

Press Statement: Response to Migrant Crisis

October 2015

In 2002 committed volunteers from the Afghan refugee community, newly arrived in the UK, formed [Afghan Association Paiwand](#) (Paiwand). A registered charity, Paiwand offers a wide range of services to support all asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to the UK, not just Afghans.

Paiwand believes that the UK's current response to the needs of women, children and men fleeing persecution, as defined by the [1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#) (and 1967 Protocol), is lacking. This very Convention was created to provide structure and guidance to signatories on how to respond to a vast scale refugee crisis as we are experiencing now. The destruction in Syria, Iraq, ongoing torture and persecution in [Afghanistan](#), [Eritrea](#), [Iran](#), [Iraq](#), [Pakistan](#), [Somalia](#), [Sudan](#) and [South Sudan](#) continues to drive people from their homes. The UK must respond more promptly and in equal measure to the level of need of those innocent civilians seeking refuge.

To respond to the current crisis, Paiwand calls for the UK Government to offer:

- Increased refugee services throughout the UK in preparation for the increasing volume of refugees and asylum seekers; to adequately address the complex needs of this population.
- Funding and support for [Refugee Status Determination](#) processing centres, staffed by well-trained legal advisers, in collaboration with [psychosocial workers](#) to respond holistically to health needs.
- Increased resettlement tracks for those who are granted refugee status in camps and urban spaces within and outside the EU, to prevent high risk irregular migration. To be effective, Resettlement must be faster and more efficient than the current system, with the UK having welcomed only [216 Syrians](#) through its Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme, since the war broke out in 2012.
- Improved treatment to ensure Asylum seekers are treated with dignity throughout the determination process. This should be reflected by increasing asylum support in line with income support and a [termination of fast-tracking through UK immigration and removal detention centres](#).

Paiwand provides a range of services to refugees and asylum seekers in London, and on a daily basis witnesses first-hand the desperation that leads refugee families to irregularly migrate to Europe. We can conclude that building fences and enhancing police patrols will not stop people from making the dangerous journey. For those in refugee camps and urban centres facing persecution, daily racism, destitution and with no access to justice or healthcare, [they have no choice](#). Many admit that it was an act of survival to make this journey, preferable to risk death en route rather than face definite suffering for them and their children in a transit country.

Formerly, Paiwand was proud of Britain's history as a place of sanctuary: The [Kindertransport](#); the scientific advances the UK enjoyed in the 1940-50s thanks to the [refugee scientists](#) to whom we offered safety on our shores, and later Ugandan Asians seeking refuge who contributed to long-term economic advances within UK society. We ask that the British government upholds its [historical efforts](#) and implements enhanced systems to a) enable refugees to safely reach the UK, thereby saving the lives of those desperate enough to attempt crossing the Mediterranean, and b) address the complex needs of refugees upon their arrival to the UK.

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