

FOR EVERY
CHILD IN
DANGER

unicef 
UNITED KINGDOM

THE UK'S REFUGEE LAW IS KEEPING FAMILIES APART – ACT NOW!

Right now the UK's refugee law is keeping families apart. No child should be without the protection and love of those willing to care for them. **Unicef UK is calling on the Home Secretary Amber Rudd to fix the law which keeps families apart. Will you join us?**

Real progress was made for refugee children in Calais last year, with many of them now living with their family in the UK. Thanks to the actions of over 175,000 Unicef campaigners – and the UK Government doing the right thing – we were able to transform these children's lives and give them hope for a happy future. Now, it's time for us to do the same for refugee children all over the world.

Take action at University by:

1. Signing and gathering petition signatures for Unicef UK's petition to the Home Secretary
2. Calling on your local MP to act
3. Raising awareness of the campaign on campus

BACKGROUND

Right now, if you are a refugee, the UK Government doesn't recognise brothers or grandmas as family members. Under the current law, children have to make their own way to Europe to be able to reunite with aunts, uncles, grandparents and older siblings waiting for them in the UK. Children fleeing war and persecution shouldn't have to make these needless, dangerous and often deadly journeys. A child is a child, no matter where they come from or where they are going.

Family comes in so many different shapes and forms. What it represents is what counts – love, care, protection, warmth; things that no child should be without. This is what children are missing out on when they're torn apart from their loved ones by circumstances beyond their control, be it war, poverty or conflict.

Children are not responsible for the bombs and bullets, the droughts and disasters – but they are often the worst affected. Children and young people continue to flee these devastating situations by foot, in the back of lorries and on flimsy dinghies. Left with little choice, they are risking everything to be reunited with their family in the UK. They make these dangerous journeys to Europe to escape the atrocities at home, but many of these journeys could be avoided if the Home Secretary were to fix a flaw in the law.

The sad reality is that all too often refugee children have lost their parents, been forced to leave them behind, or found themselves separated. What they need is for the UK law to allow them to be reunited with their aunts, uncles, grandparents and older siblings, and be able to do so from wherever they are.

By making a simple but vital change to our own law, the Home Secretary can ensure children living in regions affected by conflict and persecution are reunited with their families safely and legally from where they are. If safe and legal routes to the UK are not made available to children, they will continue to fall into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.

NABILA'S STORY

Nabila suffered many traumas in Syria. Once 3 bombs fell on her family's house, and another time the neighbour's house was bombed and the resulting fire seriously burnt Nabila's little brother's face. Nabila's father had been in great danger during the Syria conflict and his life was at risk if he stayed. He fled Syria to the UK, with a view to seeking family reunion.

Nabila said of her father: "When he came to Britain he went to the police and they protected him and gave him a room and some food. After two weeks, or something, he got a new phone and called us. When my Dad told us that the journey had ended and he was fine we felt so happy. Lots of people told us that our Dad was going to die because loads of people die on their way."

Nabila's father applied for asylum and was granted refugee status. His family reunion application was successful and he was reunited with his wife, Nabila and his two other children. Nabila's story had a happy ending, but there are many children still waiting to be reunited with their aunts, uncles, grandparents and adult siblings in the UK. For those who can no longer wait, they are forced to make the dangerous and often deadly journey to Europe to qualify for family reunion in the UK.

The Home Secretary must fix the refugee family reunion law so that refugee children can be safe with their loved ones in the UK.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Unicef UK continues to campaign for the rights of unaccompanied refugee children, and is calling on the Home Secretary to fix the UK's refugee family reunion law. We want the UK Government to extend the definition of family from parents to include aunts, uncles, grandparents and adult siblings to help reunite refugee children with their loved ones in the UK. This would also help to prevent children from having to make the dangerous journey to Europe reliant on smugglers and traffickers.

As an On Campus Unicef UK campaigner, you can help us achieve this by:

1. Signing and gathering signatures for Unicef UK's petition

Unicef UK is calling on the Home Secretary Amber Rudd to fix the UK's refugee law. Please help us to collect as many petition signatures as possible. Why not host an interesting event and ask people to sign the petition, or have a stall in your Student Union to catch passers-by?

Family Reunification Petition Link: <http://unicef.uk/OnCampus>

2. Calling on your local MP to act

Taking the time to meet your MP face-to-face will show how passionate you are about children's rights. If you can't arrange a meeting, writing personalised emails or letters is also a good approach. Another key way you can peek your local MP's interest in your campaign is by **spreading the campaign message through local media/social media** – this is another way to reach your local MP who has the power to raise this issue with the Home Secretary and take action in Parliament. See below for guidance.

3. Raising awareness at your university

The more people speaking out for refugee children, the louder our collective voice. You'll want the experiences of refugee children at the forefront of the minds of your fellow students and wider university community – you may want to use some of our event/stunt ideas below to help build support for the campaign. This will also be an opportunity to further build a society of likeminded individuals impassioned by the same cause.

EVENT IDEAS AND PETITION LINK

Help Unicef UK to gather as many petition signatures as possible! Hosting an event is a great way to raise awareness of your campaign and to encourage people to take action. Why not host a spoken word night, and invite your local refugee community to participate or lead the event with you, at the end of the event ask people to sign the petition.

Event/stunt ideas:

- Host a "solidarity event" and use this as an opportunity to raise awareness of the situation for refugee children and their families.
- Organise a short walk to symbolise the journey refugee children are currently forced to undertake between the UK and points of origin such as Syria and points of transit such as Italy and Greece (invite your MP to join you for all of the walk or part of it).
- Encourage members of your community to write messages of solidarity and attach these to a prominent place in your local area (you may need to request council permission).
- Set up a stall on campus where you can stop and inform fellow students about Unicef UK's family reunion campaign and ask them to sign a petition to the UK's Home Secretary asking her to fix the refugee family reunion law and help reunite refugee children with their loved ones.

We encourage you to come up with your own event ideas, as you will have a better idea on what will resonate with your local community and fellow students. It may be worth speaking with one of your local reporters to hear from them the types of events they would be keen to cover.

LOCAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

Local newspapers are often more widely read than national dailies, and as a result local media outlets can help spread the word in your local community and galvanise support for the campaign. You could also contact your local radio station to see if you could talk about your campaigning and the situation for unaccompanied refugee children. This is a great campaign tactic as your local MP is likely to read about your concerns and campaigning efforts and be encouraged to contact the Home Secretary once they know it is a concern felt in their constituency.

Social media channels are increasingly being used by key decision makers to interact with the people they represent. Don't be afraid to reach out to your local MP on Facebook and Twitter or use these platforms to garner attention for an event you're organising/are taking part in to raise awareness of the campaign.

Top tips:

Be prepared. Sometimes people who work in the media can be very busy, so it's a good idea to write down what you want to say and keep this in front of you when you call.

Don't leave it too late. The sooner you can get in touch the better, as they are more likely to have a space for you.

Be enthusiastic. The person you are calling should want to find out lots more about what you are doing and why you're raising your voice for refugee children.

Take photos. You can send pictures of your campaigning activity to your local newspaper along with the template *letter to the editor* we've included for you – just make sure you have everyone's consent before sharing the photos with the local media. If you know a professional photographer or a good amateur, ask them if they would take photos of your event.

What makes a good story?

Something unique: What are you doing in your local community to raise awareness of the campaign? Is this something no-one else has done?

Something interesting: Are you and your networks doing something quirky or impressive that will inspire readers? Is there a local angle to the story, such as involving a local celebrity or iconic site?

A connection to the cause: Do you have a personal connection to the cause? The local community would love to hear about a story in the news from a close and credible source.

Ways of ensuring the campaign is featured in your local media:

A great way of ensuring you get local media coverage, especially for an issue or campaign that goes beyond your local area, is to hold an event or stunt that reporters will want to cover. Remember to give advance warning of your event to your local media outlet so they can factor it in to their deadlines.

Your event should offer an opportunity for your local MP to take part, discuss the issues with you or take part in a question and answer session. Inviting your local MP to the event also adds another angle for the local media and demonstrates clearly the local support for the campaign. It's important that the event or stunt offers an opportunity to engage with your MP on this issue in a productive and positive way. See above for event ideas.

TEMPLATE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

You will find more information on how to submit letters to editors on the website of your local newspaper. You can use the template below or adapt it to include details on your campaigning.

Dear [Editor/name of editor],

Last year, real progress was made for refugee children in Calais, with many of them now living with their family in the UK. Thanks to the actions of over 175,000 Unicef campaigners – and the UK Government doing the right thing – we were able to transform these children's lives and give them hope for a happy future. However, we will continue to see grave situations, like we did in Calais, until the government fixes the UK's family reunion law.

Right now, the UK Government doesn't recognise brothers or grandmas as family members – at least, not if you are a refugee. Under the current law, children have to make their own way to Europe to be able to reunite with aunts, uncles, grandparents and older siblings waiting for them in the UK. Children fleeing war and persecution shouldn't have to make these needless, dangerous and often deadly journeys.

By making a simple but vital change to our own law, the Home Secretary can ensure children living in regions affected by conflict and persecution are reunited with their families safely and legally from where they are, rather than having to risk their lives with traffickers and smugglers in order to reach Europe.

All children deserve the safety and security of being with their loved ones.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Unicef UK On Campus society – [insert University name]

STAY IN TOUCH

If you have any further questions about campaigning with Unicef UK, please don't hesitate to ask your Unicef UK On Campus Regional Coordinators.