

FOR EVERY
CHILD IN
DANGER

unicef 
UNITED KINGDOM

WRITE TO THE HOME SECRETARY TO HELP REUNITE CHILD REFUGEES WITH THEIR FAMILIES

Right now, children seeking refuge are alone and exposed to danger, while their family members wait anxiously for them in the UK. We've seen recently with Calais that the UK Government has accelerated its approach to reuniting children with their families, but many remain in danger. No child should be alone, stuck in containers, at risk of trafficking or forced to risk their lives on dangerous journeys.

It is important to remember that beyond the crisis in Calais, children are also arriving in Greece and Italy waiting to be with their family. To keep the government acting it's vital that the Home Secretary hears positive attitudes from the public about refugees seeking safety in the UK, to show that negative and misleading newspaper headlines do not reflect the views of voters.

GET INVOLVED

We must remind the Home Secretary of our commitments to protecting all unaccompanied refugee children and reuniting them with their families. It's important she hears this message strongly from the UK public so that she feels compelled to continue reuniting refugee children with their family beyond Calais.

Get involved by writing to the Home Secretary to ask her to reunite unaccompanied refugee children whether in Italy, Greece or elsewhere in Europe:

1. **Write a personal letter to the Home Secretary** calling on her to make sure Britain shows itself to still be a force for good in the world. Tell her you support her recent action to bring children in Calais to safety and ask her to continue reuniting unaccompanied refugee children *across Europe* with their family in the UK.
 - a. Ask your friends, family and neighbours to add their signature to your letter, to demonstrate a strong constituency of support for the campaign.

- b. If you can, include a photo of your family to remind her that at its core this campaign is about more than rules or politics, it's about children being with their family.

UNICEF UK'S FAMILY REUNION CAMPAIGN IS CALLING FOR THE HOME SECRETARY TO:

1. Speed up the EU regulations across Europe to reunite families

It is unacceptable that children seeking refuge have been stuck for months in squalid camps from Greece to France, despite having a legal right to be with their families waiting for them in the UK. Every day that children wait is another day they are alone and in danger. Another day that they could fall prey to traffickers. Another day they become more desperate to risk their lives on dangerous journeys. The situation in Calais shows we can't wait for a crisis before we act. We must ensure the system works for children now.

Responding to pressure from 165,000 Unicef campaigners, the Home Secretary has achieved real progress by bringing some of the vulnerable children in Calais to the UK, but there are hundreds more in Calais and across Europe still waiting to reunite with family members in the UK. The UK has made a commitment to bring these children here and must urgently fulfil this promise.

Getting many children out of Calais is a great start, but the job is not yet done. Uncertainty remains around the demolition of the camp and it's essential that the UK and European authorities continue to work together to ensure the long-term welfare of every refugee child.

The UK Government must speed up existing family reunion procedures across Europe, so that refugee children can urgently be reunited with their families waiting for them in the UK.

2. Widen the immigration rules to reunite families

A child is a child, whether they are in Syria, Jordan, Greece, Calais or the UK. They all have an equal need to be protected and an equal right to be safe from exploitation, abuse or trafficking. Yet some refugee children find themselves alone, without family and in terrible danger.

Children are forced to flee their home country when they're at risk of being attacked, recruited by armed groups, or left to fend for themselves following the death of parents as a result of war and conflict. Left with little choice, these children risk everything to be reunited with other family members in Europe or the UK.

Under the current rules, children must reach European shores before being allowed to reunite with brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles waiting for them in the UK. This forces children to make dangerous and often deadly journeys across land and sea.

By changing the rules, the UK can ensure children living in areas of conflict can be reunited with their relatives safely and legally, rather than having to risk their lives on dangerous journeys to and through Europe. It will be a fairer and more humane system.

The UK is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is obliged to protect every child regardless of their migration status. This means keeping them safe today and giving them the prospect of a secure future with their families.

The UK Government must widen its family reunion rules to allow children to be reunited with extended family in the UK who can care for them.

OMAR'S STORY

In September Omar – a Syrian boy who fled war – finally found safety when he was reunited with his family in north-west London. Despite having a legal right to be with his uncle and cousin, like hundreds of children Omar was left by the authorities for six months in Calais, struggling to survive in the squalid camp.

Reflecting on his time there, Omar said *“everything is bad; there is a lot of violence”*. After sleeping alone in a makeshift hut, on a wooden bed piled with blankets, Omar said *“the first thing I want to do is take a shower and sleep in the home. After that, I want to finish study, to go back to school and to learn English.”*

Omar became the 50th child to be legally reunited with his family. Since then, more than 200 refugee children have been brought to the UK to reunite with family, thanks to campaigners calling on our government to act on its legal and moral obligations. The government must recognise the legal right of unaccompanied children across Europe to reunite with family in the UK.

Omar's cousin Abdullah was the first family member to see him in over a year. *“We were always so worried about him. It's such a relief to have him here, so much better. We are relaxed, now, to have him here,”* said Abdullah. *“His parents are so happy he's here now, with his family.”* His parents and siblings are still in Syria. Unable to pay to bring the whole family to Europe, they were forced to send only their eldest son.

Omar's story first appeared in The Guardian. [Read the full article.](#)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

A key way we can ensure the UK Government reunites unaccompanied refugee children with their family in the UK is by showing a strong level of support in your local area and show that negative and misleading newspaper headlines do not reflect the views of voters.

Please write to the Home Secretary and ask her to reunite unaccompanied refugee children whether in Italy, Greece or elsewhere in Europe:

1. **Write a personal letter to the Home Secretary** calling on her to make sure Britain shows itself to still be a force for good in the world. Ask her to build on the success we've seen in Calais and reunite unaccompanied refugee children across Europe with their family in the UK.
 - a. Ask your friends, family and neighbours to add their signature to your letter, to demonstrate a strong constituency of support for the campaign.
 - b. If you can, include a photo of your family to remind her that at its core this campaign is about more than rules or politics, it's about children being with their family.

KEY POINTS FOR YOUR LETTER

- Right now, children seeking refuge are alone and exposed to danger, while their family members wait anxiously for them in the UK. The Government can and must change this, by urgently reuniting children with their families.
- Children seeking refuge should be with their families. No child should be alone, stuck in squalid camps, at risk of trafficking or forced to risk their lives on dangerous journeys.
- **The UK Government must contribute to speeding up existing family reunion procedures across Europe, so that children can urgently be reunited with their families waiting for them in the UK.**
- I support the real progress you've made as Home Secretary by bringing some of the vulnerable children in Calais to the UK. There are still hundreds more children in Calais and across Europe waiting to reach safety in the arms of their family. The UK has made a commitment to bring these children here and must urgently fulfil this promise.
- **The UK Government must widen its family reunion rules to allow children to be reunited with extended family in the UK who can care for them.**

- Under the current rules, children must reach European shores before being allowed to reunite with brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles waiting for them in the UK. This forces children to make dangerous and often deadly journeys across land and sea. We need to change the rules.
- By honouring and strengthening the UK's commitment to reuniting families, we can stop children being forced to risk their lives on terrifying boats at the hands of traffickers and smugglers.
- A child is a child, whether they are in Syria, Jordan, Greece, Calais or the UK. They all should be protected and have the same right to be safe from exploitation, abuse or trafficking. The UK must play its part in protecting unaccompanied refugee children.

SUGGESTED LETTER STRUCTURE

Dear [\[insert MP name\]](#),

Introduction: start by explaining why this particular campaign/issue matters to you. What has motivated you to join the campaign and write to the Home Secretary?

Main body: Acknowledge recent progress on this issue with Calais and share some of the key points about why the UK Government must speed up existing EU regulations and widen the UK's immigration rules to ensure unaccompanied refugee children across Europe are reunited with their families in the UK. Feel free to use the key points above.

Local angle: Reflect the conversations you've had about this locally with your friends, family, neighbours or other people who live in your area. Emphasise that other people in your area also support Unicef UK's campaign to reunite families.

Family angle: Highlight the family angle of this campaign – that at its core this campaign is about more than rules or politics, it's about children being with their family. Explain what family means to you and, if you have, why you've included a family photo.

Conclusion: End by asking the Home Secretary Amber Rudd for her support in protecting unaccompanied refugee children in the UK, across Europe and around the world.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

[\[insert your name and postal address\]](#)

STAY IN TOUCH

Once you've written to the Home Secretary, please do let us know. Please also don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions.

Contact Kate Dentith (Senior Campaigns Adviser):

- Email: kated@unicef.org.uk
- Phone: 0207 3756128