



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

The Motion agreed at Federal Conference in Bournemouth in September 2015

F5 CREATING SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES FOR REFUGEES

Conference notes that:

I. There are currently almost 20 million refugees worldwide, who have fled war and persecution, including nearly four million refugees who have fled the ongoing conflict in Syria.

II. The vast majority of refugees are hosted by developing countries; for example, only six percent of Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe.

III. Increasing numbers of people are attempting extremely dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean, with over 100,000 arriving in Europe by sea and nearly 2,000 people dying making the journey in the first five months of 2015 alone.

IV. 33% of those crossing the Mediterranean have fled war-torn Syria, 10% have fled Eritrea and 18% have fled Somalia and Afghanistan.

Conference welcomes the Liberal Democrat commitment to give sanctuary to UN refugees, as stated in the party's 2015 General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone and to increase the number of UN refugees resettled in the UK to 1,500 a year, in line with the campaign by Citizens UK.

Conference expresses concern that:

- In responding to the migration crisis, Conservative ministers have used dehumanising language to condemn the actions of refugees fleeing war and persecution, and have failed to recognise or address the humanitarian crisis.
- Some governments across Europe, including the UK, are making it increasingly difficult for those fleeing war and persecution to seek safety on the continent by removing safe and legal routes and creating 'Fortress Europe'.
- The lack of safe and legal routes is forcing refugees to make dangerous journeys,



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resulting in the loss of life.

- Current UK policy limits the safe and legal routes available, including through a limited number of places for resettled refugees and overly restrictive family reunion rules that prevent, among others, adult children being reunited with their parents and siblings.
- Last December, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees called on governments around the world to provide resettlement and other forms of admission for 130,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016, yet the United Kingdom has only pledged to resettle several hundred of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, and by the end of March 2015, just 187 Syrians had been resettled here.

Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Create more safe and legal routes for refugees to seek safety in the UK by:
 - a) Significantly increasing the number of refugees resettled in the UK through UNHCR programmes, offering a minimum of 10,000 per year rather than hundreds of places to those fleeing war and persecution including via an EU resettlement scheme.
 - b) Making it easier for refugees to join relatives already living in safety through UNHCR programmes in the United Kingdom.
 - c) Accept that the best way of arresting smuggling is creating safe and legal routes for refugees, as well as participating fully in EU efforts to tackle criminal people smuggling which exploits the misery and desperation of vulnerable people, instead of taking a minimalist approach to EU police and crime cooperation.
2. Work together with partners in the EU to find sustainable solutions to the current and long-term migration crisis which has particularly affected Italy and Greece, including opting into a relocation scheme to offer asylum to the most vulnerable refugees from Syria, Eritrea and Iraq.
3. Take leadership within the EU in support of multilateral efforts to help refugees and displaced persons within their own regions and in support of host countries in North Africa and the Middle East which are assisting large numbers of refugees.
4. Continue to advocate for, and contribute to, the European search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean to save the lives of those who are forced to make dangerous journeys.



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5. In the long-term, tackle the root causes of why people become refugees so that fewer people feel compelled to flee their homes.

6. Reaffirm the UK's international commitment to give protection to those fleeing war and persecution.

In addition, Conference calls on local councils, particularly those that are run by the Liberal Democrats, to be generous in offering housing and other support to incoming refugees.

Applicability: Federal

Background briefing

This motion updates policy on resettlement of refugees in light of the ongoing migration crisis in the Mediterranean. It builds on existing policy as set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015) and policy paper 116, Making Migration Work for Britain (2014).

The Federal Conference Committee accepted the following drafting amendments which:

In 'Conference welcomes', deleted ':' and '(ii)'

After 6. inserted 'In addition, Conference calls on local councils, particularly those that are run by Liberal Democrats to be generous in offering housing and other support to incoming refugees.'

Conference accepted the following amendments which:

Inserted new A., 1. c), 2. and 3.

In B. before 'governments' inserted 'some' and after 'Europe' inserted 'including the UK.'

In 1. a) deleted 'thousands' and inserted 'a minimum of 10,000 per year' and after 'persecution' inserted 'including via and EU resettlement scheme'