



MAP and LPHR provisionally welcome statement by Home Secretary to widen UK's Syria resettlement scheme to include non-Syrian nationals

- **Scheme currently excludes Palestinian refugees from Syria, despite them being disproportionately affected by Syria crisis.**
- **Announcement appears to accord with recommendation made by MAP and LPHR that Palestinian refugees from Syria be given equal access**
- **MAP and LPHR seek assurance from UK Government that Palestinian refugees will be expressly included, given longstanding exclusion from UNHCR's mandate.**

London, 5 July 2017 – Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) provisionally welcome [the announcement made on Monday](#) by the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, that the Home Office is taking advice from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on widening eligibility of its Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme so that it includes “people of any nationality who are affected by the crisis”.

This significant announcement follows the joint correspondence of MAP and LPHR with the UK Government since May 2016, raising concerns that Palestinian refugees from Syria were excluded from the Scheme on the discriminatory basis of their nationality. We recommended that the Scheme be revised so that it includes, rather than excludes, Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRSs). These concerns and recommendations are elaborated in our joint [legal-policy briefing](#) published last summer, which further revealed that to date no Palestinian refugees from Syria had been resettled in the UK through the additional 'Gateway' resettlement programme that the UK Government operates with the UNHCR.

“It is well known that the Palestinian refugees of Syria are among the most vulnerable both inside Syria and once again as refugees, and it is scandalous that they have been excluded from the UK's resettlement schemes”, said Neil Sammonds, Director of Advocacy at Medical Aid for Palestinians. “We await clarification from the Government that Palestinian refugees from Syria are to be finally included and can find safety and refuge in the UK”.

“The Home Secretary's announcement is a crucial first step towards closing the significant protection gap within the UK government's vital resettlement programmes for the most vulnerable refugees from Syria”, said Tareq Shrourou, Director of LPHR.

Some 560,000 Palestinian refugees lived in Syria before the outbreak of armed conflict and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. According to the UN's Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), they became [“particularly vulnerable”](#) and [“disproportionately](#)



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affected” due to their proximity to conflict areas inside Syria, high rates of poverty, and the tenuous legal status of those forced to flee abroad.

It remains essential that the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees from Syria are given equal access to international protection by the UK government's relevant resettlement schemes, as illuminated by MAP's recent report: *['If I die, bury me in Palestine': How the world is failing Palestinian refugees from Syria.](#)*

“MAP and LPHR will work together to seek to ensure that the critical policy development announced this week is implemented by the UK Government as part of its vital contribution to the protection of the most vulnerable refugees from Syria, including Palestinians” said Tareq Shrourou.

Background

Palestinian refugees from Syria who have fled to Lebanon and Jordan fall under the protection of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), rather than the body that generally provides protection to refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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