



16/08/2020

Dear Fay,

I am writing to you on behalf of our group about the ongoing Channel crossings and the UK Government's response. Our concerns are threefold

1 Over recent weeks, we have become increasingly concerned about the dehumanising and worrying portrayal in the national media of people seeking sanctuary on UK shores. We fear that this has been fuelled by statements made by the UK government.

We urge you and all your colleagues to make it clear that it is entirely legal for a person seeking sanctuary to enter the UK without documents **in order to seek asylum**. We are very concerned about the language being used and ask you to urge your colleagues to remember that these are people in distress who deserve our pity not our venom.

2 We are also asking you to write to the Home Secretary urging her to introduce safe and legal routes to the UK to prevent risk and exploitation.

In the past, the UK has stood up for sanctuary and welcomed people seeking safety from countries and situations as diverse as Nazi Germany, Hungary during the cold war, Vietnam, Uganda under Idi Amin, apartheid South Africa, Chile, Syria under Assad and recently Hong Kong. That tradition, in which we can take some pride, is now at risk.

In 2015, in response to the heart-breaking image of Alan Kurdi, a three year old Syrian boy who drowned in the Mediterranean, many people in all parts of the UK joined the Sanctuary Movement to make the UK a welcoming place of safety. HBTSR was founded at that time.

Now, in 2020, must we wait for the body of a little child to be washed up on a Kent beach before we rediscover our empathy and solidarity with children and families forced to risk their lives because they have run out of options?

Most of those people seeking sanctuary have family or loved ones in the UK, are at risk of exploitation by people traffickers and smugglers and are fleeing war or persecution. No one would risk their lives on a boat unless it was the only way forward towards safety, and there was no going back.

At present, the UK does not provide a legal route, by applying for a visa, to make a claim for protection, nor does it provide adequate resettlement for refugee family reunion. The only way to make a claim is to do so after arrival on British soil. It is therefore completely unsurprising that asylum seekers will take these terrible risks to reach the UK in order to lodge their claim.

The Government should listen to the evidence and recommendations from people who have experienced these terrible journeys and experts on humane and effective solutions to make refugee journeys safer.

Introducing a safe and legal route and assisting refugees to access it, is the only way to bring to an end the dangerous and inhumane traffic in small boats across the Channel. Empowering consular officials, rather than deploying the Royal Navy, is the better, cheaper and infinitely more humane solution.

3 Finally we would like to remind people of the immense positive contribution that past asylum seekers/ refugees have made to the British culture. A common sentiment that a lot of refugee's express is that they chose to come to the United Kingdom because of its warmth, just, equal and fair treatment, and freedom of expression. These values are what the UK is known for throughout the world, and we must do our utmost to defend and maintain these

moral standards for the future generations of our diverse, multi-cultural population by ensuring that we do not stigmatise these people who can make a big contribution to our country if given a chance.

Yours Sincerely

Ailsa Dunn secretary for Hay, Brecon & Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees [1173570]

HBTSR exists to show and promote support for people forced to seek sanctuary by offering time out to people in need, raising money to help other groups who assist and support and by asking for more humane policies for people seeking sanctuary.

Website <https://hbtsr.cityofsanctuary.org/> **Twitter account** @hbts4refugees

Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hbtsr> **Address** 1 the pavement Hay on Wye
HR3 5BU