

Israel/Gaza War - Scoping paper on the potential role of Scottish Government and other partners in the delivery of a refugee resettlement scheme

Purpose

1. This paper explores several different scenarios relating to the humanitarian crisis that has arisen in Gaza/Israel. It considers the role that Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector organisations and other partners may be called upon to play depending on how the situation evolves.
2. By scoping the issues, the paper is intended to support more detailed planning and engagement with delivery partners.
3. This paper covers:
 - a. What we know about the current situation
 - b. What the Scottish Government & SRC has called for
 - c. Evacuating UK nationals
 - d. What options exist for creating a resettlement scheme
 - e. What issues need to be considered in developing plans for a new scheme
 - f. [redacted]
 - g. ANNEX A: Demographic data

What we know about the current situation

4. There are an estimated 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza and over 1.7 million have been displaced within Gaza since 7 October. UN agencies on the ground are struggling to cope with the scale of the humanitarian crisis.
5. Intense bombing continues across all areas of Gaza and there are a high number of civilian fatalities and casualties. Many homes have been destroyed and water, food, electricity and essential supplies continue to be extremely restricted and there are disease outbreaks. This is expected to get worse over the winter months and even if there are pauses in the bombing, they are unlikely to be sufficient to meet the severe humanitarian needs of the population.
6. Neighbouring countries are reluctant for Palestinians to be displaced out with the occupied Palestinian territories (OPTs). Since 1 November, the Egyptians have started a managed process at the Rafah border crossing to enable foreign nationals and medical priorities to leave.
7. It is only once people are given a route to leave Gaza that they will fall under the remit of UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. While they remain within Gaza, they are under the care of UNRWA, the agency that has provided support to Palestinians since its establishment in 1949.
8. The situation is extremely volatile in the West Bank where 3 million Palestinians could similarly become displaced in the coming months. Settler violence has increased since 7 October and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) continue to carry

out military operations in the West Bank resulting in civilian deaths. This is especially the case around Jenin refugee camp in the Northern West Bank.

9. [redacted]

What has the Scottish Government and SRC called for regarding refugee resettlement?

10. Since the attacks on 7 October, the Scottish Government has called for the following three things:

- a. For the international community to commit to a worldwide refugee programme for the people of Gaza.
- b. For the UK to use the already established UK Resettlement Scheme, which works with UNHCR, to allow a route to safety for the most vulnerable such as children and families, those with severe health needs, and those with links to residents in Scotland.
- c. For the UK Government to support the medical evacuation of injured civilians in Gaza, and if required Israeli civilians too, by activating the MEDEVAC programme.

11. These requests have been made by the First Minister in his statement to Parliament on 24 October and were followed up in writing by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice in her letter to the Home Secretary on 27 October.

12. [redacted]

13. [redacted]

14. In a statement on 24 October, the Scottish Refugee Council called for:

- a. the UK Government to facilitate medical evacuation for those who need it.
- b. the UK should plan now to scale up the existing UK Resettlement Scheme in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency, to allow an emergency pathway for people fleeing the region, especially for the most vulnerable, such as children and families, those with severe health needs, as well as those with existing links to residents in Scotland.
- c. the UK government should rapidly resolve the protection applications of people from Israel and Palestine who are already in the UK's asylum system as well as those who are stateless.
- d. current family reunion schemes should be made more accessible and faster to allow people affected directly by this humanitarian crisis to be with their family.

Evacuating UK nationals

15. [redacted]

16. [redacted]

17. [redacted]

18. [redacted]

19. [redacted]

What options exist for the establishment of a refugee resettlement scheme?

20. As immigration and asylum is fully reserved to the UK Government, Scottish Government does not have the power to establish its own scheme.

21. The UK Government has several options it may choose to pursue:

[redacted]

Establish a route under the UK Resettlement Scheme

22. [redacted]

23. [redacted]

24. The current UK Resettlement Scheme was introduced in 2021 and has not yet been used for a large resettlement. It builds on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme that was used to resettle 20,000 Syrians between 2015-2021.

25. Scottish Government has called for a resettlement route to use the UK Resettlement scheme as the legislation underpinning that requires the UK Government to meet the cost of bringing people to the UK, can include paying for interim accommodation for them, and providing tariff payments across 5 years to local authorities for wider integration services. The scheme also gives arrivals refugee status, and they would be eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain after five years.

26. [redacted]

27. [redacted]

Develop a bespoke approach

28. [redacted]

29. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) remains open to applicants from Afghans who worked for UK Government since 2001. In 2022 the UK opened the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) for vulnerable people and those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan. It committed to resettling more than 5,000 people in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years.

30. Anyone who is resettled through the ACRS will receive indefinite leave to remain (ILR) and will be able to apply for British citizenship after 5 years. The scheme is not application-based. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through different pathways – one of which is referral by UNHCR.

31. [redacted]

32. In 2022, the UK Government launched its Homes for Ukraine scheme which enabled people to apply for a three-year visa if they arranged their own UK-based sponsor who could accommodate them. Concerned by safeguarding issues, Scottish Government took the decision to act as a ‘super sponsor’ and to provide welcome accommodation for arrivals.

33. Displaced Ukrainians were allowed to work and were given access to public funds but do not have refugee status and their visa does not count towards indefinite leave to remain entitlement. There is an expectation that many will return to Ukraine, and it has not yet been confirmed if UK Government will enable a permanent route to settlement for this group.

34. [redacted]

35. [redacted]

36. [redacted]

[redacted]

37. [redacted]

38. [redacted]

39. [redacted]

What issues need to be considered in relation to planning for and accepting a new refugee cohort from Gaza?

40. [redacted]

41. [redacted]

42. [redacted]

Visas and immigration status

43. Refugees arriving under the UK Resettlement Scheme are given refugee status which means that they can stay in the UK for a minimum of five years and will be eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after that. People with refugee status can work and have access to public funds.

44. The Homes for Ukraine scheme uses different powers and arrivals are considered 'displaced' rather than refugees. They were given a three-year visa with an expectation that they would return to Ukraine in the future rather than settling permanently in the UK.

45. [redacted]

46. [redacted]

- a. [redacted]
- b. [redacted]
- c. [redacted]
- d. [redacted]
- e. [redacted]

Agreeing who and how many people might arrive

47. The UK Resettlement scheme is activated in response to referrals to the UK by UNHCR. When a cohort of eligible refugees is identified, UNHCR discuss with UKG their national and local authority capacity to receive individuals.

48. Referral by the UNHCR uses the following criteria:

- 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, including unaccompanied minors
- Lack of foreseeable alternative and durable solutions

49. Under Homes for Ukraine, people were allowed to apply for a visa if they had a sponsor in place. [redacted]

50. [redacted]

- a. [redacted]
- b. [redacted]

51. [redacted]

Arranging transport

52. [redacted]

53. [redacted]

54. [redacted]

Welcoming of arrivals

55. [redacted]

56. [redacted]

57. [redacted]

58. **[redacted]**

Defining the 'offer' of what people can expect

59. [redacted]

60. [redacted]

61. [redacted]

62. [redacted]

63. **[redacted]**

Housing

64. [redacted]

65. [redacted]

66. **[redacted]**

Healthcare provision

67. [redacted]

68. [redacted]

69. [redacted]

70. [redacted]

71. **[redacted]**

Education

72. [redacted]

73. [redacted]

74. [redacted]

75. [redacted]

76. **[redacted]**

Employability

77. [redacted]

78. [redacted]

79. **[redacted]**

Safeguarding

80. [redacted]

81. [redacted]

82. **[redacted]**

Translation and interpretation

83. [redacted]

84. **[redacted]**

ESOL/language training/learning

85. [redacted]

86. **[redacted]**

Advice and support services

87. [redacted]

88. [redacted]

89. [redacted]

90. **[redacted]**

Supporting cultural events

91. [redacted]

92. [redacted]

93. [redacted]

94. **[redacted]**

[redacted]

95. [redacted]

96. [redacted]

97. [redacted]

a. [redacted]

b. [redacted]

c. [redacted]

d. [redacted]

e. [redacted]

**Scottish Government
November 2023**

