

## Time to Get Resettlement Moving!

Ahead of the European Union's Resettlement Forum, 9 July and the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1951 Geneva Convention, we appeal to the EU institutions and member states to urgently revive and increase resettlement efforts. This is a pivotal opportunity for the EU to demonstrate global leadership on refugee protection and chart the way forward as the international community recovers and rebuilds from COVID-19.

While travel restrictions due to the pandemic brought resettlement to a standstill for several months last year, both IOM and UNHCR relaunched their resettlement activities in 2020. **However, the EU's member states and the UK resettled just 9,119 refugees<sup>1</sup>, falling far short of their commitment to welcome close to 30,000 refugees through this route in 2020 and representing only 0.6% of global needs. Since then, EU resettlement has only slowly resumed.** As obstacles to travel and application processing are removed, member states should seize the opportunity to deliver on their 2020 pledges and offer safety to thousands of vulnerable refugees that have been trapped in limbo. As of May 2021, still only 13,438 departures have taken place, whilst 23,380 submissions have been made.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, the need for resettlement is more pressing than ever - **1.47 million refugees will be in need of resettlement next year<sup>3</sup>**. Priority situations include Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; countries along the Central Mediterranean Route and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) countries.<sup>4</sup> Snapshots illustrate the challenges:

In **Lebanon**, where close to 900,000 refugees are hosted among 6.8 million nationals, a severe economic and financial crisis has dramatically affected refugees' access to basic needs and future prospects.<sup>5</sup> 89% of Syrian refugee families are now reported to live below the extreme poverty line<sup>6</sup>, while COVID-19 has crippled the health system. These developments have left refugees particularly vulnerable due to the lack of support structures, including local networks.

**Turkey** continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide. This includes - 3.65 million registered Syrian refugees along with approximately 320,000 persons of concern from other nationalities. The majority of these people are from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.<sup>7</sup> As troops withdraw from Afghanistan, there is potential for further instability in the region and increased displacement. It is vital that principled approaches to resettlement are bolstered, placing the protection of refugees at their core.

Along the **Central Mediterranean Route**, needs are increasing – with close to 367,000 vulnerable individuals estimated as in need of resettlement in 2022.<sup>8</sup> In the absence of legal and protected routes, people on the move face life-threatening journeys in the Sahel, through the desert and at

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<sup>1</sup> Please see [UNHCR's 2020 resettlement data](#).

<sup>2</sup> Figures for the EU's 2020 resettlement scheme (includes the UK). Please see [UNHCR's resettlement data](#).

<sup>3</sup> Please see [Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2022](#).

<sup>4</sup> Please see [Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2022](#).

<sup>5</sup> Please see [UNHCR's 2021 operational data](#).

<sup>6</sup> Please see [VASyR 2020](#) for further details.

<sup>7</sup> Please see [UNHCR's 2020 reporting](#).

<sup>8</sup> Figure for CMR and Rwanda. Please see [Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2022](#).

sea, and appalling detention conditions in Libya. There is an urgent need to evacuate and resettle vulnerable refugees via the largely EU-funded Emergency Transit Mechanisms (ETMs).

**These examples illustrate the urgency of the situation. Resettlement cannot wait. It is needed more than ever.** The most recent global figures show that displacement has soared to 82.4 million<sup>9</sup>. Countries neighbouring crises and low and middle income countries host 86 percent<sup>10</sup> of the world's refugees, even amidst domestic challenges and additional hardships. Several studies show that the social and economic consequences of COVID-19 in these countries have made an already difficult situation worse for refugees and host communities alike.<sup>11</sup>

In responding to this global emergency, we also encourage increased and additional access to complementary pathways. For instance, welcoming communities (municipalities, NGOs, volunteers and others) can, and do, deliver increased support and reception capacity. They are a vital tool towards adding to the number of (resettlement) places, through programmes such as community sponsorships.

Governments should also increase access to family reunification procedures. Family unity is a right and member states should ensure that refugees can access relevant procedures to reunite with their loved ones. This must remain additional to resettlement, which is a life-saving mechanism and protection tool for refugees.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU showed a clear understanding that a global approach and solidarity were necessary to face the multiple challenges posed by the virus. However, this ambition has not been matched by member states' approach to resettlement to date, even as the policy context has shifted and progress against COVID-19 has been made. The EU and its member states must urgently build and expand on the commitment made to resettlement in its Pact on Migration and Asylum and related Recommendation on Safe and Legal Pathways. Member states have the power to address the current inequity in global responsibility for hosting refugees, the resulting gap in protection and in the EU's external response to COVID-19 by urgently increasing resettlement numbers. Adoption of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework would also support the establishment a more structured, predictable and longstanding EU policy on resettlement.

Efforts to expand resettlement must reflect that it is a crucial tool for protection, rather than migration management. It is a means of demonstrating global solidarity and responsibility-sharing and must be additional to upholding the rights of asylum-seekers and the durability of refugee status within the European Union.

**We appeal to the EU institutions and EU member states to do their utmost to reach their 2020 target of resettling 30,000 persons of concern by the end of 2021, as pledged at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. In addition, and in the spirit of growth agreed to by state signatories to the Global Compact on Refugees and the associated Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, at least 36,000 refugees should be resettled into the EU in 2022.**

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<sup>9</sup> Please see [UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020](#).

<sup>10</sup> Please see [UNHCR: World leaders must act to reverse the trend of soaring displacement](#) (2021).

<sup>11</sup> For example, [IRC: Ending the hunger crisis - Response, Recovery and Resilience](#) (2021).

## We appeal:

### TO EU MEMBER STATES

- To **urgently deliver on the resettlement pledges** made for 2020 during 2021. Member states should also allow those waiting for resettlement to enter EU countries according to COVID-19 measures equal to those of returning citizens, in line with the European Commission's guidance in this area<sup>12</sup> and draw on national funding envelopes provided under AMIF for resettlement activities.
- To make a collective and additional pledge of **at least 36,000** places for 2022 in line with the spirit of growth as set out in the multi-stakeholder Three Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways<sup>13</sup>. Pledges should take into account priority situations identified by UNHCR and increasing resettlement from the largely EU-funded ETMs. In addition to this, member states should make provision for unallocated emergency quotas.
- To urgently make resettlement pledges where they have not previously done so, drawing on capacity-building initiatives' support, such as those provided by EASO, the CRISP (a joint initiative of UNHCR and IOM) and IRC's EURITA project.
- To plan for a sustainable increase in refugee resettlement beyond the 2022 pledging process so that the EU has resettled at least 250,000 refugees by the end of 2025. For example, by increasing reception capacity and facilitating multi-year funding.
- To start or reinvigorate tri-partite arrangements with civil society, UNHCR, IOM and partners to allow for good quality resettlement and integration outcomes. By doing so, member states can ensure refugees' integration needs are met holistically and that they are supported as they build new lives in host communities.
- To jump-start resettlement processing and minimise the risk of COVID-19 complications by adopting flexible processing modalities (for example, remote interviewing) particularly as regards emergency places, medical cases etc.

### TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- To encourage member states to substantially address the resettlement backlog before the end of the year through political leadership, sharing of best practices and targeted management of financial support.
- To encourage member states to make a collective EU pledge of **at least 36,000** places for 2022.<sup>14</sup>
- To ensure that sufficient financial support is available to encourage resettlement efforts by member states, we welcome the continuation of the lump sum system of 10, 000 Euro per resettled person and future funding for the ETMs. In addition, family reunification and complementary pathways such as education and labour pathways as well as humanitarian corridors, supported by community sponsorships, should be considered in the programming of AMIF and other instruments to allow for scaling up efforts.
- To facilitate the immediate operational cooperation of member states in all phases of resettlement, directly and in collaboration with EASO, UNHCR, IOM and civil society partners, allowing for speedy processing, predictability and economies of scale.

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<sup>12</sup> Please see the [Communication from the Commission](#) re. COVID-19: Guidance on the implementation of relevant EU provisions in the area of asylum and return procedures and on resettlement (2020).

<sup>13</sup> Please see the [Three Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways](#) (2019 -2021).

<sup>14</sup> As above, this would be in line with the Three Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (2019-2021).

- While explicitly safeguarding the right to seek asylum, to build on the political commitment made in the Pact on Migration and Asylum to resettlement in particular and other safe and legal avenues to protection as a key priority for the EU.

#### TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- To closely monitor the progress of resettlement pledges and activities of the Council and Commission, underlining the pressing need to kick start resettlement.
- To call for the expansion of resettlement and complementary pathways schemes through own initiative reports, resolutions, opinions etc.

#### TO THE EU COUNCIL, PARLIAMENT AND SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY

- To provide a long-term, predictable and protection-oriented framework for EU resettlement by addressing barriers to **urgently adopting the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework**, while maintaining the position in the provisional agreement between the Parliament and the Council in 2018.

#### **Signatories:**

- International Rescue Committee
  - Caritas Europe
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles
- International Catholic Migration Commission, Europe
  - Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
    - SHARE Network
    - Red Cross EU Office