

19<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about family reunion.

I can assure you I strongly support the principle of family unity, and I am glad that there already is a comprehensive framework for refugees and their families to be safely reunited in the UK. The present refugee family reunion policy allows immediate family members of those granted protection in the UK to reunite with them here. The family provisions in the immigration rules provide for relatives with protection in the UK to sponsor children when there are serious and compelling circumstances.

The policy is also clear that where an application fails under the rules, the Government will consider whether there are exceptional reasons to grant leave outside the rules. In addition, refugees with family members in the UK may be eligible for resettlement under the Mandate and Gateway Scheme.

The family reunion policy is designed to provide a safe and legal route for close, dependent family members to join their refugee family in the UK. This avoids the need for family members to make dangerous journeys in order to seek protection. Under the existing family reunion policy, over 24,000 family reunion visas have been granted over the last five years. It is crucial that our efforts are concentrated on ensuring that existing resettlement schemes are used to full effect, and that the current rules work properly and effectively. This way we can help those who need it most.

Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, I was unable to attend the hearing of the Refugees (Family Reunion) (No. 2) Bill but I will follow the debate as set out in Hansard.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**