

## **Vital reforms required to live up to refugee crisis commitment, new report warns**

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The Irish Government has not lived up to its commitments to provide a safe haven for people fleeing conflict, a coalition of leading NGOs has warned. This includes a failure to address the root causes of forced displacement, as well as a failure to implement vital reforms to the domestic asylum process, according to the group - which includes organisations working with asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in Ireland and international aid agencies supporting displaced people overseas.

Launching a new report today (Monday 7th December) – *Protection, Resettlement and Integration: Ireland’s Response to the Refugee and Migration ‘Crisis’* – the coalition expressed disappointment that the focus by EU leaders on border security has diverted attention from the urgent need to find political solutions to current crises. The coalition warned that there will not be a military solution to the current conflicts and EU Member States must put real pressure on all parties in the Middle East to engage in inclusive peace talks immediately.

The report makes a series of recommendations to the Irish Government, including:

- Making family reunification a reality without systematic barriers to allow refugees resettle in Ireland;
- Encouraging EU partners to introduce humanitarian visas to permit access to the EU at embassies and consulates;
- Ensuring that the new EU Trust Fund for Africa – to which Ireland has pledged an initial €3 million – must not divert development aid to curb migration or increase border security;
- Ending the commercial, for profit provision of accommodation for people seeking international protection;
- Establishing a Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Statelessness for Ireland along with local integration groups;
- Maintaining naval rescue missions throughout the winter;
- Calling for the suspension of the Dublin Convention with Italy, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia in order to alleviate pressure on states at the border of Europe.

**Oxfam Ireland’s Chief Executive Jim Clarken said,** “Despite several high-level commitments, the situation for desperate people has worsened. Harsh winter conditions have increased the danger faced by people attempting to flee overland and by sea. We have reports from our partners of small children suffering from trench foot in camps within the EU because of the inadequate

response of our leaders. On entering Europe, people are now being met with police brutality, dogs and barbed wire. This cannot continue.”

The coalition expressed dismay that at a domestic level, most of the 173 recommendations made by the Government’s Working Group on the Protection Process in June 2015 have yet to be acted upon, impacting on Ireland’s ability to deliver a fair and functional asylum system in line with our international obligations.

**Irish Refugee Council Chief Executive Sue Conlan said,** “Single procedure as it currently stands in the proposed Protection Bill is not the answer. Yet the Government seem determined to rush it through without proper or adequate debate, which will result in new laws that do not properly or adequately respect or uphold the rights and protection needs of the people who will be impacted by it.”

The group is also critical of what it calls the “excessively slow pace” of action at EU level, highlighting that fewer than 200 of the 160,000 refugees the EU committed to relocating have actually been relocated so far.

**Edel McGinley, Director of Migrant Rights Centre Ireland said,** “It is disappointing and disheartening that the Government has fallen short of its commitment to the Irish public to welcome 4,000 men, women and children who are fleeing war and poverty and arriving at European borders. We have resettled just 100 people so far this year, and plan to resettle only 20 or 30 more. This is unacceptable.”

As some European countries continue to tighten border controls or close borders completely, the situation is worsening for those seeking safety in Europe. The NGOs have urged political leadership in the fight against discrimination, exclusion, racism and Islamophobia, and the upholding human rights and humanitarian values, along with international obligations for people seeking protection.

[ENDS]

***A press conference to launch the report will take place today (Monday) at 11.30am at Buswells Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.***

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**Notes to editor:**

- The report *Protection, Resettlement and Integration: Ireland’s Response to the Refugee and Migration ‘Crisis’* is available to download here: [Protection, Resettlement and Integration: Ireland's Response to the Refugee and Migration Crisis](#)

- Approximately 800,000 people have crossed borders into Europe this year. Some have fled conflict and persecution and are seeking asylum; others are escaping extreme poverty and are in search of a better life. The majority have come from Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq, while a smaller number have travelled from Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan and other countries. Since the beginning of 2015, a staggering 3,400 people have died or gone missing along the treacherous routes across the sea to Greece, Italy and Turkey, or overland through the western Balkans. In September 2015 the Government committed to receiving 4,000 people through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.
- The number of people displaced around the world is now at its highest since the Second World War at 59.53 million people, an increase of 8.3 million since 2014. Globally, one in every 122 people is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. Since early 2011, the primary reason for this acceleration has been the war in Syria, now the world's single largest driver of displacement.
- The coalition is made up of ActionAid Ireland, Community Workers' Co-operative, Christian Aid, Comhlámh, the Conference of the Religious of Ireland, Cultúr, Dóchas, Doras Luimní, ENAR Ireland, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Irish Missionary Union, Irish Refugee Council, Jesuit Refugee Service, Mayo Intercultural Action, Mercy International Association, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Misean Cara, NASC Ireland, Oxfam Ireland, Trócaire and World Vision Ireland.

### **Glossary:**

**Migrant:** Person on the move between countries. Includes refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, etc.

**Displaced person:** person who has fled their home. Includes both those displaced internally and across borders (refugees).

**Refugee:** person who has fled their home across an international border and has been given refugee legal status. A refugee has a legally protected status, and is recognised based on a "well-founded fear of being persecuted" due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

**Asylum-seeker:** A person who has fled their home across an international border whose claim to refugee status is not yet definitively evaluated in the country to which they fled.

**Resettlement** is the transfer of people with recognised legal refugee status, including through the UNHCR programme, coming from outside the EU.

**Relocation** is the redistribution of asylum-seekers already present in Europe.