



October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about refugees travelling to Greece.

The UK has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis and continues to be one of the largest international donors, having now committed more than £3.3 billion since 2012. Across Syria and neighbouring countries, the UK has provided over 28 million food rations, over 19 million medical consultations, and over 13 million vaccines since the conflict began.

In particular, the UK has a strong bilateral relationship with Greece and continues to offer support and exchange expertise to alleviate the intense pressures on the Greek islands.

The UK is working closely with the Greek Government, who retain ultimate responsibility for the situation of migrants in their country. I know Ministers remain committed to supporting Greece's efforts in dealing with the migration challenge including through a United Kingdom Border Force search-and-rescue cutter in the Aegean; and over £510,000 to support the humanitarian needs of migrants on the islands. The UK and Greece signed an action plan on migration on the 22nd April which reaffirms the UK's commitment to continued cooperation to tackle the challenges posed by irregular migration.

On his most recent visit to Turkey, the Foreign Secretary raised the UK's concern about irregular migration and increased tensions on the Greece-Turkey border with the Turkish Foreign Minister. He has also paid respect to Turkey for the generosity they have shown in supporting millions of displaced Syrian refugees. These discussions build upon the wider dialogue the UK has been having about diplomatic tension in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It is critical for stability in the region that disputes between Greece and Turkey are resolved through constructive dialogue and in accordance with international law.

I appreciate the concerns you have about migrants on Lesbos following the devastating fire at the Moira Camp. I understand that around 400 unaccompanied children and teenagers have been flown to Thessaloniki in Northern Greece. The Greek Government have also sent ships to help house migrants impacted by the fire.



Chris Heaton-Harris

Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

I am very aware of the risk of coronavirus in migrant camps in Greece, given the overcrowding and limited medical facilities in camps on the Greek Islands. The Greek Government have been implementing a series of steps to address the risk of coronavirus in migrant camps, including the strengthening of health facilities and measures that reduce the need for travel. I am told that our Embassy in Athens continues to closely follow developments. The former International Development Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, spoke with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees early on in the pandemic and agreed to work together to minimise the impact of this crisis on refugees.

When it is safe to do so, the UK will recommence refugee resettlement. The Home Office is evaluating how to respond and is continuing to discuss this with international and domestic stakeholders.

It is important that this is not rushed as plans to restart resettlement are dependent on a number of factors. These include the lifting of restrictions imposed by governments of host refugee countries, local authority and central government capacity and the recovery of the asylum system from the impact of COVID-19. It is good news that the Government is taking action but I will continue to push Ministers to restart resettlement as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

I hope this reassures you that action is being taken to support refugees in Greece. This is of course an evolving situation and I will be sure to follow developments in the region closely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY