

Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees

Israel/Gaza – Information on possible resettlement scheme and related issues

Introduction

1. To provide information to the minister and copy recipients on:
 - the current state of play regarding work on a possible Palestinian resettlement scheme, and
 - the related issue of possible support required for Israeli/Palestinian British Nationals.

Purpose and Priority

2. **Routine**, although ministers will want to be aware of the information set out below given the fast moving situation.

Context

3. The First Minister has requested that the UK Government should immediately begin work on the creation of a refugee resettlement scheme for those in Gaza who want to, and are able to, leave. As part of that he has committed the Scottish Government to be the first country in the UK to offer safety and sanctuary to those caught up in the attacks. He has also urged the UK Government to support the medical evacuation of injured civilians in Gaza, and that Scottish hospitals will treat the injured men, women and children of Gaza.

4. In addition to the potential for refugees to require support in Scotland, there may be a need to provide support to returning British Nationals from Israel and Gaza. It is estimated that there are approximately 50-60,000 British Nationals in Gaza and Israel, with the vast majority in Israel. . At the outset of the Sudan crisis some British nationals from Sudan did present to Scottish local authorities seeking homeless support. Numbers were manageable and Councils (Edinburgh City in particular) managed to support all who required it. However, the situation for Israel/Gaza may be different and officials, along with COSLA/Local authorities will keep this under review.

5. [Redacted]

6. The housing context in Scotland is challenging. There is the current need to ensure we settle the remaining number of Ukrainians into permanent accommodation, which is ongoing. And there is also the increasing number of asylum seekers being granted refugee status by the UK Government, meaning they are then able to access housing and other public support. [Redacted]. In April this year, 600 people were granted refugee status in Glasgow and there are currently 170 refugee households in hotels/B&Bs following a positive decision on their asylum application. This context is in addition to the 39,000 homeless applications in Scotland in 2022/23.

Possible resettlement scheme

7. Any formal resettlement approach the UK Government may put in place should be aligned with the Syrian programme. The Syrian model was extremely successful and resettled 3,000 people directly into homes all across Scotland. The success was recognised and supported across local government and the third sector and follows international best practice.

8. If mass evacuation becomes necessary, the Scottish Government would urge the UK Government to take a formal resettlement approach, in line with UNHCR and the prioritisation principles they have outlined. These are as follows:

- Legal and/or physical protection needs
- Survivors of torture and/or violence
- Medical needs
- Women and girls at risk
- Family reunification
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Lack of foreseeable alternative and durable solutions

9. This would see UKG/SG/LG work with UNHCR to prioritise cases in refugee camps for resettlement in the UK and was the approach adopted for Syria . This approach was effective and was supported by long-term integration tariffs for local authorities to ensure people can be supported effectively and all needs addressed on arrival.

10. [Redacted]

11. People entering through a resettlement scheme will be subject to Home Office security screening, [Redacted].

Resource Implications

12. [Redacted]

13. [Redacted]

14. The resources required for medical evacuations can be significant, depending on the nature of assistance required. Officials will hold discussions with health officials to identify the arrangements that may be required.

15. We would look to work with COSLA, the UK Government and the UNHCR to ensure that arrivals in Scotland do not have needs that could not be supported.

Next steps

16. As well as internal discussions, officials are holding an initial discussion with COSLA on Tuesday next week. Discussions will also be held with the Scottish refugee Council. Both are partners in the New Scots Refugee Strategy. COSLA have contacted officials for information on the back of the First Ministers statement.

16. Once we have a deeper sense of possibilities, officials will also seek a discussion with UK Government officials.

17. [Redacted]

Conclusion

18. The minister is invited to note this information, and that further details will be provided next week.

[Redacted]

Asylum & Refugee Integration Unit

19 October 2023