### 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.

# BACKGROUND

Right now, if you are a refugee, the UK Government doesn’t recognise older siblings, aunts, uncles or grandparents as family members. Under the current law, children have to make their own way to Europe to be able to reunite with these close family members 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 refugee family reunion 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 avoided having to make the dangerous journey to Europe because the UK law allows children to reunite with their parents in the UK. But the sad reality is that all too often refugee children have lost their parents, been forced to leave them behind, or found themselves separated.

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.

# 2017-18 Campaign OBJECTIVES

Unicef UK continues to campaign for the rights of unaccompanied asylum seeking and 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.

# what do we need you to do?

**1. Engage with your local MP to ask them to support the campaign and our amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill.**

**2. Help gather signatures for Unicef UK’s petition to the Home Secretary and raise awareness of the campaign in your community.** [**unicef.uk/ccpetition**](https://act.unicef.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=375&ea.campaign.id=77925&ea.tracking.id=CCF2F&utm_source=print&utm_medium=print&utm_campaign=pa_keepfamilies_childrenschampions&utm_content=childrens_champions)

**3. Engage with your local media to raise awareness of the campaign in your community and with your MP.**

#### 1. Calling on your local MP to act

Will you please ask your MP to support our campaign and amendment to help fix the refugee family reunion law to help reunite children with their close family in the UK?

Meeting 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. Make sure you let us know if you’ve met with or contacted your MP or received a response from your MP, so that we can support you. We will update our Government Relations colleagues who will also be having private conversations with MPs.

You can find out about your MP by using [theyworkforyou.com](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/). You can find who your local MP is, as well as their voting history, contact information and links to any social media they may use. 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 about the campaign as social media channels are increasingly being used by MPs to interact with the people they represent.

#### 2. Gathering support for Unicef UK’s petition

Unicef UK is calling on the Home Secretary Amber Rudd to fix the UK’s refugee family reunion law. Please help us to gather as many petition signatures as possible! Hosting an event is a great way to raise awareness of the campaign and to encourage people to take action. Why not host a film screening, a pub quiz or a dinner night and invite members of your local community to participate or lead the event with you, at the end of the event ask people to sign the petition.

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 link with other local groups who may share an interest in the campaign.

**NB: Remember to share our *We are family* films - ‘*I AM Brother’, ‘I AM Sister’, ‘I AM Aunt’ and ‘I AM Uncle’* videosand ask your friends and family to share them too.**

**Petition Link to share**:[**unicef.uk/ccpetition**](https://act.unicef.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=375&ea.campaign.id=77925&ea.tracking.id=CCF2F&utm_source=print&utm_medium=print&utm_campaign=pa_keepfamilies_childrenschampions&utm_content=childrens_champions)

#### 3. Engage with your local media

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.

**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 a 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.

***For tips and support on each of the three actions above, please see our separate guidance documents.***

# Tell us how you get on and stay in touch

We’re keen to hear from you. It’s helpful and important that we know how you get on with your actions. This enables us to make sure we can follow up with your local MP and local media. This also allows us to monitor and make sure our campaigns are as impactful as possible for children in the UK and around the world.

We’re also here to help! If you have any further questions, need advice or want to request any resources, you contact us at any time.

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