guardian and other European publications in December](#) that he was happy to discuss Cameron's proposals but added: "This fundamental right of free movement of workers cannot be questioned existentially."

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# The Guardian



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## Crises in Middle East and Africa lead to fourfold increase in migration to Europe

**Onus on EU to formulate strategy as conflict in Syria and forced conscription in Eritrea lead to arrival of 170,000 migrants on Italian shores in 2014**

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**Mark Anderson**

Fri 16 Jan 2015 16.00 GMT

The number of migrants landing on Italian shores quadrupled last year, as more than 170,000 people from the Middle East and Africa fled humanitarian crises, piling pressure on the EU to form a long-term migration strategy.

Syrians fleeing civil war and Eritreans escaping forced conscription comprised nearly half of all Italian boat arrivals in 2014, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Refugees from Mali, Nigeria and Gambia were also common. Many migrants brave a perilous journey across the Mediterranean to Italy before travelling overland to other European countries.

Last year, a total of 170,100 refugees arrived in Italy by boat, the IOM said. This marked a rise of nearly 300% from 2013, when Italian authorities recorded 42,925 arrivals.

“Many of these people are fleeing war, persecution and totalitarian regimes,” said Federico Soda, the IOM’s head of Italian operations.

Refugees used to attempt crossings only in warmer months, but a growing desperation to gain asylum in Europe has created a year-round smuggling business, the IOM said. As a result, more ill-equipped boats are journeying across the Mediterranean, leading to a sharp rise in migrant deaths. More than 3,200 fatalities were recorded last year; in 2013, the total was 700.

“These figures suggest that the flows are linked to the deteriorating multiple and complex humanitarian crises near Europe’s external borders, including the war in Syria and the unrest caused by the political instability in Libya,” Soda said.

The sharp rise in Syrian and Eritrean refugees journeying to Europe is a major factor in rising migration flows. Last year, more than 11,000 Syrians landed in Italy, while this year more than 40,000 made the crossing. Nearly 35,000 Eritreans came to Italy in 2014, up from just less than 10,000 in 2013.

The hazardous nature of the journey across the Mediterranean faced by many migrants was highlighted in 2013, when a boat carrying mostly Eritreans sank near Lampedusa, off the coast of Italy, killing nearly 300. For Eritreans, many of whom have fallen victim to torture and trafficking in Sudan and Egypt over the past 10 years, travelling overland has often proved equally unsafe.

Syrian migrants have started paying “unscrupulous smugglers” up to \$6,000 (£3,943) to be smuggled on Turkish cargo ships destined for southern Italy, the IOM said.



Some of the 700 migrants aboard the Moldovan-flagged ship Blue Sky M before their arrival in Gallipoli, south-east Italy in December. Photograph: Courtesy of Syrian migrant/AFP/Getty Images

Operation Mare Nostrum, run by Italy's navy, saved about 85,000 lives last year, according to the IOM. But its high cost has raised concerns that it may be discontinued unless the EU agrees to contribute funding.

"It is urgent to respond collectively to these migratory flows. Migration can only be managed by the EU as a whole: and its scale and complexity necessitates cooperation and collective action," said Soda.

In November last year the EU's border agency, Frontex, launched its Triton operation, which monitors migration using two aircraft, three ships and seven teams of officers for "debriefing/intelligence gathering and screening/identification purposes". The operation has €2.9m a month in funding, but this expires in 2015.

Triton has less funding and a more limited geographic scope than Mare Nostrum, according to Judith Sunderland, Human Rights Watch's senior western Europe researcher. "It took a long for the EU to even take up the migration issue ... their primary focus is surveilling maritime borders, but of course they are involved in rescue operations," said Sunderland.

Soda said: "This is not a crisis of an excess of migrants reaching Europe and overburdening the continent - an area with a population of about 500 million people. It is an emergency in the sense that more migrants now need protection, aid and safe migration channels."

. This article was amended on 19 January to correct the number of people killed in the October 2013 Lampedusa boat sinking.

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## Immigration and asylum

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# Lowering immigration: what politicians have said

*Rabaab Ashraf*

Thu 26 Feb 2015 07:00 GMT

### **Theresa May, November 2010**

“While the right type of immigration can stimulate growth, badly managed migration has led to serious social impacts in some areas, with pressure being placed on key public services such as schools, the health service, transport, housing and welfare.”

### **David Cameron, speech in Hampshire on immigration, April 2011**

Promises that the government would bring down net migration to below 100,000 and adds: “I believe that will mean net migration to this country will be in the order of tens of thousands each year, not the hundreds of thousands every year that we have seen over the last decade.

“Britain will always be open to the best and brightest from around the world and those fleeing persecution. But with us, our borders will be under control and immigration will be at levels our country can manage. No ifs, no buts. That’s a promise we made to the British people, and it’s a promise we are keeping.”



*Context: Rise in Ukip support and planned changes to welfare.*

## **David Cameron, Hampshire speech**

Says immigration has “created a kind of discomfort and disjointedness in some neighbourhoods”.

“Yes, our borders are open to people from other member states in the [European Union](#). But actually, this counts for a small proportion of overall net migration to the UK,” he said.

*Context: Total immigration for 2011 - 205,000, including 82,000 from the EU.*



▲ David Cameron makes his keynote speech on immigration during a visit to Romsey town hall, Hampshire. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA Archive/Press Association Ima

## **Nick Clegg**

“... the prime minister said [the target] was an aspiration, an aim. It’s not in the coalition agreement, and I don’t think anyone is suggesting that what we should be doing is pursuing fixed numerical targets on immigration. (...) He is making an estimation about what the outcome might be of the policies that we are implementing. It is not a coalition government objective to pursue one numerical target.”

## **Vince Cable on Cameron’s Hampshire speech**

Labels Cameron’s comments on immigration “very unwise”. “I do understand there is an election coming, but talk of mass immigration risks inflaming extremism, to which he and I are both strongly opposed,” the business secretary said.

## David Cameron, March 2013 speech on the NHS

“I have always understood the genuine concerns of hard-working people, including many in our migrant communities, who worry about uncontrolled immigration.

“The pressure it puts on public services, the rapid pace of change in some of our communities, and of course the concerns, deeply held, that some people might be able to come and take advantage of our generosity without making a proper contribution to our country.

“These concerns are not just legitimate - they are right, and it is a fundamental duty of every mainstream politician to address them.”

## // The danger for the Conservatives is that they repeat mistakes of the past Nick Clegg

*Context: Ukip wins 150 local council elections, rising prominence of Nigel Farage, success of message that the government had failed to curb immigration because of EU membership and free movement of people into EU.*

## David Cameron, November 2013

“On 1 January, the people of Romania and Bulgaria will have the same right to work in the UK as other EU citizens. I know many people are deeply concerned about the impact that could have on our country. I share those concerns.

“The EU of today is very different from the EU of 30 years ago. We need to face the fact that free movement has become a trigger for vast population movements caused by huge disparities in income. That is extracting talent out of countries that need to retain their best people and placing pressure on communities. It is time for a new settlement which recognises that free movement is a central principle of the EU, but it cannot be a completely unqualified one.”

*Financial Times interview*

## Theresa May on immigration policy, November 2014

“It is of course unlikely that we are going to reach the tens of thousands by the end of the parliament. Why is that? It is because we have seen increasing numbers of people coming from across Europe, partly because our economy is doing better than other economies across Europe. We have been doing what we can in relation to EU migration, but there is more to be done.”

*Speaking on the Andrew Marr show before Cameron's speech on immigration, putting the blame for failing to meet government targets on the EU freedom of movement. This*

*is in response to Office for National Statistics figures from March 2013-14 showing a 68,000-rise in immigrants*



▲ Yvette Cooper.  
Photograph: Richard  
Gardner/REX

### **Yvette Cooper, November 2014**

“David Cameron promised ‘no ifs, no buts’ he would get net - migration down to the tens of thousands. But that target is now in tatters.

“And they have still failed to deal with employers and recruitment agencies who are exploiting immigration or using zero-hours contracts to undercut local wages and jobs. It undermines people’s trust in the whole system.”

*The Mirror, 22 November 2014. Context: defeat for the Conservatives at the hands of Ukip in the Rochester and Strood byelection*

### **Yvette Cooper on Labour scrapping the immigration target, September 2014**

“We would not have a net migration target, because choosing net migration to focus on is the wrong thing. We think immediately what should happen is that students, international university students, should be taken out of the net migration target straight away.

“What you should instead have is a series of different controls and targets for different kinds of immigration.”

*Context: Higher education industry warns that bringing down foreign student numbers to meet immigration targets is hurting UK exports. Response to criticism from business leaders*

### **Nick Clegg response to Cameron’s November 2014 speech**

“I think the danger for the Conservatives is that they repeat mistakes of the past, where they’ve over-promised and under-delivered on immigration, as they did on the net immigration target, which they’ve missed, and that does a great deal of damage to public confidence in the immigration system.”

### **Vince Cable, February 2015**

“The coalition agreement states that the coalition commits to introduce a cap on immigration - it does not state the level of the cap; the wording you quote is from a Conservative party commitment which my party believes to be unrealistic and unachievable and hence has never agreed to it ... It should therefore not be referenced in any official government publication.”

*Context: Challenging the Office for National Statistics’ portrayal of immigration targets as government policy; attempts to distance Liberal Democrats from government caps*

on immigration

## // We would like to see lower low-skilled migration from Europe Yvette Cooper

### **Theresa May before Cameron's November 2014 speech**

"It is only the Conservative party that is guaranteeing people that if in government after the May 2015 election then we will renegotiate our relationship with the EU. Free movement will be one of those issues that we will be dealing with. I believe we can win that negotiation because I see within Europe there is greater mood now for looking at this issue of free movement and dealing with the problems people are seeing in relation to [it]. That is about cutting out abuse. But it is more than that."

*Speaking on the Andrew Marr show, 23 November 2014. Context: The reframing of government immigration policy and rhetoric in terms of the relationship with the EU. Efforts to control immigration were to include tightening habitual residence tests for EU immigrants, and demanding two years of national insurance payments before claiming tax credits*

### **Yvette Cooper, November 2014**

"We would like to see lower low-skilled migration from Europe." Admits that the "scale and pace" of low-skilled migration from Europe is an issue.

*On Newsnight, acknowledging that EU short-term immigration is damaging the UK labour market*





▲ Ed Miliband campaigns before the Rochester and Strood by-election in Chatham. Photograph: Ben A Pruchnie/Getty Images

## Ed Miliband on EU immigration while on Rochester election trail

“We must understand these are real issues and show that we are ready to act on them,” and questions “false promises” of Conservatives and Ukip.

### Theresa May, January 2015

Continues to promote immigration of “brightest and best” to UK against criticism from Yvette Cooper and Sir James Dyson for asking foreign graduates to return home before applying for UK work permits.

“We have to recognise that the latest surveys also show that 121,000 students came in from overseas while only 51,000 left in that year and that by the 2020s we will see 600,000 overseas students each year in this country.”

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## Migration

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# Brussels plans migration centres outside EU to process asylum applications

**Ian Traynor in Brussels**

Thu 5 Mar 2015 14.20 GMT

The [European commission](#) is planning to establish immigrant-processing centres outside the EU for the first time, in a radical policy departure aimed at stemming the movement of hundreds of thousands of people across the Mediterranean.

Struggling to draft coherent immigration strategies at a time when the issue has become one of the most toxic in the politics of many EU countries, the European commission announced it was fast-tracking a policy paper on migration.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, the commissioner in charge of home affairs including migration policy, said Brussels wanted to use EU offices and embassies in third “countries of origin” to process applications for asylum and refugee status before the migrants reach Europe. The aim would be to reduce the numbers of migrants illegally landing on EU shores.

The new policy is strongly supported by Italy, which is on the front line of what has become one of the world's most perilous migration routes, the Mediterranean. Of the 270,000 migrants who arrived illegally in the EU last year - 1.5 times more than the previous year - 220,000 came via the Maghreb and across the Mediterranean, according to Frontex, the EU's external borders agency.

More than 3,500 drowned attempting the crossing. Another 1,000 arrived in Sicily this week after being rescued, including 10 who drowned.

While EU governments view the influx as a crisis, migration professionals argue that the figures are a lot less dramatic than commonly portrayed by politicians.

"We do not consider the caseload of arrivals to the EU as a huge or overwhelming number because the EU can, if managed properly, handle this," said Anna Eva Radicetti, a policy expert at the International Organisation for Migration's European office. "We should not view this as a crisis in terms of numbers of migrants arriving to Europe, and Europe should not respond with a crisis mode."

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees points out that 84% of forcibly displaced people globally are in developing countries.

But the idea of introducing migrant-processing offices in key transit countries such as Niger, Egypt, Turkey or Lebanon is gaining traction in the EU. France is also a strong supporter of such a scheme, while the German interior minister, Thomas de Maizière, is said to be pushing for EU facilities in countries such as Egypt. Small EU member states disproportionately affected by the flow of migrants, such as Malta, are keen on the idea.

The commission has previously resisted pressure on the issue from national governments in the EU. Avramopoulos's statement represents a U-turn. While there is growing support in certain EU capitals, there is also very strong opposition in other countries to a proposal that would entail shouldering the refugee burden more equitably across Europe. Migration experts say that, of the 28 members of the EU, 18 have small immigrant communities and few are keen to see that change.

"This is an enormous step. It means a common European asylum system is getting closer," said Elizabeth Collett, director for Europe of the Migration Policy Institute. "But there will be lots of unintended consequences. It throws up lots of big questions, legally, technically and practically."

A fundamental problem is that there is no European policy on immigration, with national governments jealously guarding their powers over admission and asylum procedures. Anti-immigrant and anti-EU right-wing parties are making electoral

gains from Sweden to France, and there is little stomach among mainstream ruling parties to “Europeanise” immigration policies.

Matteo Salvini, the leader of Italy’s anti-immigrant Northern League, blamed the Italian government for the arrival of 1,000 in Sicily this week, accusing it of corruption and being in cahoots with the traffickers dispatching migrants from Libya.

“Another 10 deaths and 900 illegal immigrants ready to land,” Salvini said. “Pockets are full and hands are dirty with blood in Rome and Brussels. Stop the departures, stop the deaths, stop the invasion.” He said the Italian authorities were making things worse by encouraging human traffickers.

The same argument is made by the British government, which refuses to take part in Mediterranean search-and-rescue missions on the grounds that the operations are a “pull factor”, encouraging migrants to risk their lives at sea in the hope that they will be saved if in trouble.

The commission policy paper, expected in May, will argue that the third-country processing centres are but one of a gamut of proposals aimed at reducing illegal immigration and creating legal channels for migrants.

Britain flatly rejects that argument, with the government declaring that it is against creating more “legal paths”. The government views this as “inconceivable in the current climate” and the home secretary, Theresa May, has told EU interior ministers that “the idea of making it easier for legal routes to stop illegal routes is completely the wrong way”.

Denmark, the country with the tightest immigration regime in the EU, would also oppose the commission plans, and last week Viktor Orbán, the nationalist prime minister of Hungary, said multiculturalism in the EU was a “delusion”.

“The Hungarian man is, by nature, politically incorrect. That is, he has not lost his common sense,” Orban said. “He does not want to see throngs of people pouring into his country from other cultures who are incapable of adapting and are a threat to public safety, to his job and to his livelihood.”

Since the beginning of the year at least 20,000 migrants have left Kosovo in the Balkans and gone to Germany, mainly crossing from Serbia into Hungary and into the EU. Orban said the Kosovo influx risked turning Hungary into “a big refugee camp”. Last month, 1,400 Kosovars were arriving in Germany daily.

Under EU rules, refugee and asylum applications need to be registered in the country where a migrant enters the EU, but Berlin has been refusing to send the



Kosovars back to Hungary because the reception conditions are said to be so wretched.

While migration professionals say that EU processing centres abroad could only be used as a complementary instrument in dealing with refugee flows and not as an alternative to existing procedures within the EU, the proposal raises big issues about capacity and expertise. EU offices abroad do not have the staff to cope with large numbers of applicants, nor does the commission have a large cadre of immigration officers and asylum specialists.

It is not clear whether a refugee would still be able to lodge an application in Europe if he or she has already had a request rejected in a third country.

For the system to work and to decide where successful applicants are going, there would need to be a new, agreed system of burden-sharing or a “distribution key” for taking in migrants in the 28 member states. Experts being consulted on the commission proposals say there is discreet discussion of a distribution key, but there is high scepticism about whether agreement will be reached.

The EU would also need to strike bilateral agreements with the governments of countries hosting the new application centres. These countries could become magnets for regional migrant flows with the refugees reluctant to return to their native countries after having an EU application rejected.

“You would need Faustian bargains with third countries. It is unlikely, say, that Egypt would play,” said Collett. “There would need to be an enormous amount in it for them.”

The attempted shakeup of migration policy was triggered in the first place by the Lampedusa tragedy 18 months ago, when 366 people drowned off the coast of Italy’s southernmost island.

The response in Brussels was to declare that EU frontier search-and-rescue patrols would be introduced, spanning the Mediterranean from Lebanon to Gibraltar. In fact, what happened was that the Italians ditched their relatively successful Mare Nostrum patrols, arguing they were being left to foot the bill for the rest of Europe. This was replaced by an EU operation one-third the size called Triton, mandated to patrol no further than 30 miles from Italy’s coast.

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# The Guardian



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## Syrian refugees: 3.5 million people flee to neighbouring countries

**The UN refugee agency has identified the huge impact of the crisis on the Middle East and Turkey, and says 20,000 Syrians have applied for asylum in Europe**

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About this content

**Achilleas Galatsidas and Mark Anderson**

Wed 11 Mar 2015 17:15 GMT

Four years after the start of Syria's civil war, more than 3.5 million people have fled the country and registered in refugee camps in neighbouring states, while nearly 220,000 have applied for asylum in Europe, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The impact of Syria's refugee crisis on the Middle East has been immense. Turkey hosts more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees, Lebanon is home to 1.1 million, and Jordan has registered nearly 620,000, the UNHCR said. Iraq hosts 232,800 Syrian refugees and Egypt close to 136,000.

These five countries host 97% of Syria's refugees, according to Amnesty International. About 80,000 Syrians live in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, making it the country's fourth largest city.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a credible source inside the country, estimates that 210,000 people have died in the conflict. About 6.5 million Syrians have been displaced within the country, according to the Migration Policy Centre.

Syrian refugees now comprise 26% of Lebanon's total population, placing a strain on humanitarian resources. Political pressure to stem the flow of new arrivals led Lebanon to impose strict entry requirements on Syrians at the end of last year, raising concerns that more displaced people will remain in danger inside the country as fighting continues.

Syrians fleeing the civil war are also streaming across European borders. European law requires people to be physically present in the country they are petitioning for asylum. This has sparked a boom in illegal migration across the Mediterranean.

About 218,000 Syrian refugees had applied for asylum in EU countries as of December 2014, according to the UNHCR. Germany and Sweden fielded nearly half of all asylum requests.

The UNHCR's data does not include internally displaced people or those who have not registered at a recognised refugee camp.

Refugees are defined by the UNHCR as those with a legitimate fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, or affiliation with a social or political group, and who are outside their country of origin. Asylum seekers are people whose claims of persecution have not yet been substantiated.

According to the 1951 refugee convention, which was amended in 1967, "refugees deserve, as a minimum, the same standards of treatment enjoyed by other foreign nationals in a given country and, in many cases, the same treatment as nationals".

The UK has fielded asylum applications from fewer than 6,000 Syrian refugees, but the British government has committed £800m in humanitarian aid to the Syrian crisis, its largest response to a humanitarian emergency.

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# The Guardian



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## UN plan to relocate Syrian refugees in northern Europe

**UNHCR proposes one-year pilot programme for 'orderly relocation' from overstretched southern countries**

**Harriet Grant**

Wed 11 Mar 2015 15.41 GMT

The UN has drawn up radical plans for an “orderly relocation” of thousands of Syrian refugees from southern Europe to richer countries in the north, and is pressing the EU to agree to a year-long pilot programme.

On the eve of the fourth anniversary of the start of the Syrian conflict, and with ever greater numbers of refugees arriving in southern European countries, the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, has approached senior EU figures to get backing for its pilot programme.

The proposal, outlined in a letter to the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, and the commissioner for home affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos, is a radical departure from current EU policy, which forces asylum seekers to apply for asylum in their first country of entry, under legislation known as the Dublin law.



The director of the UNHCR's Europe bureau, Vincent Cochetel, told the Guardian that new approaches, which could be achieved within the existing Dublin framework, were urgently needed: "We are concerned that when the boat arrivals resume on a large scale in April, not all the lessons learned from last year have been drawn by EU member states," Cochetel said.

"More than two-thirds of those disembarked in Italy moved on without fingerprinting or proper identification," he added. "At a time of increased security concerns over movements from Libya, this situation is abnormal. Not all those saying that they are Syrians or Palestinians are Syrians or Palestinians. And not all of them are refugees."

The Syrian conflict has exacerbated a refugee crisis in north Africa and the Middle East. More than 3 million people are estimated to have fled the country in the past four years, and although the vast majority have remained in neighbouring countries - Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan - thousands have tried to make the perilous journey to Europe.

Most of those who survive the Mediterranean crossing - and more than 3,000 died last year - end up in Italy and Greece. More than 42,000 Syrians ended up in Italy in 2014 alone. EU rules mean migrants should apply for asylum in their country of arrival. But only a tiny minority do. In practice, many migrants simply slip through the net and move, vulnerably, around Europe.

Cochetel said the huge numbers of Syrians who chose to move irregularly across Europe could be reduced if people were allowed to legally travel onwards to join family or move to countries where they have language skills or work opportunities.

"We need to convince them that it is better to go legally, that there is an alternative to months of suffering," he said. "When I see a Syrian arrive in Italy who has relatives in the Netherlands who are not close enough to be eligible for reunion under the family directive, for example an 18-year-old with a brother in the Netherlands, the choice for policymakers is that he either moves illegally or legally. The person is going to move."



Syrian migrants at a refugee centre in Milan. Photograph: Giuseppe Cacace/AFP/Getty Images

The proposed relocation, which would start as a one-year pilot programme, would focus only on Syrians who have been recognised as refugees in Italy and Greece and would depend on an initial voluntary commitment from member states. But previous attempts to reform the Dublin law have been met with fierce resistance during internal EU discussions.

The UK and other northern European countries have fought in both domestic and European courts to defend the right to return asylum seekers to their first country of entry, despite lawyers and human rights groups arguing that protection and accommodation conditions in Italy and Greece are inadequate.

Asked whether there is internal support for the proposal, Natasha Bertaud, European commission spokeswoman for migration, home affairs and citizenship stressed the importance of states upholding the Dublin regulations.

“Regarding Syrian migrants, they should be invited to lodge requests for international protection in whichever member state they arrive. The member state concerned is obliged to comply fully with its legal obligations in accordance with the provisions of the [appropriate EU law, including the Dublin Regulation].”

Bertaud said the EU would continue to focus on tackling the refugee crisis through direct resettlement of vulnerable refugees from camps, not through any change in policy on arrivals at EU borders.

“EU member states have offered over 36,300 resettlement places so far, with Germany offering the majority, at over 30,000 places.

“Right now, the commission is discussing with the member states on how to ensure a more balanced distribution of resettled refugees among all member states. We will soon elaborate on the proposal for a pilot project on resettlement in which all member states and associated states could take part.”

Cochetel acknowledged that only a significant interest in building a new system would create a change in behaviour among desperate migrants, but pointed out that pressure outside Europe’s borders made it an urgent task.

“Last month Turkey become the largest country of asylum in the world - very few people take notice of this. [The pilot project] will need to be large enough to constitute a credible alternative to what we have experienced so far: massive irregular secondary movements feeding trafficking, leading to human suffering and exploitation.”

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### Best bits

## 12 ways to ensure a more secure future for Syria's refugees

**Katherine Purvis**

🐦 @KatherinePurvis

Mon 16 Mar 2015 10.59 GMT

**Push for an end to the conflict:** The only way the Syrian refugee crisis will be fully resolved in the long term is through a durable political solution. To date, the UN security council and other power brokers have focused on humanitarian action because it's easier to agree on providing humanitarian assistance. But no matter how effective the humanitarian response, it is no substitute for a long-term political resolution. **Benedict Dempsey, director of policy and advocacy, [Mercy Corps](#), London, UK, [@mercycorps\\_uk](#)**

**Increase reallocation places in Europe:** Switzerland has just announced that it will facilitate entry of 3,000 people fleeing from Syria over the next three years. Germany has committed to resettle 30,000 people. It's a positive step and others should follow the example and play their part. **Ana Fontal, senior press and public information officer, [European Council on Refugees and Exiles](#), Brussels, Belgium, [@ecre](#)**

**Be flexible with funding:** Creativity is going to be needed to design livelihood options that allow both vulnerable host communities and refugees to find ways to



better support themselves; we need to see greater involvement of development actors and funding for infrastructural improvements in host countries (eg water systems) and support for education and health sectors. **Camilla Jelbart Mosse, campaign manager - Syria crisis response, [Oxfam](#), Beirut, Lebanon, [@CamillaJelbart](#)**

**Rethink assistance:** In Lebanon alone, more than 1.1 million refugees are scattered across 1,700 locations living in unfinished buildings, makeshift structures, tents and so on. We as a humanitarian community need to rethink how we deliver assistance. There are many lessons to be learned from this crisis, in particular on working with local government, civil society and communities from the outset. **Julia St Thomas, protection and rule of law technical adviser, [International Rescue Committee](#), Beirut, Lebanon, [@juliastthomas](#), [@theIRC](#)**

**Help neighbouring countries to keep borders open:** People escaping from the war must have a safe place to go. Neighbouring countries must let refugees in but they also need help to continue receiving them. There are three very concrete things that wealthy countries in the west, but also in the Gulf and elsewhere, can and should do: give more money for humanitarian assistance, help the main host countries to cope, and resettle more vulnerable refugees. **Sherif Elsayed-Ali, head of refugee and migrants' rights, [Amnesty International](#), London, UK, [@sherifea](#)**

**Consult with communities:** We need to do more to ensure that refugees and host communities, including civil society organisations, are at the forefront of creating solutions and driving the priorities of the response. This means reducing our role as direct service providers and working closely with local government and local organisations to support them in their efforts. **Julia St Thomas**

**Ease tensions:** In [Jordan](#), for example, communities identified the lack of a girls' schooling as a source of tension because of an influx of refugees. So we worked with those communities and the government to establish a new school. In turn, this helped the different communities discuss other issues that were causing tension. **Benedict Dempsey**

**Find a way for refugees to live, not exist:** If this means resettling them in other countries, or working with current host countries to adapt their policies, then it must be adopted. Countries like Britain have offered to take in refugees but I don't think it should be down to responsibility but what is the most beneficial for the refugee. There are other neighbouring countries from the Arab League, which have the land mass and economy to host Syrian refugees. **Samira Abu-Helil, global programmes coordinator, Islamic Relief UK, Croydon, UK, [@IslamicReliefUK](#)**

**Help landlords in host countries:** There is also the need for more houses. We have projects in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, which gives financial assistance to landlords



to complete unfinished buildings in return for housing displaced families for a period free of rent. This creates jobs in the local community and increases the stock of housing units, preventing rents from increasing for both host and displaced communities. **Robert Beer, Syria response coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council, Amman, Jordan, [@nrc\\_middleeast](#)**

**Support migrant routes:** Europe needs to step up its search and rescue efforts in the Mediterranean. If a well-resourced European search and rescue initiative is not put in place, more people will die trying to reach our shores. **Ana Fontal**

**Provide education opportunities:** Portugal has created a number of “emergency scholarships” for Syrian students to study in Portugal. This could be life-changing for young people whose education has been interrupted by the conflict. I meet so many amazingly talented and skilled Syrians in [Lebanon](#) every week, with so much to offer to a potential host country. Instead, many are just stuck waiting, trying to find extremely poorly paid informal work to survive, or relying on aid with no choice. **Camilla Jelbart Mosse**

**Urge governments to act:** We need to put pressure on governments to get them to do more than just expressing solidarity with Syrians. Words are good but they don't help people suffering in the region. We think that getting the public more engaged, getting people to show political leaders that they want to help vulnerable Syrian refugees, and that they would welcome them in their communities is key. **Sherif Elsayed-Ali**

*Read the full Q&A [here](#).*

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# The Guardian

Yvette Cooper calls for moral leadership over refugee crisis at the Centre for European Reform in London - video

This article is more than **5 years old**

## How many refugees should Britain take?

**Yvette Cooper's call for 10,000 more places for people fleeing the Middle East is welcome, but the UK has the infrastructure and experience to take many more**

**Alan Travis**

Wed 2 Sep 2015 13.01 BST

Yvette Cooper is said to have “broken a political taboo” by calling – rightfully – for every city and borough in Britain to take 10 families from among the four million refugees who have so far fled from Syria.

This, she argued, would make 10,000 more places for vulnerable refugees available within a month. The government has so far allowed 200 to be resettled.

Cooper's proposal is a start. But Britain has done far more in the recent past, and the infrastructure and experience exists to take many more than this modest beginning. The last time there was a major refugee crisis on the doorstep of Europe, in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia, Britain took in more than 75,000 asylum seekers each year over three years, reaching a peak of 84,000 in 2002. Over the past 12 months the UK has taken 25,000 asylum seekers.

The asylum system that offered housing and support for those fleeing the breakup of the Balkans is still in place. In 1999 the Home Office took over the provision of housing for asylum seekers from local authorities whose political welcome fluctuated wildly between a warm reception and outright hostility.

At the same time a decision was taken to disperse new asylum seekers in areas outside London and the south-east, which were then housing more than 100,000 asylum seekers – more than 90% of the total. Those contracts with private sector housing providers have not had the happiest history but are still in place with G4S, Serco and Clearel, at a cost of about £150m a year. They currently house about 23,000 destitute asylum seekers.



Refugees and migrants outside Keleti railway station in central Budapest. Photograph: Matt Cardy/Getty Images

Many asylum seekers return to London or opt to find their own accommodation in the south-east to be close to existing communities, but the Home Office laid down a formula to ensure no town or city outside London found itself taking a disproportionate number of asylum seekers.

That official formula still stands at one asylum seeker for every 200 residents. It seems a useful benchmark when trying to answer the question of how many refugees Britain should be prepared to take now. Applying that same formula to the UK population of 64 million would imply we could take somewhere in the region of 320,000 Syrian refugees.

That is a significant number but a long way short of the 800,000 asylum seekers Germany expects to receive this year.

The problem is not as difficult as it may seem at first glance. Some refugees have means of their own and, unlike asylum seekers, are legally allowed to work, so could be expected to provide their own accommodation after an initial reception period. In 2002 the arrival of asylum seekers provoked a political backlash especially in some specific areas.

One factor that is different now is the emergence of the City of Sanctuary movement to try to ensure asylum seekers are welcomed. This has been officially backed by Sheffield and Birmingham city councils.

There is no point in pretending that there will not be a strong political reaction to a government and home secretary that decided to scale up Britain's contribution to 50,000-80,000 a year. This could at least be a preliminary target that the UK could offer to Angela Merkel when Europe meets in two weeks to respond to the migration crisis.

Leaving it to individual local authorities to say how many they will take leaves their commitment vulnerable to a local hostile reaction, but a central decision by the Home Office, and with funding by them in these straitened times to include education, health and social services, could make it work. As Cooper pointed out, Britain did it in the second world war with the Kindertransport, but we also have a more recent record of humanitarian protection that deserves to be renewed.

This article was amended on 4 September 2015. An earlier version said Germany had taken 800,000 asylum seekers so far this year, and referred to the City of Sanctuary movement as "faith-based"; the organisation says it is a movement "of all faiths and none".

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# The Guardian

David Cameron defended the UK's approach to the migration crisis, saying: 'I don't think there is an answer that can be achieved simply by taking more and more refugees.'

This article is more than **5 years old**

## Britain should not take more Middle East refugees, says David Cameron

**Prime minister maintains hardline position despite pressure for UK to do more to help amid outcry over pictures of drowned refugee child in Turkey**

**Patrick Wintour** *Political editor*

Thu 3 Sep 2015 07.24 BST

David Cameron faced accusations of heartlessness after he insisted Britain should not take any further refugees from the war-torn Middle East, as community groups prepared to show that councils in the UK are willing to take thousands more.

The prime minister knows he and the home secretary, Theresa May, will be pressured over the migration issue when parliament returns next week, but some senior Tory backbenchers said they expected Cameron to shift his ground after distressing pictures of a drowned child, who had been found washed up on a beach in Turkey, went viral.

Cameron insisted the best solution to the crisis was to bring peace and stability to the Middle East. During a visit to Northamptonshire, he said: "We have taken a number of genuine asylum seekers from Syrian refugee camps and we keep that under review, but we think the most important thing is to try to bring peace and stability to that part of the world.

"I don't think there is an answer that can be achieved simply by taking more and more refugees."

But in a sign that the political temperature on the issue was rising, Cameron faced calls to do more from both the Catholic church and two of the Labour leadership contenders.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the head of the Catholic church in England and Wales, said: "This is a disgrace. That we are letting people die and seeing dead bodies on the beaches, when together, Europe is such a wealthy place. We should be able to fashion a short-term response, not just a long-term response.

"It is no longer an abstract problem of people on the scrounge. It's not. It's people who are desperate for the sake of their families, their elderly, their youngsters, their children. And the more we see that the more the opportunity for a political response that is a bit more generous, is growing. What is screaming out is the human tragedy of this problem, to which we can be more generous."

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary and Labour leadership candidate, accused the prime minister of turning his back on the worst migration crisis since the second world war.



“When mothers are desperately trying to stop their babies from drowning when their boat has capsized, when people are being left to suffocate in the backs of lorries by evil gangs of traffickers and when children’s bodies are being washed to shore, Britain needs to act.

“It is heartbreaking what is happening on our continent. We cannot keep turning our backs on this. We can – and must – do more. If every area in the UK took just 10 families, we could offer sanctuary to 10,000 refugees. Let’s not look back with shame at our inaction.”

Cooper urged May to convene a conference of council leaders to discover how many refugees local authorities are prepared to take. The task of organising a conference is being handed to Citizens UK, the community campaign group, and there are signs that some Conservative-led councils are likely to offer help.

The Conservative leader of Kingston upon Thames council, Kevin Davis, has already written to 50 Tory-led councils asking them to become involved in a scheme run by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to help find private housing for refugees for a year.

Andy Burnham, the shadow health secretary and another Labour leadership contender has demanded that the government make a Commons statement next week. He said the response of Cameron and his ministers had veered from the inadequate to the misjudged and was a stain on the nation’s conscience.

“Many of these refugees are children, fleeing the violence and horrors of war. The images we have seen of children washed up on beaches will leave no person unmoved. When Parliament returns next week, MPs must be given an opportunity to debate the Government’s handling of the crisis and the chance to make a judgement on whether Britain should accept a share of refugees,” he said.

Cameron does not want to join any Europe-wide resettlement programme for refugees, believing that if the UK became involved in a large-scale scheme, it would act as a magnet for other migrants and it would be impossible to distinguish economic migrants from refugees.

The prime minister said Britain was focused on stabilising and improving the countries where migrants and refugees came from and highlighted action the government was taking to improve security at the French port of Calais.

He said: “We are taking action right across the board, helping countries from which these people are coming, stabilising them and trying to make sure there are worthwhile jobs and stronger economies there.

“We are obviously taking action at Calais and the Channel, there’s more that we need to do and we are working together with our European partners as well. These are big challenges but we will meet them.”

Citizens UK, the community organising group, the Refugee Council and council leaders – including some from Conservative-run councils – are pressing ahead with holding a pledging conference about taking refugees fleeing the instability in the Middle East.

Neil Jameson, executive director of Citizens UK, said: “We are delighted Cooper has made her intervention, but this should not be a party-political issue. We think civil society can show there is a generosity in the British people, and with the help of churches, mosques and synagogues we can identify empty property in which refugees can be housed. The housing must not be public-sector housing because that would not be politically tenable.”

Citizens UK had been lobbying the government for more than a year to take more people under an EU-funded scheme that allowed refugees to be taken from UN camps and to be housed in the UK for a year.

Cooper has suggested a target of 10,000 refugees being taken by the UK – a figure endorsed by Andy Burnham, the shadow health secretary and her rival for the Labour leadership. She also won the support of the Welsh first minister, Carwyn Jones, who said Wales “stands ready to play its full part”.

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## Refugees

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# Family of Syrian boy washed up on beach were trying to reach Canada

**Jessica Elgot**

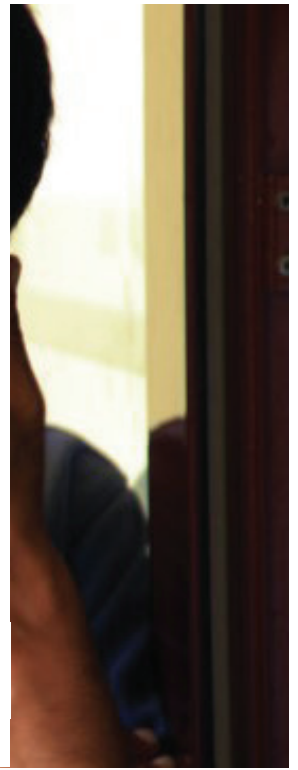
🐦 @jessicaelgot

Thu 3 Sep 2015 09.37 BST

The family of a three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was washed up on a beach in [Turkey](#) were making a final, desperate attempt to flee to relatives in Canada even though their asylum application had been rejected, according to reports.

Syria was already at war when [Alan Kurdi](#) was born. He died with his five-year-old brother, Galip, and mother, Rehan. Their father, Abdullah, survived.

0:00 / 2:09



▲ Abdullah Kurdi describes the moment when the boat he was travelling on with his family suddenly capsized. Guardian

Speaking to Canadian press on Wednesday night, the family said Abdullah had phoned them to tell them his wife and sons were dead, and he now only wanted to return to their Kurdish home town of Kobani to bury his family. The town was bombarded during heavy fighting this year between Islamic State and Kurdish fighters.

Pictures have emerged of the two boys, a laughing Alan and Galip holding a teddy bear in a pink dress, and the pair standing together on a sofa, with Galip's arm around his small brother.

Their aunt Teema Kurdi, a hairdresser in Vancouver, heard the news from her brother Mohammad's wife, Ghuson. "She had got a call from Abdullah, and all he said was, my wife and two boys are dead," she told the National Post.

"I was trying to sponsor them, and I have my friends and my neighbours who helped me with the bank deposits, but we couldn't get them out, and that is why they went in the boat.

"I was even paying rent for them in Turkey, but it is horrible the way they treat Syrians there."

Kurdi, who emigrated to Canada more than two decades ago, said she had privately sponsored a refugee application for the family to join her in Canada, but the application had been rejected.





▲ Alan Kurdi and his older brother, Galip. Photograph: Twitter

Her account was confirmed by her local MP, Fin Donnelly, who told the paper that he had personally delivered Kurdi's application to the immigration minister, Chris Alexander, in March, but it had been turned down.

Donnelly said he had spoken to Kurdi since the pictures were published and she was devastated. He **told the Associated Press**: "This tragic loss is just heartwrenching to go through. She was just completely upset and heartbroken."

He said there were tentative suggestions about holding a memorial service for the family locally, but nothing had been decided. "She did say that she's spoken to her

brother and it's very hard for him to even want to stay alive at this point, knowing what he's going through."

Canada allows refugees to settle if they have the sponsorship of at least five Canadian citizens, on the condition that those citizens provide financial and emotional support.

Only people who have been formally designated as refugees can apply, and many Syrian Kurds have reported difficulties getting their applications processed in UNHCR camps in Turkey. Turkey will not issue exit visas to refugees if they do not have official status.

The two young brothers and their mother were among at least 12 Syrians who died on a boat headed for **Greece**. The boat was part of a flotilla of small dinghies boarded by passengers at Akyarlar, the closest point to the Greek Aegean island of Kos.

It overturned in calm waters, overloaded by the 17 passengers. Bodies washed up on Ali Hoca Point beach in Bodrum. Another dinghy carrying a further 16 people also capsized.



▲ A Turkish police officer carries Alan's body. Photograph: Reuters

The Turkish coastguard said five children and a woman died after the boats capsized and another three people were still missing. Helicopters helped rescue a further 15 people.

The country's state-run news agency, Anadolu, said police have detained four suspected people smugglers, linking them with the tragedy.

Anadolu said the suspects, including at least one Syrian citizen, were detained on a beach on the Bodrum peninsula and would appear in court later on Thursday, suspected of acting as intermediaries for illegal crossings.

This week the coastguard said it had rescued more than 42,000 people in the Aegean Sea in the first five months of 2015, and 2,160 in the past week. More than 100 were pulled from the sea on Wednesday night alone, trying to reach Kos, the coastguard told AFP.

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# The Guardian



This article is more than **5 years old**

## Refugee crisis: what can you do to help?

**From donating to a charity to volunteering - here is a guide to some of the practical ways that individuals can contribute**

**Matthew Weaver**

Thu 3 Sep 2015 12.08 BST

The shocking image of a boy who drowned trying to flee the war in Syria has prompted calls for governments to do more to tackle the refugee crisis, but what can individual citizens do to help?

So far Germany has put other nations to shame with plans to take 800,000 asylum seekers this year. There has also been a series of impressive voluntary campaigns and gestures, from Refugees Welcome - a scheme for sharing homes with those fleeing conflict and persecution described as "an Airbnb for refugees" - to a professional football club fielding a third team made up entirely of refugees.

By contrast the response of the British media has been characterised by fear rather than compassion, but there are plenty of ways that individuals can offer support. We want to hear about how you've helped those seeking asylum. But in the meantime, here's a guide about some of the ways you can contribute.

### Give Money



A number of charities and non-governmental organisations have opened appeals specifically aimed at helping the plight of refugees. Various organisations spell out exactly what a specific donation could provide. Here's a sample:

**Migrant Offshore Aid Station:** The charity which runs independent rescue boats to rescue migrants at risk of drowning has seen a huge spike in donations since pictures of the drowned Syrian boy emerged.

**Médecins Sans Frontières:** The humanitarian agency has three rescue ships in the Mediterranean, on Tuesday alone they rescued 1,658 people in its biggest day of operations.

**Aylan Kurdi Fund:** A specific fund named in honour of the drowned boy was set up within 24 hours of the circulation photographs of his body emerging. All proceeds will go to the humanitarian agency Hand in Hand for Syria.

**Refugee Council:** A donation of £100 could pay for the education and travel for two children for a week.

**Unicef:** The UN's children's charity is providing life-saving supplies such as clean water, medicine and psychological support. It says a donation of £9 could provide an emergency water kit for a family.

**Save the Children:** It says a donation of £50 could buy two hygiene kits including soap, towels and toothbrushes.

**British Red Cross:** A donation of £30 could buy 28 mats to help Syria refugees cope with the cold.

**Islamic Relief:** Three families could be fed for a month on a donation of £210, the charity says. The crowdfunding website **Just Giving** has a list of specific appeals for migrants in Calais. It includes one of students trying to raise £750 to buy mobile phones, footballs, camping equipment, dictionaries, storage boxes, sanitary items and waterproof clothing.

The **UNHCR** is running camps, providing shelter and aid to refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, as well as helping refugees across Europe.

## Other Donations

It is not only cash that can help.

**Refugee Action** is offering to take old cars as donations. It says the last scrap car it took raised £126 for refugees. It is also looking for old mobile phones and even printer cartridges.

A Facebook group **Music Against Borders** is looking for musical instruments for migrant musicians in Calais.

Teacher Mary Jones is looking for donations of books for her **Jungle Books** library named after the Calais migrant camp.

The grass roots campaign **Calais Action** is urging supporters to donate in any way they can. It has put together a map of drop-off and collection zones.

## Volunteer

The US refugee charity the **International Rescue Committee** has opportunities to volunteer at all of its 22 offices. Roles include mentoring refugee families and helping refugees find jobs. The organisation also asking for donations.

## Protest

March on Downing Street in **Solidarity with Refugees** on Saturday 12 September. The protest begins at noon at London's Marble Arch.

The International Organisation for Migration is urging supporters to get involved in its #MigrantsContribute campaign, which promotes the cultural, economic, and political contributions that migrants make to society.

A number of online petitions have been launched, including one calling for a more compassionate Europe-wide response to the crisis and another urging Britain to accept more asylum seekers.

## What are you doing to help?

# The Guardian



This article is more than **5 years old**

## Syrian refugee crisis: why has it become so bad?

**After years of refugees struggling to make their way out of danger, Europe is finally realising the scale of the crisis. We look at why it has taken so long**

**Patrick Kingsley** *Migration correspondent*, **Mark Rice-Oxley** and **Alberto Nardelli**

Fri 4 Sep 2015 13.05 BST

The Syrian war has been going on for four years, but only in 2015 has Europe woken up to the flow of Syrian refugees.

### So why now?

It is hard to find definitive reasons, but conversations with Syrians across the migration trail and a survey of recently available data suggest a mixture of the following.

Firstly, the war is not getting any better. That has the dual effect of prompting more Syrians to leave their country and causing Syrians in exile in Turkey to give up hope of returning home.





Children rest on the ground at Piraeus harbour in Greece.

Photograph: Michael Debets/Pacific/Barcroft

Secondly, Turkey is not a country for people to stay in for the long term. It has been more receptive than most, taking in about 2 million Syrian refugees. But Syrians do not have the right to work there legally, so it is not a place to settle. Additionally, the recent electoral setbacks for the AKP, the party perceived as being most in favour of helping Syrian refugees, has made many Syrians nervous about Turkey's political future.

Thirdly, UN bodies working with millions of refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon are complaining that they are running out of money, making camp conditions harsher than in the past and life more untenable for Syrians who live on their own but still depend on UN subsidies.

The UNHCR reports that its appeals for cash are underfunded. The graphic below shows what rich countries have given to UNHCR to deal with the problem - leaving a gap of almost 40% between what it needs and what has been donated.

And these figures are just for the Syria region. In eastern Europe, a conduit for thousands of refugees seeking respite in Europe, the finances are even more damning. A UNHCR request for £14m to deal with the specific problems of conduit countries such as Italy, Hungary and Bosnia has only reached 9% of the target.

The knock-on effect is that the UN has been unable to provide as much financial support to Syrian refugees in the Middle East during the past year, and so many have opted for Europe as a result.

A fourth point is that people have finally saved up enough money. It is expensive to pay for your family to cross to Greece and then work your way up through Europe. Depending on how many smugglers you use, every individual might spend about \$3,000 (£1,970) to get to Germany. It takes time to get that kind of cash - and maybe we are now seeing the result of several years of penny-pinching.

Fifth, there is now a known route. People have long trekked through the Balkans to the EU, but Syrians were not previously among them. That changed late last summer, when the first few Syrians found the Balkan route to Europe. Those trailblazers told their friends, who told their friends, who set up Facebook groups about it. Suddenly a phenomenon was born - and one that grew still faster when people realised that the window might not stay open for much longer.

And sixth, the crisis is only a crisis because of the European response to it. EU countries have spent all year debating and procrastinating about an appropriate solution to Europe's biggest refugee movement since the second world war.

The chart above shows the problem: a few countries are bearing the brunt, while at least a dozen others take in virtually no one. Any attempt to parcel out refugees to all 28 EU countries in proportion to the size of their populations is being resisted by those where there is a deep-seated apprehension about becoming “overrun” by refugees.

Lastly, to put things in perspective: Europe may be quailing at the numbers trying to get in, but it is as nothing compared to the numbers that Syria’s neighbours have been dealing with. Here is a chart that speaks for itself:

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Every contribution, however big or small, makes a real difference for our future.

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## Public Leaders Network

# Refugee crisis: the UK local government response so far

**Naomi Larsson**

🐦 @naomilars

Fri 4 Sep 2015 16.41 BST

It has taken four years of war in Syria and a harrowing [image of a young boy](#) washed up on the Turkish shore to spark a wave of activism in the UK. In less than 24 hours [a petition to welcome more refugees](#) stormed past the 100,000 signatures needed to instigate a debate in parliament, and David Cameron finally pledged to [house thousands more people](#) fleeing the Middle East.

But a few councils across the country have already been supporting vulnerable refugees for years through two government schemes.

The [vulnerable persons relocation scheme \(VPRS\)](#) was introduced in January 2014 to provide a route for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to come to the UK. These are victims of torture and sexual violence, the elderly and those in need of medical care. So far [216 refugees](#) have been housed through the scheme by a number of councils across the UK, and given access to healthcare, education and employment.

Meanwhile, many have come through the [Gateway protection programme](#), a more general resettlement scheme that has been around for more than a decade. Sheffield was the first UK city to welcome refugees through Gateway, when a group of [69 Liberians arrived there in 2004 \[pdf\]](#). According to campaign group Citizens UK, at least eight councils have signed up to Gateway, with 14 more in the process. The programme offers a legal route for [up to 750 refugees](#) to settle in the UK each year.

But these resettlement schemes don't include those who have entered the UK independently and then claimed asylum: since 2011 the UK has accepted [an estimated 5,000 Syrian refugees in total](#).

Bradford council signed up to the relocation scheme in March 2014 and has resettled 103 vulnerable refugees: 23 families with 55 children and seven single people. "They have been welcomed and supported by the community as they deal with the trauma they have suffered, and the difficulties they face settling into a new culture in a foreign city far from their home," says council leader David Green. "We have worked with the government to provide housing, medical support and other basic necessities to many Syrians who would otherwise have been faced with little or no hope for the future."

In May, Edinburgh council also expressed an interest in the relocation scheme. The city is in the initial stages of what is a long process to arrange facilities, despite the willingness of NHS Lothian and Police Scotland to support the council. "We may be far away, but there are still ways in which we can help," says council leader Andrew Burns. "The key measure of success will be that the number of refugees moving here will integrate successfully into the city in terms of their home, social and professional lives."

As Edinburgh shows, even when councils are willing to help, there are difficulties with both schemes. Funding is a big issue. Under both schemes, the Home Office provides £6,000 per refugee [for the first year of resettlement \[pdf\]](#) to cover health, education and social care, according to Citizens UK. The question remains as to who will pick up the bill after that first year.

The issue of funding is what [prevented Malvern from taking part](#) in the VPRS this summer, while Worcestershire county council rejected the proposal, claiming the scheme is meant to bring refugees to urban rather than rural areas. The Local Government Association has now called for central government to [fully reimburse councils](#) that agree to take in refugees.

Another issue is accommodation. With limited social housing in many councils across the UK, it is difficult to find suitable homes for resettlement. [Refugees](#) must be housed in a separate property - not a spare room or annexe - that will be available for a minimum of 12 months after they arrive. Citizens UK, which has been

campaigning for a year for each local authority to take in 50 refugees, says it has been inundated with responses from people offering spare rooms, but the rules on these government schemes won't allow this.

The organisation is now asking for private landlords to rent out homes for these schemes at less than the market rate. It hopes that those with empty properties will be persuaded to offer refuge. In Westminster, meanwhile, Labour councillors have called on businesses, landowners, the Westminster Property Association, foreign investors and the voluntary sector to coordinate, and find a way to make some of the borough's [1,550 empty private properties available to refugee families](#).

Bradford's Green says that taking in refugees is challenging. "Resources are and will always be an issue; the physical and mental scars of the refugees need to be treated and healed, but we do this out of a commitment to humanity."

The Home Office doesn't release the whereabouts of the resettled refugees for privacy reasons, but it is believed Birmingham, Edinburgh, Bradford, Glasgow, Kingston, Coventry and Islington councils have [pledged to open their doors to refugees](#). All campaigners agree that it's now time for other local authorities to step up.

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# Refugee crisis: Hundreds set off from Budapest on foot – as it happened

Updated 15 Aug 2018 **ge as David Cameron prepares details of a climbdown on accepting more refugees and a standoff between migrants and the authorities in Hungary continues**

## Read the latest summary

Thousands of refugees begin the march to Vienna from Budapest

**Matthew Weaver Mark Rice-Oxley and Nadia Khomami**

Fri 4 Sep 2015 17.38 BST

## Key events

Show ☐

- 4 Sep 2015** Afternoon summary
- 4 Sep 2015** Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia reject quota system
- 4 Sep 2015** Cameron pledges an extra £100m in aid
- 4 Sep 2015** 'Clarification' on 4,000 figure
- 4 Sep 2015** Clashes in Lesbos
- 4 Sep 2015** Hungary shuts border crossing with Serbia
- 4 Sep 2015** Migrants stranded in Budapest march on Austria

## Live feed

Show ☐

**4 Sep 2015** 17:38

## Afternoon summary



Nadia Khomami

We're closing the live blog now. I've included all the significant developments from today below.



**David Cameron has bowed to overwhelming domestic and international pressure and announced that Britain will accept thousands more Syrian refugees.** The prime minister said his government would “act with our head and our heart” in response to the crisis and refugees’ suffering. This afternoon, he also **pledged an extra £100m in humanitarian aid, which would bring the UK’s total contribution to over £1 billion.**

**The UN said that Britain had agreed to take 4,000 more Syrian refugees.** “Those spaces are going to be critical to the lives and future of 4,000 people,” spokeswoman Melissa Fleming told AP. It later said it may have spoken out of turn and that it had not received confirmation of the number of additional refugees to be taken by the UK.

**The humanitarian agency ActionAid said Cameron’s pledge to resettle thousands more Syrians falls well short of what’s need.** Its head of humanitarian Response Mike Noyes said: “The promise that the UK will only take 4000 refugees, if correct, is nowhere near enough. It is the equivalent of only six refugees per parliamentary constituency and represents only 0.1% of the total number of Syrian refugees.”

**Scotland’s first minister Nichola Sturgeon said Scotland should accept 1,000 refugee as a “first step”.** She said: “When the world is looking for leadership, courage and a simple display of common humanity, we will be found standing eagerly at the front of the queue.”

**The UN high commissioner for refugees has called on the European Union to admit up to 200,000 refugees as part of a mass relocation programme that would be binding on EU states.** António Guterres said the EU was facing a defining moment.

**The Syrian boy whose death galvanised public opinion and put pressure on European governments to tackle the continent’s refugee crisis has been buried in the town of Kobani alongside his mother and brother.** Aylan Kurdi’s father, Abdullah, who survived the capsizing that killed his family, wept as the bodies were buried in the predominantly Kurdish Syrian border town.

**People stranded in Budapest started a protest march to Austria after days of being refused train travel out of Hungary.** Hundreds of people were filmed joining the march.

**Hundreds of people living in the Jungle camp in Calais have gone on hunger strike.** A group of more than 100 Eritreans, Syrians and Sudanese people marched from the camp towards Calais town centre this morning carrying banners and chanting “freedom, freedom.”

**The EU’s migration chief Dimitris Avramopoulos was the butt of angry protests as he made his way to the island’s seafront town hall this morning for talks with mayor Giorgos Kyritsis.** Locals, enraged by what they have described as uncontrollable waves of “illegal immigrants” landing on their shores, screamed “traitors, get out of here” .

**Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orban, remains defiant on his country’s hardline anti-immigrant stance, with a warning that Europeans risk becoming a minority on their own continent.** Hungary shut its main border crossing with Serbia after about 300 migrants escaped from a nearby refugee camp.

**The Hungarian parliament has also introduced emergency anti-migration laws in response to the record number of refugees and migrants crossing the country’s border.** These include three-year jail terms for people climbing over the newly built razor wire fence on the border with Serbia, as well as new border “transit zones” to hold asylum seekers while their applications are being processed.

**The prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have rejected any quota system for accepting migrants.** The four EU leaders said the bloc's approach should include "preserving the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures."

**Migrants and refugees have clashed with the security forces during angry protest on the Greek island of Lesbos.** Greece's Coast Guard and police used of stun grenades to deal with the uprising. Around 1,000 Afghans tried to occupy Blue Star 1 ferry shouting "Athens- Athens". An occupation was avoided when the ferry's gates closed.

**According to Amnesty International, refugees on the Greek island of Kos were attacked in the early hours of Friday by "thugs" with bats,** telling them to "go back to their countries". And at Budapest's Keleti station this afternoon, **Hungarian right-wing extremists threw fire crackers into a makeshift refugee camp.**

Join us again tomorrow morning, when we'll continue to cover the deepening migration crisis that has engulfed Europe.

**4 Sep 2015** 17:38

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**4 Sep 2015** 17:29

Further information has come in about the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia rejecting an EU-wide quota system, a measure that Germany and France support.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia have proposed creating a rail corridor for Syrian refugees linking Hungary and Germany. Czech Interior Minister Milan Chovanec said at a joint press conference in Prague: "The Czech Republic and Slovakia can create a rail corridor for Syrian refugees travelling from Hungary to Germany, if Berlin and Budapest agree."

Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz insisted that her country, the largest in the region to reject adopting fixed quotas for hosting refugees, believes in "European solidarity". "We understand this as allowing EU members to take sovereign decisions about their engagement, corresponding to their real possibilities," she said.

Chovanec told reporters: "The quotas are no solution, we don't even know the formula we should use to redistribute migrants, and above all how to keep them on Czech and Slovak

territories when virtually all of them don't want to stay here.”

While insisting that the EU's Schengen system of passport-free travel must remain intact, Slovakia's leftist Prime Minister Robert Fico warned that uncontrolled migration raised the risk of terrorists circulating freely within the EU.

**4 Sep 2015** 17:16

This is the route the march would take from Budapest to Vienna and onto Munich. Hundreds of migrants have set off along the motorway on foot.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:59

More than 4 million people have fled Syria since March 2011. Click through to watch a video, published by AFP, explaining the crisis.

Updated at 5.01pm BST

**4 Sep 2015** 16:55

Migrants on a Hungarian train in the town of Bicske have agreed to end their stand-off with riot police and begun to voluntarily leave the train, a Reuters reporter at the station said. Families, mostly women and children, were seen leaving the train and police said the people would be transported to a migrant camp in Bicske.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:53

Nearly a dozen new leftist Spanish town halls are working to create a network of cities to assist refugees and say Spain should take in more migrants than the 2,739 the country's government has agreed on.

The “refugee city” program started when Barcelona mayor Ada Colau announced the creation of a register of people who can take in or help refugees. She said the city hall has received thousands of offers.

Other cities such as Madrid and Valencia have followed suit. Madrid mayor Manuela Carmena promised to dedicate 10 million euros to the project.

Opposition groups in Spain have criticised the government's reluctance to take in more migrants. Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria said that Spain will probably take in more than previously announced.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:50

### **Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia reject quota system**

The prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have rejected any quota system for accepting migrants. The four EU leaders said the bloc's approach should include “preserving the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures.” They insisted “any proposal leading to introduction of mandatory and permanent quota for solidarity measures would be unacceptable.”

**4 Sep 2015** 16:46

At Keleti station, calm has been restored following the clash between right wing extremists and refugees.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:35

John Domokos reports that many Hungarians are handing out food and water to migrants travelling to Austria along the motorway.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:26

A train pulls into Munich from Budapest 40 minutes late - delayed because around 200 refugees were taken off outside the city to be processed. Phoebe Greenwood meets the new arrivals now coming from Libya via Italy who receive a warm welcome from Munich's volunteers.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:22

AFP is reporting that Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris has offered to buy an island off Greece or Italy and develop it to help hundreds of thousands of people fleeing from Syria and other conflicts. The telecoms tycoon first announced the initiative on Twitter.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:15

The governments of Italy, France and Germany have written a letter to the European Union's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini calling for new rules to end a patchwork of national policies that have sowed division among member states. The letter, seen by Reuters, states that "a more efficient asylum system ... goes hand in hand with a more efficient repatriation policy of irregular migrants."

The letter also calls on the EU to agree a list of countries considered safe and whose citizens have fewer rights to claim asylum. This should speed up repatriation and free up time and resources to deal with legitimate asylum applications.

A third proposal is to create an "integrated border management system" which could help to identify, fingerprint and register migrants seeking asylum.

Responding to the letter to Mogherini, the EU's head of enlargement, Johannes Hahn, said it was "absolutely necessary" to provide EU support to countries dealing with the biggest flow of migrants. "We have to be clear that the European Union has to support those countries particularly affected," Hahn said.

**4 Sep 2015** 16:13

Missiles and bottles have been thrown in the last few minutes at at Keleti train station in Budapest, the BBC is reporting. Syrian refugees are shouting: "Freedom, freedom, we want peace." Some are holding others back as tensions continue to flare.

The BBC's Ben Brown said: "In the last few minutes Hungarian right-wing extremists have thrown fire crackers into what is a makeshift refugee camp at this station. There were two loud



explosions. A lot of refugees were understandably frightened and some of the men then chased the far-right extremists, who were skinheads. There were clashes and plastic bottles that were thrown. Riot police were called in.”

Updated at 4.38pm BST

**4 Sep 2015** 16:07

Meanwhile, Phoebe Greenwood reports from Munich’s central station, where 500 people have volunteered to help thousands of refugees expected to arrive from Hungary. Colin Turner, a volunteer, shows off a stockpile of food, drink and clothes, but says refugee numbers have tapered because of the actions of the Hungarian authorities.

1 of 9

Newest

Oldest

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- Refugees
- Migration
- Europe
- Hungary
- Humanitarian response
- Syria
- Middle East and North Africa



## Refugees

🕒 This article is more than 5 years old

# Austria plans to close border as refugee crisis grows

**Emma Graham-Harrison in Munich and Helena Smith in Athens**

Sun 6 Sep 2015 20.05 BST

Austria warned on Sunday that it planned to close its border again to refugees and migrants as thousands of people travelled across on their way to [Germany](#), and splits on how to handle the crisis deepened across Europe.

[Pope Francis in his Sunday sermon called](#) on every religious community across Europe to do their part to stem the humanitarian crisis by offering sanctuary to a migrant family, in stark contrast to the rhetoric of politicians such as [Hungary's Viktor Orbán](#) who have claimed that the mostly Muslim arrivals threaten European Christianity.

He told tens of thousands of people in St Peter's Square that it was not enough to tell those on the march to "life's hope" to have courage, and called on every Catholic parish, convent, monastery and sanctuary in [Europe](#) to shelter a family.

In Munich, where more than 10,000 people have arrived over a single weekend, the [mayor said he was not worrying about whether the country could afford or handle the influx](#), only how to make those arriving feel safe.

“Of course there are some limits responding given the space we have in Munich but that is not the question I am asking myself,” Dieter Reiter said, adding that he had been surprised by how smoothly the city had handled an influx several times larger than they had expected.

0:00 / 0:37



▲ Refugees welcomed warmly in Germany – video Guardian

“Every day I am asking myself how can we accommodate these people, these refugees, how can we give them a feeling that they are safe here in Munich, here in Germany. I am not really thinking about how many people can we afford and can we take here in Munich. That is not the question.”

For a second day running, ordinary Germans turned out in force to cheer the new arrivals, handing out toys, sweets, SIM cards and other gifts. “I saw the reports on the news and wanted to help,” said Annabel Parker, who was spending her 16th birthday at the train station handing out toys.

Not everyone in Bavaria agreed, however. Some of Merkel’s partners in her conservative bloc who hail from the region accused her of “giving the wrong signal to Europe”, and said the issue will be on the agenda of a high-level coalition meeting on Sunday.

Joachim Herrmann, the regional interior minister, from the local sister party of Merkel’s Christian Democrats, accused her of pushing forward with plans to welcome refugees without asking the states that are having to handle the new arrivals, Reuters reported.

Her centre-left partners have leapt to her defence, calling the lifting of border controls “the only right thing to do” and a government spokesman stressed it was a temporary humanitarian decision. The country is the EU’s top destination for migrants and refugees, with 800,000 expected this year and more than 100,000 registered in August alone.

In [Austria](#), however, the chancellor warned on Sunday that the country would soon close the border again to travellers without papers, after holding “intensive talks” with Merkel and a telephone call with Orbán.



▲ Austrian volunteers set off from Vienna to help refugees marching towards the Austrian border in Hungary. Photograph: Csaba Krizsan/EPA

“We have always said this is an emergency situation in which we must act quickly and humanely,” Reuters quoted Austrian chancellor, Werner Faymann, saying. “Now we have to move step by step away from emergency measures toward normality in conformity with the law and dignity.”

Austrians organised a convoy of citizen drivers to pick up refugees from [Hungary](#) and bring them over the border on Sunday, and many who had been planning to go earlier in the week said they would defy the government if it did try to shut the crossings.

“A lot decided like us to wait ... if it gets worse then we can go there again,” said 18-year-old Dora de Goederen, who with her father drove a family of four Syrians across the border on Friday, and took them to their home to wash, eat and rest, before buying them train tickets to Germany.



Several Austrians were detained that day in Hungary for making the same journey, and De Goederen said her group were briefly stopped by an Austrian police officer, but allowed to continue.

“I think I never met people so polite,” she said of the family, who had a teenage son around her age. Chatting with him she sometimes forgot that he was fleeing war and she was risking arrest to help him, she said. “We were just talking like normal teenagers, the future and what we would like to become when we are older.”

0:00 / 0:30



▲ Clashes erupt between refugees and police on Lesbos – video Guardian

Meanwhile, the situation has become increasingly explosive on Lesbos, one of the Greek islands on the frontline of the crisis.

Greece's migration minister, Ioannis Mouzalas, has travelled to Lesbos after a second day of street fighting on the Aegean isle. Scenes of stone-pelting refugees engaged in hand-to-hand battle with local police have prompted the government to step up security, with two extra units of riot police sent to the island on Sunday.

Amid renewed violence local officials processing newcomers on Sunday morning locked themselves in a container as refugees vented their anger over delays in registration. On Saturday police used teargas and stun grenades as about 500 Afghans attempted to board and seize a ferry heading to Athens. At least four were injured, one seriously.

Those who reach Greece have almost all been heading north through the Balkans towards Germany or other western European countries. There are still hundreds of

**people crossing into Hungary from Serbia each day**, with little sign of the border fence the government had pledged to finish by the end of August.

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# The Guardian



This article is more than **5 years old**

## UN agencies 'broke and failing' in face of ever-growing refugee crisis

**Damage will be impossible to reverse, warns head of UNHCR, after 10% fall in funding forces cuts to food rations and closure of clinics**

A world of problems: the United Nations at 70 is supported by

About this content

**Harriet Grant**

Sun 6 Sep 2015 22.00 BST

The UN's humanitarian agencies are on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to meet the basic needs of millions of people because of the size of the refugee crisis in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, senior figures within the UN have told the Guardian.

The deteriorating conditions in Lebanon and Jordan, particularly the lack of food and healthcare, have become intolerable for many of the 4 million people who have fled Syria, driving fresh waves of refugees north-west towards Europe and aggravating the current crisis.

Speaking to the Guardian, the UN high commissioner for refugees, António Guterres, said: "If you look at those displaced by conflict per day, in 2010 it was 11,000; last year there were 42,000. This means a dramatic increase in need, from shelter to water and sanitation, food, medical assistance, education.

“The budgets cannot be compared with the growth in need. Our income in 2015 will be around 10% less than in 2014. The global humanitarian community is not broken – as a whole they are more effective than ever before. But we are financially broke.”

Recent months have seen severe cuts to food rations for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan as well as for Somali and Sudanese refugees in Kenya. Darfuris living in camps in Chad have been warned that their rations may end completely at the end of the year. UN-run healthcare services have also been closed across a large part of Iraq, leaving millions of internally displaced people without access to healthcare.

Guterres warned that the damage being done by these cuts would be impossible to reverse. “We know that we are not doing enough, we are failing the basic needs of people.

“The situation is beyond irreparable. If you look at the number of children who will see their lives so dramatically impacted by malnutrition and lack of psychosocial support, you will see this is already happening.”

The majority of the UN’s humanitarian work is funded entirely by voluntary donations from individual governments and private donors, with agencies such as the UNHCR and Unicef receiving none of the regular budget that member states pay into the UN’s central coffers.

Guterres is leading calls from within the UN to change this system and ask member states to make more regular payments to the main agencies.

The current global humanitarian funding budget for all countries stands at \$19.52bn (£12.84bn), but only \$7.15bn of that has been raised from international donors.

The Syria regional refugee response plan is only funded to 35% of the \$1.3bn needed to support refugees, both in the camps and by providing resilience funding for the countries hosting them. In Africa, where the crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan do not often make international headlines, many funding appeals are less than 15% full.

Experts say the current system, with constant emergency appeals to keep supply chains running month by month, must be changed to acknowledge that the situations in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Central African Republic are all deteriorating and need long-term funding.

In August, a multi-million dollar shortfall forced the World Health Organisation to close down 184 health clinics across 10 of Iraq’s 18 districts, in an area that has seen severe fighting and massive internal displacement. The cuts have left three million people without access to healthcare.

The World Health Organisation is trying to raise \$60m to fund healthcare in Iraq but so far only \$5.1m has been given by donors.

Dr Michelle Gayer is director for emergency risk management at the WHO. She told the Guardian that the gap between the desperate need in countries such as Iraq and current funding levels risked permanent damage to public health across whole populations.

“The global community, including WHO, we are dealing with emergencies of really unprecedented scale and nature,” she said. “This has a disproportionate impact on health because health deteriorates in a conflict situation over time.

“People haven’t been vaccinated, they suffer from malnutrition, they have mental health issues because of the conflict. We are setting countries back decades.”



Gayer said the decision to cut services was hugely difficult. “We are never 100% funded so we are always having to prioritise, but it breaks your heart when you end services for 3 million people. There will be no access for trauma like shrapnel wounds, no access for children’s health or reproductive health. There will be no surveillance of things like cholera. A generation of children will be unvaccinated.”

She supports the idea that there should be a change to the current funding system for UN agencies. “Most people who work outside the humanitarian sector, they would fall over backwards if they knew how we do our work, having to ask each and every year for funding.”

Another major crisis for the UN is feeding refugees, not only those recently displaced but people who are still unable to return home years after leaving.



A Syrian refugee peels potatoes at a refugee camp in Zahle in the Bekaa valley, Lebanon. Photograph: Mohamed Azakir/Reuters

This year the World Food Programme cut rations to 1.6 million Syrian refugees. The most vulnerable living in Lebanon now only have \$13 to spend on food each month, a figure that the WFP warned would leave refugees vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups.

And this pattern has been repeated around the world. Since the beginning of the year, the WFP has twice cut food rations for refugees in the Daadab and Kakuma camps in northern Kenya, as well as for Sudanese refugees in Uganda.

Dina El-Kassaby, a spokeswoman for the WFP based in Cairo, said the cut in rations was pushing refugees into making dangerous decisions, including returning to Syria or travelling irregularly to Europe.

“This is a desperate situation for families. In the last few weeks in Jordan and Lebanon many refugees were asking me how they can get on one of these boats to Europe and we have run into many people who have said they will consider returning to Syria if food rations don’t return to previous levels.”

“As the year goes by and the funding crisis gets deeper we are making more and more cuts. Mothers are telling us that they are being evicted from their houses and are now living in makeshift shelters in the field because their rent money is going on food. Think about young men and boys who are responsible for feeding their families. Reaching these desperate levels makes them prime targets for Isis.”

One Syrian refugee, Fatmeh, said of her two children in Lebanon: “When we can’t afford both medicine and food, I tie scarves around my boys’ bellies at night so they don’t wake up crying from stomach aches because they are hungry.”

Kassaby said the current funding system meant the WFP never had the funds it needed. “This is a hand-to-mouth operation: the minute money comes in it goes out. We have been operating with a funding deficit since the beginning of the year and right now we are short of \$149m to help Syrians just through September and October.”

The UNHCR also says it is seeing evidence that refugees are making the dangerous journey into Europe because conditions in the Middle East are worsening.

On the Greek islands, where UNHCR frontline workers meet refugees as they arrive by boat, they cite new arrivals saying they were pushed into leaving Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey by a shortage of food or a desperate need for medical treatment.

Carlotta Sami, the UNHCR spokeswoman for southern Europe, said: “They mention ration cuts or difficulty in getting electricity. We meet many people who are chronically sick or have sick children and say they can’t go on living in this way. One Syrian man had a bullet lodged in his stomach and had travelled from Turkey hoping he could have surgery in Germany. He was suffering so much.”

Guterres wants to see rapid changes to the funding system. “It’s a very dramatic situation and it’s clear that because Syrians can’t work legally and the assistance is not enough, then that is one of the reasons why more people are moving onwards.”

“As [UN] peacekeeping operations are funded by assessed contributions I think that at least major emergencies like Syria should benefit from assessed contributions that all member states contribute to.

“If you look at the humanitarian budget all over the world, it is somewhere between \$20bn and \$30bn. I don’t know any bailout of even a medium-sized bank that did not cost more than that. Not to spend more on humanitarian aid is a bad strategy, not to say a suicidal one.”

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# Refugee crisis: UK will resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years - as it happened

Updated 15 Aug 2018 **Germany to take 55,000 extra refugees under quotas**

**10,000 more refugees expected in Munich on Monday**

**Follow live: UK PM Cameron to make counter-terror speech**

**UN agencies 'broke' due to scale of the crisis**

**Read the latest summary**

Volunteers form a convoy of cars to drive refugees from Budapest to the Austrian border and beyond on Sunday night. One volunteer says Europe has a tradition of human rights and says it is their duty to help the refugees. Some drivers came from as far as Germany to help the wave of people escaping conflict in Syria

**Matthew Weaver**

Mon 7 Sep 2015 16.00 BST

## Key events

Show ☐

**7 Sep 2015** UK to take 20,00 refugees

**7 Sep 2015** Tougher EU approach on Syria?

**7 Sep 2015** EU quota plan to accept an extra 120,000 people

**7 Sep 2015** France and Germany reported to take extra 55,000 refugees

**7 Sep 2015** Merkel: number refugees 'breathtaking'

**7 Sep 2015** New Zealand and Australia offer to take more refugees

**7 Sep 2015** Cooper alarmed at raid on aid budget

## Live feed

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**7 Sep 2015** 15:57

### UK to take 20,00 refugees

Britain is to resettle up to 20,000 refugees from Syria over the next four and a half years, David Cameron has told the commons. He said Britain would take in vulnerable refugees only from camps in the region, and not those who have crossed the Mediterranean into Europe.

He told MPs: "We will continue to show the world that this country is a country of extraordinary compassion, always standing up for our values and helping those in need."

The acting Labour leader, Harriet Harman, asked Cameron if the pledge to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over the course of this parliament meant just 4,000 this year? Updated at 4.00pm BST

7 Sep 2015 15:12

David Cameron is preparing to make his statement to the Commons about Britain's response to the crisis. Politics Live will be covering the details and reaction, so we're going to pause this blog for now.

7 Sep 2015 15:12

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7 Sep 2015 15:09

Here's a summary of the latest developments:

**France and Germany are to take an extra 55,000 refugees over the next two years.** The plan, part of an initiative to taken an extra 120,000 across Europe, will be set out on Wednesday by EU commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker.

**France is considering launching airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Syria president François Hollande announced as he confirmed plans to take an extra 24,000 refugees.** "We have proof that attacks have been planned from Syria against several countries, notably France," Hollande told a news conference.

**Angela Merkel called on other European countries to pull their weight to help tackle the crisis.** She described the number of people coming to Germany over the weekend as "breathtaking" and said Germany should be proud of its response.

**Tensions between the authorities and migrants and asylum seekers have remained tense at a number of flash points across Europe.** On Greek island of **Lesbos** the sight of thousands of frustrated refugees and migrants marching on Mytilini, the capital, prompted Greece's migration minister to announce that transit of the newcomers would be speeded up immediately. Scuffles broke out earlier on between police and thousands of people attempting to enter **Macedonia** from with Greece. The Hungarian security forces struggled to contain migrants trying to break out of the **Röszke** camp on the Serbia border.



**The Bavarian authorities have warned they are at “breaking point” after accepting two thirds of the 18,000 refugees who arrived in Munich via Austria over the weekend.** “We’re right at our limit,” said Christoph Hillenbrand, meeting reporters at Munich train station.

**David Cameron is to set out details of the government’s plans to resettle thousands of refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria.** He will also announced further details of a counter terrorism strategy on Syria.

**Hundreds of millions of pounds from Britain’s aid budget will be used to tackle the crisis,** Chancellor George Osborne confirmed that every penny in the “uplift” in the aid budget - the automatic rises as the economy grows - would be spent on global challenges with a direct effect on Britain.

**The ruling coalition in Germany has set out plans to spend an extra €6bn to cope with migration.** After a meeting in Berlin lasting more than five hours, leaders from chancellor Merkel’s coalition also agreed to speed up asylum procedures and facilitating the construction of asylum shelters.

**Hungary’s hardline PM, Viktor Orban, said people coming into the EU are “immigrants not refugees”.** He also said that it was the EU primary interest that Hungary protects its borders.

**The United Nations warned that its humanitarian agencies were on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to meet the basic needs of millions of people because of the size of the refugee crisis.** “We are broke,” the UN high commissioner for refugees, António Guterres, told the Guardian.

7 Sep 2015 14:59

Mona Mahmood

**Mona Mahmood** has been speaking to a Mustafa Abu Yazen, from Damascus, a 40 year old father of two, forced to leave Syria after spending three months in detention. Speaking after making it to Germany he said:

*‘Is it worth it?’ I’ve been asking myself since leaving Azmir, in Turkey. I had to leave my wife and two kids in Damascus after being detained by the Syrian security for more than three months. I was accused of helping foreign terrorists, when I was just working for the German sportswear company Adidas.*

*The fear of being rearrested pushed take the bus to Azmir in Turkey.*

*I thought I could establish a new live in Turkey and bring my family. But after trying several odd jobs, the income was too low, and I hardly could meet my own daily expenses.*

*Like most of the desperate Syrian refugees in Turkey, I had to find a smuggler who could take*



Mustafa Abu Yazen Photograph: Handout

*me to Greece for \$1,200, by putting me in a boat with other 40 refugees at night. The good thing there is that Greeks understand the hardship of the Syrian people and they will tell you which way to take to get to Macedonia and then to Serbia.*

*The biggest hurdle was how to cross into Hungary without being fingerprinted. Me and my four friends took a taxi from the Hungarian border to Budapest, to try to dodge the authorities. It cost €1,250 but after two hours, the driver ordered us to leave the car immediately or he would inform the police.*

*We had to walk all the way to Budapest and stayed over night in a hotel for another €160. We then had to find another smuggler who could take us to Germany. They suck your blood for every move you take from one country to another. To get to Germany I paid another €1,000. Once, we got to the camp in Munich in, the German authorities confiscated €5,000 from us. They said, "As a refugee you should have only €500 with you, we will divide this money among other Syrian refugees." It was a big shock for us as we had saving the money to send it to our families in Syria.*

*The treatment in the camp in Munich was not that good as it was run by Turkish and Cypriot security men. I had to collect all my luggage and blankets every day at 8 am and wait till 4 pm to find if I would be transferred to another camp.*

*Eventually, I was moved to another camp in Nuremberg where there are more than 250 Iraqi and Syrian refugees. The treatment is better but the procedures are so slow and nothing has been done since I arrived. Only today I got a check for €183 but my main concern is how to bring my family to Germany as soon as possible. And the Syrian security is*

*still chasing me and they might take my wife if they don't get hold of me.*

*The camp here is so noisy with Syrian young men spending the night singing and playing cards and shouting all night, in a way it is so hard to sleep. I'm not that sure about the future here and in fact I want to go to the Netherlands, where people say asylum procedures are quicker. But at the end of day, it is much safer to be here rather than being in Syrian under the mercy of the cruel Syrian army.*

**7 Sep 2015 14:41**

The UN's refugee agency has applauded Austria and Germany for its welcome of refugees, but suggested more will need to be done in the coming days and weeks.

In a blogpost the UNHCR's Don Murray praised Austria, Germany and civil society groups for the way they had reacted to the crisis. He did not praise Hungary's response and suggested that the mass busing of migrants through Hungary should be allowed to continue.

*As the Austrian buses arrived to pick up the stream of people - as many as 4,000 - the Hungarian government insisted there would be no more mass busings. It said this singular effort had been undertaken to protect the security of its transport network. For three days Hungary had cancelled all international trains serving Western Europe to frustrate refugee attempts to leave the country.*

*At the Keleti train station where thousands had camped for days, there were only a few families left on Saturday. But more than 2,000 new refugees arrived in the country from Serbia overnight.*



Hungarian police officers guard migrants who arrived from Serbia near the border village of Roszke. Photograph: Zoltan Gergely Kelemen/EPA

**7 Sep 2015 14:09**





Helena Smith



Refugees and migrants take part in a protest at the port of Mytilini, on the north-eastern Greek island of Lesbos. Photograph: Santi Palacios/AP

Emergency measures are being taken in Greece to deal with the increasingly explosive situation on the far-flung Aegean island of Lesbos, according to our correspondent **Helena Smith**.

*Local officials on Lesbos are voicing growing concerns over what is fast becoming an increasingly chaotic - and, some say, inflammable situation - on the island. The sight of thousands of frustrated refugees and migrants marching on Mytilini, the capital, prompted Greece's migration minister to announce that transit of the newcomers would be speeded up immediately..*

*Ioannis Mouzalas said at least two-thirds of the estimated 15-18,000 refugees and economic migrants currently stranded on the island would be ferried to Athens by the end of the week. "It is imperative that the burden is taken off the island," he told the state run television channel ERT. Greece's caretaker government has made handling of the crisis its top priority until general elections are held on 20 September. Visiting Lesbos on Sunday, Mouzalas, a physician with the aid organization Doctors of the World, announced a series of emergency measures to defuse tensions.*

*Chaotic scenes followed two days of street fighting this morning as Afghans, Syrians and Iraqis, abandoning a camp outside the capital, attempted to occupy the port. By 2pm they had managed to cut the capital in two with riot police being rushed to the scene amid fears of looting. Newsites showed some carrying placards that read: "we will destroy the island."*

*Refugees and migrants have become increasingly frustrated by the slow pace of processing and the long waits they are having to endure to get proper documentation on Greek isles. Lesbos, which lies close to the Turkish coast, receives an estimated 1,000 desperate men, women and children fleeing war and deprivation every day.*



*The Greek government has now pledged to put on an extra two ships daily to transport the newcomers to the mainland and has deployed 60 coastguard officials and police to the island to expedite registration of the refugees. Once processed, newcomers will be immediately housed on the cruiseship, Eleftherios Venizelos, now pressed into service on a 24-hour basis. The liner, which will be running between Athens and Lesbos, has a capacity for 2,500 passengers.*

*Mouzalas said a new reception and registration centre would also be created in a disused army camp while conscripts had, as of today, been ordered to bake and handout 1,500 loaves of bread to the migrants and refugees.*



Refugees clash with Greek police, demanding to board a ferry boat, in the port of Mytilini on Lesbos. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Updated at 2.11pm BST

**7 Sep 2015** 13:54

Ahead of David Cameron's statement on refugees, dozens of MPs from all parties in the UK have taken part in a "Refugees Welcome" vigil outside Parliament.

Updated at 2.12pm BST

**7 Sep 2015** 13:44

Former UN diplomat and foreign minister in the last Labour government, Mark Malloch-Brown, has added to calls for the UK to accept more refugees. Speaking on the BBC Radio 4's World at One, he called for "generous asylum here in the UK - a little bit of Angela Merkel's magic dust needs to be sprinkled on our response."

**7 Sep 2015** 13:37

Scuffles broke out earlier on Monday between police and thousands of people attempting to enter Macedonia from with Greece.

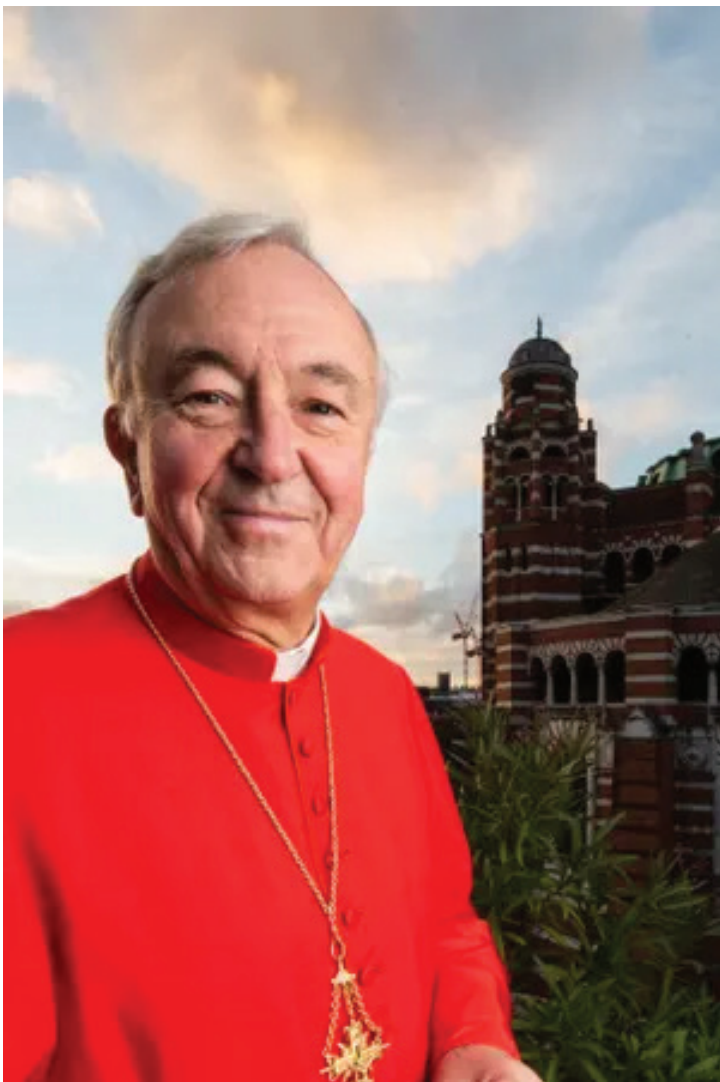
About 2,000 people gathered at the Greek border near the village of Idomeni just after dawn. The Macedonian authorities allowed only small groups to cross every half hour, leading to tension. The situation later calmed after more were allowed to cross, with about 1,000 having passed the border by mid-day, AP reported.



Migrants and refugees try to break through a police cordon of police forces to board a train after crossing the Macedonian-Greek border. Photograph: Robert Atanasovski/AFP/Getty Images

Updated at 2.12pm BST

**7 Sep 2015** 13:24



Cardinal Vincent Nichols Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, has urged Catholics in England and Wales to respond to the crisis with “practical action” and promised the church will issue guidance on how people can help.

In a statement he said:

*“We urge government to respond positively to this crisis and to provide the necessary resources and funding to ensure the effective reception and long-term resettlement of these desperate people. We will work with both government and other responsible authorities to meet this grave challenge.*

*“We invite all Catholics to respond in prayer and in real, practical action. It is my hope to join the prayer vigil which is taking place outside Westminster Cathedral tomorrow night.*

*“Guidance will follow shortly on how the Catholic community in England and Wales can practically respond to this refugee crisis.”*

On the subject of candle lit vigils GuardianWitness have a callout on the #LightTheDark candlelit vigils being held across Australia. Here’s a sample of contributions Updated at 1.26pm BST

**7 Sep 2015** 13:18



Ian Traynor

The Guardian's Europe editor, **Ian Traynor**, rounds up the latest diplomatic developments on the crisis:

*French president François Hollande has called for a Paris summit of European leaders to tackle the refugee crisis. He said Europe's passport-free Schengen zone could not survive without a new system of binding quotas for sharing newcomers, and said France has agreed to take 24,000 people under a new EU scheme.*



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, right and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Photograph: Virginia Mayo/AP

*Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, is to outline a new three-pillar system for dealing with refugees on Wednesday in a speech to the European parliament. He will propose the obligatory sharing of 160,000 asylum-seekers moved from Italy, Greece, and Hungary across the rest of the EU, although the countries of eastern Europe are bitterly opposed to being forced to accept refugees.*

*The eastern Europeans will be offered the option of buying themselves a year's grace, delaying acceptance of their quota in return for returning money to EU coffers. It is not clear whether they will accept. Under the quotas, Germany, France, and Spain are to take around half of the total, although Madrid is also balking.*

*Britain and Denmark do not need to take part in the new scheme.*

*The Juncker proposals will also effectively put EU agencies in charge of registering and fingerprinting newcomers in Italy and Greece, taking on powers previously reserved for*

*national governments. This is being pushed by Germany, which is furious that for two years the Greeks and Italians have been deliberately not registering people to avoid having to take them back from other EU countries.*



*Juncker is also to table a list of agreed so-called safe countries of origin, replacing the patchwork of different national lists with a standardised number of countries accepted across the EU. This will be politically divisive. It will apply mostly to the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania. Migrants from these countries currently make up more than 40% of people going to Germany. The Germans have Serbia, Bosnia, and Macedonia on their own safe list, but not Kosovo, Albania, and Montenegro which will be on Juncker's list.*

*Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany needs a new system, separate from asylum procedures, for dealing with migrants from the Balkans. Juncker is also expected to include Turkey on his list, controversial since the 30-year-old conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish militants has re-erupted and is escalating. And almost one quarter of asylum applications of people arriving from Turkey in Europe are currently accepted.*

*The right to claim asylum is an individual, not collective nor national right. People from countries on the safe list will still be able to claim asylum, but the chances of them obtaining it will be reduced while their applications will be fast-tracked, making deportation a quicker prospect.*

**7 Sep 2015** 13:12



German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier Photograph: Julien Warnand/EPA

Germany's foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has heaped more pressure on David Cameron by calling on other EU states to take part in a "massive joint effort" to tackle the refugee crisis. In a statement issued on Monday he said:

*"It is still an illusion to think that we can get a grip on that crisis without a really comprehensive and differentiating approach. In all our efforts, we must not forget the people who are currently considering embarking on the extremely dangerous and risky journey to Europe from refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan.*

*"We have to do even more in collaboration with our partners to create fresh prospects for them in the places currently sheltering them. That means, for example, supporting the UN efforts to stabilise Libya and the endeavour to launch a real peace process in Syria, which may for the first time in a long time have a chance of success now that agreement has been reached in the nuclear dispute with Iran."*



Steinmeier echoed earlier remarks by the German chancellor Angela Merkel. She said that other EU countries must take in more migrants because “only with common European solidarity can we master this effort”.

She called for a “solidarity-based and fair distribution of refugees” and said the “Europe based on values must show its face”.

**7 Sep 2015** 12:25



Refugees, mostly Syrian are prevented from moving further towards the interior of Hungary and are kept surrounded by Hungarian police. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

The Hungarian security forces are struggling to contain migrants trying to break out of the Röszke camp on the Serbia border, according to reports.

Updated at 12.25pm BST

**7 Sep 2015** 12:18

A UN committee has urged Gulf States to do more to help tackle the crisis.

In a statement the UN Committee on the Protection on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families said: “While neighbouring states have opened their borders to millions of Syrian migrants, other countries, especially in Europe and elsewhere, notably the Gulf States, should do more to address one of the most tragic mass displacements of people since World War II.”

The Guardian’s migration correspondent Patrick Kingsley said persuading the Gulf States to take more Syrians was one of the key ways to tackle the crisis. He wrote:

*Most Arab countries don’t allow entry to Syrians. Some of them have reasonable excuses – Lebanon’s refugee population is already a quarter of the country’s total. But the Gulf countries – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar – have less justification, not least because their support for various sides in the Syrian war is one of the reasons the conflict has lasted so long.*

*The Guardian has met some Syrians in the Balkans who led safe lives in the UAE for years but had to leave because their residencies were recently rescinded. If Europe has a moral duty to help Syrians, then the Gulf certainly does too.”*

**7 Sep 2015** 12:03

We want to hear experiences from refugees who are making a journey in Europe this summer, as well as their friends and families, and from people whose communities are receiving refugees. You can share your stories, pictures and videos with us via WhatsApp by adding the contact +44 (0) 7867 825056 and starting your message with refugees, or by contributing to GuardianWitness.

7 Sep 2015 12:01

Here's a summary of the latest developments:

**France and Germany are to take an extra 55,000 refugees over the next two years.** The plan, part of an initiative to take an extra 120,000 across Europe, will be set out on Wednesday by EU commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker.

**France is considering launching airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Syria president François Hollande announced as he confirmed plans to take an extra 24,000 refugees.** "We have proof that attacks have been planned from Syria against several countries, notably France," Hollande told a news conference.

**Angela Merkel called on other European countries to pull their weight to help tackle the crisis.** She described the number of people coming to Germany over the weekend as "breathtaking" and said Germany should be proud of its response.

**Bavarian authorities have warned they are at "breaking point" after accepting two thirds of the 18,000 refugees who arrived in Munich via Austria over the weekend.** "We're right at our limit," said Christoph Hillenbrand, meeting reporters at Munich train station.

**David Cameron is to set out details of the government's plans to resettle thousands of refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria.** He will also announced further details of a counter terrorism strategy on Syria.

**Hundreds of millions of pounds from Britain's aid budget will be used to tackle the crisis,** Chancellor George Osborne confirmed that every penny in the "uplift" in the aid budget - the automatic rises as the economy grows - would be spent on global challenges with a direct effect on Britain.

**The ruling coalition in Germany has set out plans to spend an extra €6bn to cope with migration.** After a meeting in Berlin lasting more than five hours, leaders from chancellor Merkel's coalition also agreed to speed up asylum procedures and facilitating the construction of asylum shelters.

**Hungary's hardline PM, Viktor Orban, said people coming into the EU are "immigrants not refugees".** He also said that it was the EU primary interest that Hungary protects its borders.

**The United Nations warned that its humanitarian agencies were on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to meet the basic needs of millions of people because of the size of the refugee crisis.** "We are broke," the UN high commissioner for refugees, António Guterres, told the Guardian. Updated at 12.01pm BST

7 Sep 2015 11:32

In his press conference President Hollande, said France was considering air strikes in Syria, but ruled out sending not send ground troops into the country. AFP quoted him saying this would be "inconsequential and unrealistic."

*He said it was unrealistic “because we would be the only ones” and also risked being “transformed into an occupation force”.*

*“So we won’t do it,” he said. “It’s for regional forces to take their responsibilities. France, however, will work to find political solutions.”*

*He said that finding a political transition that sidelined Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was “essential”.*

*“The transition is an essential point. Nothing must be done that can consolidate or maintain Bashar al-Assad,” he said.*

*France has so far only carried out airstrikes against IS in neighbouring Iraq. Hollande said the French military had so far carried out 200 strikes in Iraq.*

*Britain is also thought to be considering military strikes in Syria, with Prime Minister David Cameron trying to organise a new parliamentary vote on the issue in the coming weeks.*

*British MPs rejected such action two years ago, in a decision that embarrassed Cameron and drew criticism from the United States.*

1 of 3

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## Hungary

🕒 This article is more than 5 years old

# Refugee crisis: how does Europe solve a problem like Viktor Orbán?

**Ian Traynor in Brussels**

Wed 9 Sep 2015 05.00 BST

It is unusual for European leaders, allies in the EU and in Nato, to criticise one another publicly, especially when standing next to them. But when Viktor Orbán, Hungary's prime minister, came to Brussels last week **to fight his corner**, three European presidents made a point of keeping him at a distance.

Orbán, a strongman leader for the past five years who embraces controversy and confrontation as his preferred mode of politics, is Europe's foremost exponent of tough exclusion policies in the midst of the continent's biggest refugee crisis.

He denies there is a crisis, despite figures showing that more than half of the arrivals in Europe this year are Syrians fleeing war and persecution. He states bluntly that Muslims are not wanted in **Hungary**, that he is defending the EU's external frontier as a Christian against a Muslim invasion. A gifted orator, he uses hyperbole and alarmism to great effect, pandering to popular prejudices. Tens of millions of



migrants are coming, he contends, to a continent in which the natives will end up as the minority.

Donald Tusk, president of the European council, said Orbán was being unchristian in stoking a clash of civilisations between the west and Islam. Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European commission, and Martin Schulz, head of the European parliament, voiced their disagreements with a leader revelling in the spotlight and relishing his role as Europe's leading bad boy.

But apart from occasionally shaking their heads and holding their noses in Orbán's company, there is little they are inclined to do either to isolate him or force him to change his ways. "He hasn't broken any laws," said a senior EU official.

In a speech in Brussels on Monday evening, Tusk's recommendations on how to tackle the refugee crisis were more moderately phrased, but entirely in line with the Hungarian's emphasis on tough security measures, closing the borders and keeping people out.

Frans Timmermans, the commission's No 2 and its 'enforcer', recently delivered a speech on the rule of law in Europe and repeatedly referred to the problem of Hungary under Orbán. He made it plain he was reluctant to sanction the government in Budapest by, for example, invoking EU treaty provisions depriving a member state of its voting rights.

This was done once before by Brussels, against Austria in the 1990s when the **late far-right leader, Jörg Haider**, entered government. "The case of Austria weakened the EU's capacity to react," said Timmermans. "It was a political response which completely backfired. Since then member states have been reluctant to take issue with other member states."

If EU governments hesitate to denounce their peers, the political party system in the EU helps them. Orbán is widely seen as an authoritarian nationalist shifting towards the far right, but his party, Fidesz, is part of the family of Christian Democrats, which make up the European People's party (EPP) in the European parliament, dominated by Germany and Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Berlin and Budapest are fiercely critical of each other over immigration - Orbán described the influx as "not a European problem, but a German problem". But Merkel's Christian Democratic Union party has done little to put pressure on Orbán. The EPP's other big problem figure in recent years was Silvio Berlusconi when he was prime minister of Italy. Eventually Merkel helped to topple him.

But for the political leaders of Europe, nothing is prized more highly than power and electoral success. And here Orbán is peerless. Not even Merkel, coasting towards a

fourth term if she wants it, can hold a candle to him. She has to rule through coalitions and sharing power. Orbán, in office since 2010 and not facing re-election until 2018, has a whopping majority, just short of two-thirds. He has the strongest electoral mandate in the EU. He has no competition beyond the neo-fascist Jobbik movement, which is now the biggest opposition party.



▲ Hungary has built a fence at its border with Serbia. Photograph: Zoltan Gergely Kelemen/EPA

The Americans are less fussy. Last year, they blacklisted several senior Hungarian government officials, barring them from the US for alleged corruption and “kleptocracy” in a unique move against a Nato ally and an EU state.

Such a move is inconceivable in the EU, not least since many national leaders would balk at setting the precedent for fear that the penalties could then be used against others.

Orbán does not have a good word to say about modern Europe, whose response to the refugee issue is “madness”, he said last week. He has put up a razor-wire fence on the border with Serbia, and warned he might repeat the exercise on the frontier with Croatia, which, unlike Serbia, is an EU member state. He is putting the army on the borders and fast-tracking new laws criminalising immigrants, which on Monday triggered the resignation of his defence minister.

Orbán has used his power to write a new constitution, cow the media, stuff the constitutional court with supporters, purge the foreign ministry and the diplomatic corps, restructure parliament and gerrymander electoral districts. He mocks

European notions of liberal democracy, and voices admiration for Vladimir Putin in Russia and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey.

But he has plenty of quiet admirers in central Europe and the Balkans, where leaders increasingly see Orbán as a man to emulate, rather than isolate. Given the rise of radicalism and populism of left and right and the shrinking of the centre in European politics, there are many who see in Orbán Europe's future, and not a hangover from history.

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# The Guardian

Britain's response to the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the second world war has been criticised as insubstantial in comparison with others in the region and within the EU. But what are the numbers? How much is Britain spending? And does it match the scale of the crisis?

This article is more than **5 years old**

## Refugee crisis: Juncker calls for radical overhaul of EU immigration policies

**European commission president calls for common asylum and immigration policy and says EU should accept 160,000 migrants and refugees**

**Ian Traynor** *in Brussels*

Wed 9 Sep 2015 17.06 BST

The EU executive has announced a drive aimed at radically overhauling Europe's dysfunctional and fragmented immigration policies.

Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European commission, urged a common regime of EU border guards, the opening of legal channels to coordinate arrivals to Europe, as well as binding and permanent systems for absorbing the influx of refugees fairly across the continent.

In a major address to the European parliament in Strasbourg, Juncker called for root-and-branch reform of disparate immigration policies in the EU. He complained that national governments were failing to observe agreements on asylum procedures, and warned that several countries could be sanctioned.

"I don't want to get despondent, but Europe is not in good shape," Juncker said, concentrating his first and lengthy 'state of the union' speech on the EU's biggest postwar migration emergency.

Accusing national governments reluctant to take in refugees of historical amnesia, he listed Europe's long record of helping refugees fleeing and persecution, from the Huguenots in 17th-century France to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, to emphasise that the Geneva conventions established in 1951 to regulate refugee treatment were aimed at helping Europeans crushed in the fallout of the second world war.

"Today it is Europe that is sought as a place of refuge and exile. It is Europe today that represents a beacon of hope, a haven of stability in the eyes of women and men in the Middle East and in Africa. That is something to be proud of and not something to fear."

Juncker confirmed that Brussels was asking national governments to agree to distribute 160,000 refugees currently in Italy, Greece and Hungary. This had to be on a binding and not a voluntary basis. "It has to be done and it will be done," he said.

Additionally, he proposed a permanent new system of sharing refugees in case of crisis. He also called for the creation of a European force of border and coastguards to patrol and police the external frontiers of the passport-free Schengen travel zone embracing 26 countries.



Juncker announced that the commission was drafting policies on how to open up legal channels to allow people seeking to get to Europe by highly hazardous routes to do so much more safely. “We have the means to help those fleeing from war, terror and oppression,” he said. “Migration must change from a problem to be tackled to a well managed resource.”

The blueprint unveiled by Juncker sets the scene for a potentially ugly confrontation on Monday in Brussels, when interior ministers from the 28 countries meet to discuss the compulsory refugee quotas demanded by the EU and supported strongly by Germany, France and Italy but vehemently rejected by the younger EU members of central Europe. They remain intensely reluctant to bow to a system of imposed quotas.

Juncker pointedly remarked that today’s wave of immigration from the Middle East and Africa could be tomorrow’s influx from a war-ravaged Ukraine, the message being that the eastern Europeans on the frontline would then demand help from western Europe.

The east Europeans responded robustly to Juncker’s demands. The Slovak prime minister, Robert Fico, dismissed the quotas as a non-starter. “We won’t bow down to Germany and France,” he said. “Quotas are irrational.”

The Czech Republic’s Europe minister, Tomas Prouza, described the quotas idea as “nonsensical.”

Beata Szydlo, on Poland’s nationalist right and tipped to become prime minister following elections next month, complained that Warsaw was under pressure from Brussels to accede to a new quotas system. “The Polish government should definitely not yield to this pressure,” she said.

In Berlin, Angela Merkel offered vocal support for Juncker, arguing that the commission proposals did not go far enough. “Generally we need a binding agreement on a binding distribution of refugees between all member states based on fair criteria,” the German chancellor told the Bundestag.

Juncker’s figure of 160,000 was only a first step, she added. Receiving refugees was a European responsibility, but there was no point in putting a ceiling on the numbers to be shared.

Germany and others receiving the lion’s share of refugees are warning that national border controls within the Schengen area could be re-established if countries continue to veto equitable sharing of the new arrivals.

Juncker stressed that the Schengen zone would not be sacrificed while he remained in charge of the commission. Speaking of “common” and “united” refugee and asylum policies, he said they had to “be permanently anchored in our policy approach and our rules”.

“We will propose ambitious steps towards a European border and coastguard before the end of the year,” he said. “The commission will come forward with a well-designed legal migration package in early 2016.”

The proposed overhaul aimed at establishing a new uniform EU asylum and refugee regime, which will be extremely difficult to achieve given national sensitivities and the prominence of immigration issues in national politics across Europe, is unlikely to affect Britain.

The UK is not part of the Schengen zone and will be unaffected by a common European border guard system. It also enjoys special status allowing it to choose whether to take part in

common asylum policies and has already declared it will have no part of any refugee-sharing quotas system.

However a cross-party group of 14 British MEPs have written a letter to David Cameron urging him to listen to the views of European experts on the issue of relocation and to take part in Juncker's proposed scheme.

The Liberal Democrats' only MEP, Catherine Bearder, said the UK's European partners were exasperated by the UK prime minister's "stubborn refusal to take part in a collective European response to this crisis".

"By refusing to take a single refugee that has arrived on Europe's shores, the UK government is shirking our international duty and lowering Britain's standing in the world," she said. "Of course we must do more to tackle the causes of the refugee crisis at source, but we cannot turn a blind eye to the human tragedy unfolding right now on our continent."

Glenis Willmott MEP, Labour's leader in the European parliament, said: "The prime minister should be leading efforts for a common EU plan for relocation and resettlement of refugees - not acting in isolation, weeks after Germany and other countries have taken the lead."

A spokeswoman for Cameron said Juncker's speech covered "the importance of a fair deal for Britain".

"The point I'd make is that the UK is already playing its part and - in terms of a financial contribution to tackling the refugee crisis from Syria - we are the leading donor nation on that," she said.

"In terms of any relocation, we have already been clear on our position, which is that we are not bound by it and we are going to focus our efforts on resettlement."

The biggest speech of Juncker's 10 months as head of the commission came close on the heels of family bereavement. His mother died last Sunday, since when his father has been taken into hospital.

In a plea for European generosity towards the 500,000 he said had entered the EU this year, Juncker said: "Europe is the baker in Kos who gives away his bread to hungry and weary souls. Europe is the students in Munich and in Passau who bring clothes for the new arrivals at the train station. Europe is the policeman in Austria who welcomes exhausted refugees upon crossing the border. This is the Europe I want to live in."

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## Europe's refugee crisis is a major opportunity for businesses

**Lucy P Marcus**

Fri 11 Sep 2015 08.33 BST

In the face of the largest influx of refugees into Europe in decades, the responses and policy proposals from the European Union and its member governments have varied enormously, and the debate has become deeply politicised. International organisations and non-governmental agencies such as the [UNHCR](#) and the [International Rescue Committee](#), and religious leaders including [Pope Francis](#) and the [archbishop of Canterbury](#), have weighed in as well. But one group's voice has been conspicuous by its absence: business.

While governments, charities, and donor organisations actively discuss how to share responsibility for refugees on all steps of their journey – from camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to transit to settlement – European business has been strangely silent. But, at a time when business is more powerful than ever, with multinational corporations stretching around the world, the private sector must

work with governments and NGOs to help address the short-term and long-term challenges posed by the massive refugee inflows.

Indeed, industry leaders in all sectors owe it to themselves to be involved from the start. Only by turning the challenges into opportunities can social, political, and economic risks be mitigated.

There has been one notable exception to the pattern of private-sector silence. Just as the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, has been at the political forefront of the migration crisis, the Federation of German Industries (BDI) has been at the business forefront. **The BDI has spoken clearly and decisively** about the benefits of refugees for business and has proposed changes to Germany's labour laws and regulations, including fast-tracking the newcomers' **right to work**. In order to make business engagement and investment sustainable, the BDI has also sought assurances that migrants who find employment will not be deported.

Now it is time to hear from other countries' business associations. How do the Confederation of British Industry or France's MEDEF intend to respond? And what of individual multinational corporations? What legislative changes do they think they will need to aid governments and the EU in addressing the refugee crisis and ensuring long-term stability in Europe?

The challenge, everyone agrees, is not confined to managing the huge inflows and processing asylum applications. In the coming months and years, destination countries must lay the foundations for integrating refugees into their workforces. To wait too long is to miss an important opportunity to be involved in developing a strategy that works for businesses, governments, and societies alike.

Becoming involved early in the process of assessment, education, and integration planning would allow the private sector to help shape policy from the outset, rather than complaining about the government's failures after the fact. Business leaders can help identify the skills and abilities that would most benefit their sectors, establish guidance and training programmes, and offer apprenticeships.

The benefits are clear. The refugees arriving on Europe's shores are often young, well-educated, skilled, and eager to integrate quickly into society. They are an antidote to ageing populations and low birth rates, and many come ready to work. By collaborating with the public sector, business can help to ensure that they get the training and jobs they need.

Business also has a role to play in helping to shape societal attitudes toward refugees. This is particularly true of public-facing organisations. Football clubs across Europe are not only donating money, but also taking concrete steps to



encourage a welcoming atmosphere, with welcome banners, training camps for refugees, and, in the case of [Bayern Munich](#), language lessons.

Not all of these refugees will remain in Europe permanently. One day, many may return to their homeland. When they do, they will have the skills to help rebuild their societies and economies, as well as provide strong ties to the country where they sought refuge. The importance of this investment in future state building, as well as business relationships, cannot be underestimated. Although the payoff may seem distant, investing in today's refugees could make all the difference in building tomorrow's strong, stable trading partners.

Europe's refugee crisis continues to be viewed solely as a political problem, in part because that is how the media portray it. The only business coverage tends to focus on the financial impact caused by the [disruption of transport links](#) such as the port of Calais. But Europe's refugee crisis is also a business problem. By addressing it now, business can turn that problem into an opportunity for all.

*Lucy P. Marcus is Professor of Leadership and Governance at IE Business School and a non-executive board director of Atlantia SpA.*

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## Migration

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# Refugee crisis: as Kos reaches out, strain of helping begins to show

**Helena Smith** *in Kos*

Fri 11 Sep 2015 05.30 BST

**O**ut of the fog they come, first as apparitions and then shadows: people in overloaded boats and dinghies. A few hours later, from the bow of the Maria Star – the tourist ferry that crosses the sea every day to Turkey from Kos – the mechanic Manolis will often get a bird's eye view. “At times these waters can be full of them, little people in little boats shouting ‘help, help,’” he says. “The coastguard rescues those that capsize but really there seems no end to it.”

About 850,000 men, women and children, most from war-torn Syria, are expected to make similar voyages this year and next. The United Nations refugee agency has

warned that this figure is likely to be a conservative estimate. At least 366,000 have already sought refuge in **Europe** after crossing the Mediterranean, with growing numbers electing to go via Lesbos and Kos, the Greek islands off Turkey's picturesque shores.



▲ Refugees from Pakistan land on Kos after completing a journey in a small dinghy crossing a three-mile stretch of the Aegean Sea from Turkey. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

On Kos, an estimated 1,000 pitch up every day, their number inflated by ever more migrants joining the influx from Asia. **On Lesbos it is closer to 1,500** and climbing.

On both isles it is now the prone bodies of newcomers, many huddled in foetal positions in flimsy, low-lying tents, that fill ports, streets and shores. In Kos town, they lie along the beach, under the great walls of the castle of the knights of St John, in corners where they might get some shade. And when they go, more come.

Few islanders ever thought that this would become the frontline of Europe's biggest refugee crisis since the second world war. Amid rising tensions, the strain is beginning to tell. Last week, under cover of darkness, more than 100 young local men charged along Kos's neon-lit seafront, beating migrants and refugees. In Lesbos, **street fighting has erupted**, with baton-wielding riot police clashing repeatedly with Afghans, Syrians, Iraqis, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis all desperate to board ships for the mainland and continue their journey north.

In both cases, sympathy and solidarity is being tested. At what has been the height of the holiday season, at a time of enormous economic hardship for ordinary



Greeks, local infrastructure has buckled under the pressure.

“In Kos we speak from the soul and then from the mouth,” says Stefanos Graviaras, a moustachioed, soft-spoken man in his sixties. “Please write [that] we are not against these people, our heart reaches out to them, but our only industry is tourism and tourists aren’t happy,” he sighs, impatiently waving a hand. “They want peace, peace of mind. How can they have that with all of these tragic figures lying around everywhere?”



▲ Refugees at the police station in Kos wait to be processed prior to making the journey to Athens. Photograph: Gail Orenstein/NurPhoto/Corbis

Altruistic volunteers have begun to pour in. From 5am every day the [Boat Refugee Foundation](#), a Dutch charity, works its way through the central boulevards of Kos town, distributing water, toiletries and food.

“The need is so big,” says Jolanda Kromhout, who, joined by her sister Nelleke, a nurse, has decided to spend her annual holiday on Kos with the charity.

“The authorities are doing what they can but they clearly can’t cope,” she says, as a seven-year-old Syrian girl, cradling her newborn sister, snaps up clothes from the boot of a rented car. “A lot of tourists spontaneously stop us in the streets, they ask us what they can do. They really want to help, too.”



0:00 / 16:58



▲ We walk together: a Syrian family's journey to the heart of Europe Guardian

With local services stretched to breaking point, international agencies have increasingly called for emergency relief to be stepped up. Kos, alone among the islands most affected by the influx, still lacks a registration and reception centre, with harassed police officers - the only officials permitted to process refugees - working around the clock to try and keep up.

So rudimentary are state provisions that refugees without the means to stay in local hotels arrive to find no access to shelter, sanitation, food or medical care. "What we have seen is totally unacceptable," says Vangelis Orfanoudakis, coordinating work on the island with the humanitarian group [Médecins Sans Frontières](#). "The only help they get is from NGOs and local solidarity groups because local authorities are dead-set against a reception centre for fear that it will be a pull factor and lure even more."

Islanders are the first to say they are appalled that a journey costing €15 (£11) for anyone holding the right passport on pleasure boats such as the Maria Star, costs at least \$1,500 (£970) for those who don't, with passage almost always in unseaworthy vessels.



▲ People wait to board a bus following their arrival on board the Eleftherios Venizelos passenger ship at the port of Piraeus, near Athens. Photograph: Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters

But patience is also wearing thin. Shopkeepers, who depend on package holidaymakers, complain that business is down by half - a dramatic effect of the surreal coexistence of tourists and refugees. “Tour operators are telling all their clients that it’s dangerous and they shouldn’t stay out late,” says Theofilos Samaras, who sells books and magazines in Kos’s old town. “It’s terrible. We only have a window of a few months and sales are right down.”

Under the weight of the sheer numbers, even clerics are now openly grumbling and, tapping into the natural propensity of Greeks for conspiracy theories, have begun to talk of “dark plots”.

“Why is it that Kos and Lesbos are suddenly the two main entrances to Europe? Is it because this is aimed at the further dissolution of our country economically?” asked Papa Vassilis, his heavily perfumed presence attracting a swarm of bees as he stands outside the island’s ornate cathedral.



▲ Eimear Ní Mhathúna with donations for camps in Kos and Calais, collected by the Northern Ireland Calais Refugee Solidarity group. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

“I’ve asked parishioners to cook lentils for them because they can’t only survive on bread and macaroni but their behaviour has offended us,” he says. “They have even urinated all around the great plane tree of Hippocrates, the place where the man himself taught medicine to his pupils. They have to go!”

The Greek government, expediting what has fast become a huge evacuation exercise, laid on more cruise liners this week to transit arrivals to the mainland and lessen the burden on the islands. On Wednesday, 8,500 people were moved from Lesbos alone, according to local representatives with the UNHCR.

But aid workers worry that this is only the beginning. Across the sea, in Turkey, an estimated 1.9 million Syrian refugees have yet to move from camps many no longer want to be in.

Seated on Kos’s seafront, taking in the young men freshly arrived on dinghies and boats, Roberto Mignone, the island’s UN emergency coordinator, shakes his head in disbelief.

In 23 years of working with refugees in war zones around the world, he has never seen “anything, anywhere, quite like this”, he says. With autumn’s arrival, he worries about the next phase of the crisis - winter - when the winds pick up, the waters turn and the incidence of boats capsizing inevitably grows.

“As an EU country, you would assume there was a capacity to deal with this but in reality everyone is overwhelmed,” says the Italian, whose cigarette intake has



tripled in the past month. “What is important is that we come up with a contingency plan for any scenario – and that is going to be a big challenge not just for Kos or Lesbos, or any of the other affected Greek islands, but all of Europe.”

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Dalai Lama at Magdalen College, Oxford

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## Refugee crisis: Dalai Lama in plea to put 'interests of humanity' first

**At start of UK trip, spiritual leader praises German and Austrian response to crisis but declines to criticise British plan to take only 20,000 refugees over five years**

**Harriet Sherwood** *Religion correspondent*

Mon 14 Sep 2015 13.23 BST

National interests should come second to the interests of humanity, the Dalai Lama has said in relation to the global refugee crisis, as he praised the response of Germany and Austria to those “crying, starving and asking for help”.

However, speaking in Oxford on Monday at the start of a nine-day trip to the UK, the Tibetan spiritual leader declined to criticise the UK government’s proposal to take only 20,000 refugees over five years. “You have to consider many factors, whether you can take care of these people,” he said, adding that Britain was a small country and “you have to be practical”.

Ultimately the only solution to the mass movement of people fleeing war and persecution was “genuine peace” in their home countries and regions, added the Dalai Lama, who will address MPs at Westminster and give a talk at London’s O2 arena during his visit.

Referring to conflict and instability in the Middle East, a major factor behind the current refugee crisis, he said that the US’s forceful response to 9/11 had produced “a lot of unintended consequences”. He added: “The billions of dollars spent on weapons could be spent on education and health instead.”

He called for religious harmony across the globe, saying that faith was depicted as the cause of conflict. “People feel religion is a troublemaker [but in fact] religion teaches compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and contentment.”

The media, he said, should report love and harmony, not just focus on division. “The idea of a clash of civilisations is dangerous,” he said, adding that Islam emphasised love, not bloodshed.

The Dalai Lama, who turned 80 this year, also criticised China’s “politics of suppression”, which he said makes it impossible for people to express their real views. The Chinese government has said it will designate the next Dalai Lama, rather than the figurehead being chosen through the traditional method where Buddhist monks identify their reincarnated spiritual leader after his death.

The Beijing regime routinely vilifies the Dalai Lama - who has lived in exile in India since 1959 - over his demands for greater autonomy for Tibet. China says his true intention is independence for Tibet, and it strongly objects to heads of state, dignitaries and high-profile figures meeting with him.

The Dalai Lama is to meet MPs at the invitation of the all-party parliamentary group on Tibet, of which the new Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, is a member. The group exists to pressure the government “to encourage negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, whilst recognising that Tibet is an occupied country which had independent links with Britain”.

There are no scheduled meetings with David Cameron or any government ministers. The Dalai Lama’s visit comes just a month before the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, is due to travel to Britain for the first state visit in 10 years.

Cameron and his then coalition partner, Nick Clegg, met the Dalai Lama in 2012, triggering a furious response from the Chinese, who accused the government of “conniving at and supporting separatist attempts to achieve Tibetan independence”.

The following year Cameron led a large trade delegation to China, partly to repair the diplomatic damage over the Dalai Lama meeting. At the time, Downing Street said the prime minister had “turned a page” on the issue and had no plans to meet the Tibetan spiritual leader in the future.

Last week, the Chinese authorities cancelled two Bon Jovi concerts in Shanghai and Beijing, reportedly because the rock band used an image of the Dalai Lama as a backdrop during a 2010 performance in Taiwan.

The Dalai Lama’s main public event during his trip is a talk at the 20,000-seat O2 on Saturday, entitled Compassion: the Foundation of Well-being. Proceeds from the sale of tickets – with prices ranging from £24.75 to £90 – will go to the Tibet House Trust, the Dalai Lama’s UK charity, a spokesman said.

The spiritual leader will also join Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, in leading a two-day private symposium at Cambridge University. The purpose was “to shape humane, compassionate, intelligent responses to the various crises that confront us today”, Williams said.

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