

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about Syrian refugees.

I appreciate your concern with this issue. Recent photos are clearly shocking and harrowing. This is why we continue to be at the forefront of the international response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, including as the second biggest bilateral donor of humanitarian aid, having already pledged £1.12 billion. Some £105 million of the funding will help Syrians who are still in Syria.

Of course we have a moral responsibility to help those affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria. That is why we sent the Royal Navy to the Mediterranean, saving thousands of lives; why we meet our commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our economy on aid; why Britain is the second biggest bilateral donor in the world to Syrian refugee camps; and why since the crisis began we have granted asylum to nearly 5,000 Syrians and their dependents through normal procedures.

As you will know, the Vulnerable Persons Relocations scheme (VPRS) is up and running and has already welcomed 216 Syrians to the UK. This scheme will make a real difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable Syrians by giving them protection and support in the UK.

I am also glad that the Prime Minister has proposed that Britain should resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years. These refugees will come straight from the camps in the Middle East to discourage refugees from taking the perilous journey across the Mediterranean.

To support our local communities, the foreign aid budget will be used to finance these refugees for the first year and help local councils with things such as housing. In the longer term, our additional aid spending will be directed to these failed states and to the refugee crisis. The Prime Minister has also appointed a new Minister for Refugees, who will be solely responsible for overseeing the work of welcoming these refugees to the UK.

Simply taking people will not solve this crisis. We need a comprehensive solution that deals with the people most responsible for the terrible scenes we see: President Assad in Syria, the butchers of ISIL and the criminal gangs that are running this terrible trade in people.

I am glad that the Prime Minister has been clear that the aim is to resettle 1,000 refugees by Christmas. The Government will report back after Christmas to assess how many refugees have come.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**