

Vulnerable persons relocation scheme for Syrian nationals

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Written statement to Parliament

This written ministerial statement was laid in the House of Commons by James Brokenshire on 25 March 2014.

From:

Home Office and The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP

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Immigration and Security Minister (James Brokenshire):

Our country has a proud history of granting protection to those who need it. We are still all too conscious of the appalling scenes of violence and suffering which are occurring every day in Syria.

The greatest contribution we can make is to work to end the conflict altogether and we continue to seek a peaceful settlement that enables a political transition and an end to violence. We are the second largest bilateral donor to the Syrian relief effort and have provided £600 million so far.

As the Home Secretary outlined to the House of Commons on 29 January 2014, whilst the greatest need is in the region and the United Kingdom can make the largest impact there, we have launched the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) scheme to provide protection in this country to particularly vulnerable refugees who are at grave risk. Since that point, we have been working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify those who are most vulnerable.

I am pleased to report that we expect the first group of Syrians to arrive as part of the VPR scheme today, just eight weeks after the Home Secretary's announcement. During this time, we have been working in close collaboration with UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration and local authority services to ensure that the particular needs of the beneficiaries, with their extreme vulnerabilities, will be met. Given the absolute primacy of safeguarding the UK's security, appropriate checks have also been conducted before bringing Syrians displaced by the conflict to the UK. We expect the next arrivals in April.

Those admitted under the VPR scheme will be granted five years' Humanitarian Protection with all the rights and benefits that go with that status, including access to public funds, access to the labour market and the possibility of family reunion. We believe that the VPR scheme will make a real difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable Syrians displaced by the conflict by giving them protection and support in the UK.

I have agreed a ministerial authorisation (Equality (Syria – Entry clearance outside the immigration rules) Authorisation 2014) to allow differentiation in favour of Syrian nationals whom we want to bring to the UK under the VPR scheme.

This authorisation will remain in force until revoked. I am placing a copy of the authorisation in the Library of the House.

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