



NEWS RELEASE

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GIVING SYRIANS FULL REFUGEE STATUS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, SAYS CHRISTIAN AID

Christian Aid welcomes the Home Office announcement to grant Syrians resettling in the UK refugee status, saying Britain should be proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and conflict.

Thousands of people who have fled Syria and resettled in the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) will now have access to rights, including higher education and overseas travel documents, promoting dignity and stability among people who have experienced violence and trauma.

Syrian refugees have previously been granted Humanitarian Protection, a special form of leave to remain, which prevented them from accessing some services.

Tom Viita, Head of Advocacy at Christian Aid, said: "It may take many years for peace to return to Syria and the many millions who have fled to return home and help rebuild their country.

"Today the Home Office has done the right thing for the few thousand Syrians resettled in the UK by granting full refugee status so they can move on with their lives with some stability after such trauma.

"This will allow them to make a full contribution to this country while they are here. Britain should be proud to do our bit to offer sanctuary to these Syrians."

Currently at least 5 million Syrians are refugees, mostly in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, which hosts more than 1 million refugees in a country with a population of around 4 million. The UK scheme has resettled less than 6,000 out of a planned 20,000 by 2020.

However, following Donald Trump's moves to stop America's refugee resettlement programme, the charity called on the UK to expand the British scheme beyond the planned 20,000 it has committed to resettle by 2020.

Mr Viita added: “Donald Trump’s U-turn on America’s commitment to resettle refugees means the UK and other countries need to step up and do more for the millions of people who have been forced to flee Syria, especially those in need of permanent resettlement.

“The British scheme of 20,000 is low by international standards and suggests the UK is not doing all it can to help those who have fled for their lives. The Government should extend the scheme and speed up the transfer of people from the region.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in around 40 countries at any one time. We act where there is great need, regardless of religion, helping people to live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance in tackling the root causes of poverty as well as its effects.

2. Christian Aid’s core belief is that the world can and must be changed so that poverty is ended: this is what we stand for. Everything we do is about ending poverty and injustice: swiftly, effectively, sustainably. Our strategy document Partnership for Change www.christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf explains how we set about this task.

3. Christian Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. Further details at <http://actalliance.org>

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