

Rt. Hon Amber Rudd,
Home Secretary,
House of Commons,
London, SW1A OAA ,

7.11.16

Dear Amber Rudd

Re: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

We are writing to you to request that you and your colleagues urgently work with your French counterparts to:

- Speedily unite unaccompanied children in reception centres in France with their extended families in Britain.
- Move forward rapidly within the terms of the Dubs amendment and allow our hands of welcome to be extended to the other unaccompanied children in France and Europe.

We have a long and proud tradition of providing safe havens for people in time of need, but this time we seem to be turning our backs on these young people, who could be our sons or daughters, brothers or sisters. We were shocked and dismayed at the reports coming through from Calais in the last 2 weeks. These include that approx. 1,500 unaccompanied children were obliged to live in containers without sanitation or drinking water, while other children were left living in the open next to the burning remains of the Jungle. Such degradation is unsupportable and reminds us of the horrors of the 1930's and 40's. The *UN Committee on the Rights of the Child* criticised your Government (and the French Government) for failing to meet your obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

"The events of the past week have shown clearly that political and other considerations prevailed over the initial promises by both Governments that the situation of unaccompanied children would be their priority. The best interests of the child have been completely disregarded....."

Disagreements between the French and UK Governments over who should take responsibility for the majority of these children have led to major violations of these children's rights. Hundreds of children have been subjected to inhumane living conditions, left without adequate shelter, food, medical services and psychosocial support, and in some cases exposed to smugglers and traffickers." OHCHR, Geneva, 2nd November 2016.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20815&LangID=E>

We do not understand how your Government allowed children to suffer so appallingly as part of what seems to be a battle of attrition of responsibilities between ourselves and France?

We do welcome that the children have now been relocated to dedicated centres in France where the next steps concerning their applications for asylum/family reunification in the UK are to be decided. We ask for this to be done as quickly as possible and in a child-centred manner to avoid further and possibly irreparable harm to these children's well-being.



Exeter City of Sanctuary
c/o CoLab
King William Street
Exeter
EX4 6PD

Please be assured that your effective response now will be received with gratitude and respect not only from the children themselves but also from the wider civil society; – in Exeter represented by organisations such as ourselves, but also by faith groups, voluntary and community organisations and ordinary citizens.

We are aware that there is huge sympathy for these children as demonstrated by the donations and offers of help received on a daily basis. We urge you to act without delay.

Your key contact for administration and reporting is Wendy Milne: info@exeter.cityofsanctuary.org or Exeter City of Sanctuary, c/o COLAB, King William St. Exeter EX4 6PD

Yours Sincerely

Signed: Wendy Milne, on behalf of Exeter City of Sanctuary Campaigns group

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