

WHAT SHOULD THE UK BE DOING TO HELP REFUGEES?

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What should the UK be doing to Help Refugees?

Introduction

Refugees represent a set of vulnerable people escaping violence, persecution, or war from their motherland and attempting to seek asylum in other countries, often perceived as stable and peaceful. Over the past few years, the number of refugees seeking asylum in other countries has been increasing rapidly globally (Ahmed, 2018, p. 77; Carastathis et al., 2018, p. 30). Most refugees come from war-torn countries or countries with heightened insecurity, unending conflict, persecution, and violence. The problem of refugees has become prevalent in Europe in the recent past, primarily due to political instability in Arab countries. Also, the current Russian invasion has culminated in a refugee crisis due to the many Ukrainians attempting to flee their land for other European countries. Refugees face several challenges on their way to and once they arrive in their target countries. Some of the refugees die on their way due to harsh environments and journeys characterized by violence and conflict.

The United Kingdom is one of the top countries targeted by refugees from war-torn countries, primarily due to its political and economic stability. According to a report published by UNHCR, there were approximately 135,912 refugees in the UK in mid-2021 (UNHCR, 2022). The same report also noted that there were approximately 83,489 non-UK citizens with pending asylum issues and 3,968 people without a state. The influx of refugees represents unique challenges to the host country, such as resource constraints, high expenditure, settlement, and sanitation problems. Due to refugees' vulnerability and the problems they can potentially present to the United Kingdom, it is necessary to implement effective and strategic measures to help refugees in the UK. For example, the United Kingdom can opt to resettle some of the refugees,

advocate for global leaders to address the refugee crisis, and provide a safe sanctuary for refugees. The provided solutions can help address the challenges posed by refugees in the UK and address the crisis, which has become prevalent in Europe in the recent past.

Refugees Crisis in the UK

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the United Kingdom was one of the preferred destinations for refugees. Research studies note that the UK has been acting as a safe European country for political exiles and people fleeing oppression and persecution from their motherlands throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Panayi, 1993, p.95). However, the influx of refugees during the 19th and 20th centuries did not pose a significant social problem. In the modern UK, the number of refugees seeking asylum in the country has been increasing. For example, a report published by the UNHCR noted that approximately 135,912 refugees were in the UK by mid-2021 (UNHCR, 2022). Most of the refugees in the UK are coming from Iran, Syria, Eritrea, Albania, and Iraq. Following the invasion of Russia in Ukraine, the influx of refugees in the UK also increased rapidly. A report published by the BBC in May noted that approximately 600 Ukrainian refugees had arrived in the UK since the Russian invasion of their country (Adams, 2022). Since then, the number of refugees in the UK from Ukraine has been increasing. The provided data about refugees in the UK represent a tip of the significant problem facing the United Kingdom. As of 2022, thousands of refugees are scattered across Europe, some already settled and others facing challenges on where to stay and thrive safely. The influx of refugees in Europe means the UK will have to face challenges associated with the growing influx of refugees.

Statistics about Refugees Crisis in Europe

From January to August 2021, Europe experienced an influx of 655,000 refugees and migrants (UNICEF, 2022). The influx represented a 95% increase compared to the influx of refugees in 2020. In 2020, measures enforced to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of refugees significantly, which sheds light on the significant percentage difference in refugee influx between 2020 and 2021 (UNICEF, 2022). Most refugees in Europe come from politically unstable and warring countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and countries in northern Africa. The number of refugees has increased rapidly in 2022, particularly due to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. According to a report published by the United States, approximately 12 million Ukrainians have fled Ukraine since the Russian invasion started (BBC, 2022). The end of the invasion is unknown due to the continuing Russian aggression in the country; hence the problem of refugees is bound to continue escalating in Europe. The humanitarian issue poses a significant social problem in the UK and Europe. There are several factors contributing to the refugee influx in the UK.

Causes of the Current UK Refugees Crisis

Several factors contribute to the influx of refugees in the United Kingdom. The influx is not a recent issue but has been ongoing, especially over the last decade. For instance, since 2008, the number of refugees seeking refuge in Europe and the UK has been increasing (Hodes et al., 2018, p. 389). One of the factors leading to the influx of refugees is wars and conflicts in the Middle East, which are further worsened by human rights abuses and political instability in the countries. Syria and Iran, particularly, have been contributing to the influx of refugees in the United Kingdom for the last decade. The factors leading to the refugees' influx in the UK are interrelated in the sense that where there is war, there is the likelihood of human rights abuses,

persecution, and violence against women and children. Each of the mentioned factors makes life quite difficult for the affected people, forcing the victims to seek refuge in other politically and economically stable countries such as the United Kingdom.

Wars and Conflicts

One of the leading causes of the refugees' influx in the United Kingdom is wars in the Middle East and the current war between Russia and Ukraine. The Arab uprising, which started in Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East, led to political instability and wars in the affected countries. One of the uprisings occurred in Syria, causing one of the most devastating wars in the country. The uprising in Syria coincident with the emergence of the Islamic State and terrorist organization that intended to create a caliphate in the Middle East. As a result, war broke out in Syria in 2011 and other Arab countries, leading to the influx of refugees in the United Kingdom. The number of refugees leaving Syria increased after Russia intervened in the conflict and wrangles between forces allied with the government and those associated with ISIS (Heisbourg, 2015, p. 14). As noted earlier, wars are linked to political instability and heightened persecution of civilians. Most countries in the Middle East are currently characterized by internal conflicts, weak governments, and many incidents of human rights abuses. For example, countries such as Iran and Iraq have been experiencing political instability and wars, respectively, over the last two decades (Koyuncu, 2020, p.24). Also, the current war between Russia and Ukraine is contributing to the influx of refugees in the UK, primarily due to its devastating impact on housing structures in major cities in Ukraine. According to Choudhary et al. (2022), the war between Russia and Ukraine is advancing a humanitarian crisis of refugees in Europe (p. 1). Since the war started, millions of Ukrainians have sought refuge in other European countries, the United Kingdom included.

Fear of Persecution

Fear of persecution is another reason for refugees' influx into the United Kingdom. Some countries, such as Afghanistan, are under the control of harsh Islamic groups such as the Taliban. For example, when the United States withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, many Afghans fled, primarily due to the fear of persecution (Dashti, 2022). Research studies show the fear of persecution is one of the leading causes of the refugee crisis in Europe. Most countries in the Middle East, such as Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq, have high incidents of persecution, beheadings, and religious-based oppression (Avdimetaj, 2021, p.12; Cheterian, 2021, p. 8). In countries such as Syria, the war has been marked by several incidents of persecution and killing innocent people. Massacre, beheading, and religious persecution instill fear in the general public, forcing many vulnerable people such as women and children to seek refuge in other politically and economically stable countries. Therefore, the fear of persecution is another leading cause of refugee influx in the UK and across Europe.

Violence

High incidents of violence, especially against women and children, is another factor contributing to the refugee influx in the UK. War, conflict, and political instability increase the vulnerability of already vulnerable people such as women, children, and people with disabilities. Also, regardless of gender and age, refugees experience many violent incidents while traveling across borders, often leaving them traumatized (Bjertrup et al., 2018, p. 56; Holvikivi and Reeves, 2020, p. 5). According to Bjertrup et al., the most common types of violence experienced by refugees include threats, bombing, sexual abuse and exploitation, and torture (p.56-59). The incidents make refugees change locations in search of politically stable and peaceful countries.

The United Kingdom is one of the most peaceful and economically stable countries in Europe, shedding light on why most refugees from Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan prefer the country.

Challenges Caused and Faced By Refugees

Refugees are causing significant challenges in the United Kingdom, necessitating the need to provide a lasting solution. Even though the influx of refugees cannot be stopped due to unending conflicts, persecution, fear of persecution, and conflicts: the issue can be addressed through strategic measures to ease the challenges associated with the problem. Refugees experience and cause several challenges once in the United Kingdom. The challenges range from resource constraints and sanitation problems to increased total spending by the UK government. The challenges have negative implications on refugees and the United Kingdom.

Resource Constraints

One of the challenges associated with the current influx of refugees in the UK is increased resource constraints. Like the general population in the UK, refugees need a place to stay and something to eat. In most cases, refugees have nothing at their disposal once in the UK, an outcome linked to increased constraints on resources required to support their stay in the UK. Refugees are often in constant need of healthcare access, food, energy, and education. According to a report published by UNHCR, refugees need food, access to healthcare services, and energy to lead quality lives once they get refuge in a foreign country (UNHCR, n.d.). The refugees' needs listed above adversely affect resources in the host country and can potentially deplete available resources or cause unwarranted competition for resources. A research study by Armbruster (2019) noted that the influx of Syrian refugees in the UK is contributing to scarce resources to sustain them in the country (p.2). In the recent past, resource constraint has been increasing owing to the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees in the UK.

Housing and Sanitation Problems

Another challenge associated with the influx of refugees in the UK is housing and sanitation problems. In most cases, refugees live in congested areas awaiting visa approval, asylum seeker approval, or alternative accommodation to ease congestion. A case study by Gewalt et al. (2019) noted that most refugees and asylum seekers experience difficulty accessing proper houses and sanitation. Inability to access proper houses forces most refugees to live in deplorable conditions. Poor houses make refugees vulnerable to attacks, an outcome that further increases their suffering. Millions of refugees are moving from Ukraine to other European countries as of July 2022. According to Kamenshchikova et al. (2022), around 4.2 million people, including 208000 non-Ukrainians, have fled the country since the Russian invasion started (p. 757). Most of the refugees have ended up in the UK and other European countries and will contribute to and further exacerbate housing and sanitation problems in the UK.

Increased Total Spending

The influx of refugees in the UK has a significant economic impact since the government has to spend a substantial amount of money on healthcare services, housing, sanitation, and food for the refugees. For example, a research report published by BBC News in February 2022 noted that asylum and Afghan refugees made the government spend approximately £4.7m per day to accommodate them in hotels in early 2022 (BBC News, 2022). Even though hotel accommodation was temporary, the above findings paint a grim picture of the economic cost of refugees in the UK. The UK government spends approximately £39.63 per refugee weekly, which can be significantly high cumulatively depending on the influx of refugees (UNHCR, 2022). The number of refugees arriving in the UK continues to increase owing to the current war in Ukraine and Syria: and political instability in Afghanistan and Iraq. According to Abdul-

Khalek et al. (2020), refugees represent a significant economic challenge to the host country (p. 657). The host country has to provide food, accommodation, healthcare services, housing, and educational needs. Such requirements increase the economic burden of refugees. Due to the challenges posed by the refugee influx in the UK, there are several measures the UK can implement to help refugees.

Measures the UK Can Implement to Help Refugees

Refugees are vulnerable people escaping wars, persecution, and violence, experiences that necessitate the need to protect and help them. The UK is one of the top countries preferred by refugees seeking asylum and a place to call home. As a result, the country has been experiencing an influx of refugees from Iran, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen. The influx of refugees in the UK presents significant challenges to the government, which has a duty to protect and help them accordingly based on the provisions found in international law. However, it is also imperative to note that helping refugees should be done in a reasonable way without causing an undue burden. The problem of refugees is significant and cannot be solved at a go; rather, strategic measures can be implemented to address the issue. One of the strategic measures the UK can implement to help refugees in the country is resettling them.

Resettling Refugees

One effective measure the UK government can invest in to help refugees is resettling them. Many refugees prefer the UK due to the perceived expectation of a good life- and without countermeasures, the number of refugees in the country can contribute to a population crisis between UK residents and refugees (Van der Boor et al., 2022, p. 4; Langdon, 2018, p. 1). Resettling refugees involves moving refugees from the host country into another willing country. The strategic measure can help a country address challenges posed by many refugees, such as

economic burden, housing and sanitation challenges, and resource constraint. In the recent past, the UK government partnered with Rwanda in a program aimed at resettling some of the refugees from the UK to Rwanda (Gower, 2022, p.6; Engelbrecht and Dahir, 2022). Even though some of the refugees objected to the move, the measure can potentially address the challenges posed by the influx of refugees in the UK. According to Abbas (2019), resettling refugees is an effective strategy that can be employed to address the challenges posed by refugees in the host country (2452). Thus, the UK can help refugees by resettling them to ease the burden of accommodating them. The measure will also ensure refugees can access basic needs to live peacefully and comfortably in another host country without experiencing significant challenges.

Making Limited and Targeted Concessions

The UK can also make limited and targeted concessions to address specific challenges faced by refugees attempting to move from war-torn countries. For example, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the UK government implemented a limited and targeted waiver of visas for refugees from Ukraine (The University of Birmingham, 2022). The targeted concessions significantly helped address the crisis posed by refugees from Ukraine. The measure included waiving visa requirements for Ukrainians with families in the UK. The concessions can also target vulnerable refugees from warring countries such as Syria. For example, in 2016, the then UK prime minister, David Cameron, pledged that his government would accept 20,000 refugees from Syria (BBC News, 2016). The pledge helped address challenges faced by vulnerable refugees as they attempted to find a place to live. The UK government can also help refugees assimilate into the community to ease the burden of accommodating them. Helping refugees integrate into the community would provide them with a place where they can interact with people and live (Refugee Action, 2017). The strategic measure should also include removing

bureaucratic walls that make it challenging for refugees to enter the UK. Research evidence shows most of the bureaucratic requirements condemn refugees to more suffering as they attempt to enter the UK (Manolova, 2021, p.3; Schweitzer, 2020, p. 21). However, if the UK government helps refugees by making limited and targeted concessions, it would reduce the burden of refugees in the country and be in a position to accord them the most appropriate help.

Investing and Implementing Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

The UK government can also invest in vulnerable persons' resettlement schemes to help refugees. Refugees are already vulnerable people by having the identity of being called refugees (Sözer, 2021, p. 1; Sabates-Wheeler, 2019, p. 2). However, among refugees, there are children, the elderly, disabled people, and women who are more likely to be exploited through human trafficking, prostitution, and abuse. The selected group of refugees comprises vulnerable individuals deserving immediate help to settle down. Research studies show vulnerable persons' resettlement schemes effectively address problems faced by vulnerable refugees (Bolt, 2018, p.2-4; Dajani, 2021, p. 4; Armbruster, 2019, p. 5). Some of the possible resettlement schemes include community sponsorship schemes and regional schemes. The programs will position the government in readiness to identify vulnerable refugees and resettle them in designated areas. Programs such as the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme are already in place, helping the UK tackle the problem of vulnerable refugees (Bolt, 2018, p.2-4). The government needs to invest more in resettlement programs to help vulnerable refugees. Even though all refugees deserve resettlement, it is prudent that the government identifies the most vulnerable refugees and accord them the necessary help.

Promoting Peace in Warring Nations to Stop Refugee Influx

Any measures to help refugees would end up being futile if endless wars hinder peace in warring countries. Wars are one of the leading causes of refugees globally, and without ending them, it would be challenging to address the problem of refugee influx in the host countries (Ramasubramanian and Miles, 2018, p. 4488); Shultz et al., 2020, p.138). For example, the ongoing wars in Syria and Ukraine are one of Europe's main sources of refugees. It is quite difficult for all people to run away from their country in search of politically stable and peaceful countries. Nonetheless, as long as there is an ongoing war, residents of the affected countries will continue moving out to find peaceful countries to live in. The UK can promote peace between warring nations by bringing together conflicting groups for peace treaties. International organizations such as the United Nations are always at the forefront advocating for peace between warring groups, armed militia, and nations (Vincent, 2022, p. 74; Pushkina, 2020, p. 263). Even though research studies show the UN has been successful in bridging peace in some areas, there are some instances peace has failed despite UN input. According to Autesserre (2019), the initial intention of creating the UN was not to equip the organization with its own force as means of instilling peace. Nonetheless, due to demand, the organization has military strength but has not been entirely effective in advancing peace. The UK has significant political influence globally; hence it can work with global organizations to promote peace between warring nations and groups to help refugees. Promoting peace in the warring countries will make them liveable and may motivate refugees to return home. Also, peace would lead to a significant reduction in refugee influx in the UK.

Encouraging Other European Countries and Global Leaders to Tackle Refugees Crisis

The UK alone cannot help refugees without the input of the other European countries and global leaders. The issue of refugees is multifaceted in the sense that it does not affect one nation; rather, refugees moving in search of a peaceful place to dwell may move from one country to another (Dines et al., 2018, p. 2; Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 2019, p. 22). Thus, helping refugees require the input of several able nations, especially countries around regions affected by war. According to Guo et al. (2020), the refugee crisis is a global problem that requires the input of several nations and international communities such as the UN. Most European countries have imposed draconian measures that create undue barriers to refugees seeking asylum in the region (Murray and Longo, 2018, p. 1; Sajjad, 2018, p. 6). The measures imposed by most European countries prevent most of the refugees from reaching their target country. Failure of other European countries to take refugees would mean the crisis would continue to burden the UK. However, if the UK encourages other European countries to help refugees in equal measure, it would be easy for the UK to address its baggage of refugee influx.

Opening Safe Route to Sanctuary

The UK needs to open a safe route to sanctuaries for refugees seeking refuge in their country. Like most other European countries, the UK does not adequately provide safe and legal passage for most refugees seeking refuge in the country. The lack of a safe route to sanctuaries has exposed most refugees to violence, exploitation, and human trafficking (Boychenko et al., 2021, p.5; Canning, 2019, p. 2; Latham-Sprinkle et al., 2019, p. 13). Refugees are already vulnerable due to violence and sexual abuse in their motherland. When refugees fail to get a safe route to sanctuaries, they end up being exposed to other problems such as human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labor. According to Gregoriou and Ras (2018), refugees in the

UK are more exposed to human trafficking and sexual exploitation (p.28). One of the contributing factors to many incidents of human trafficking and sexual exploitation among refugees is the lack of a safe route to sanctuaries. The UK can address this problem by advancing safe routes to sanctuaries to protect and help the already vulnerable refugees.

Conclusion

The number of refugees seeking refuge in the UK has been increasing for the last decade. The main factors leading to the refugee influx in the UK are wars, political instability, fear of persecution, and violence in countries such as Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. For example, the Russian-Ukraine war is currently one of the leading causes of refugee influx in the UK. The influx of refugees is associated with resource constraints, housing and sanitation problems, and significant expenditure to accommodate refugees. The challenges posed and experienced by refugees in, entering, or trying to enter the UK necessitate the need to help them. The UK needs to invest in resettling refugees, resettling programs for vulnerable refugees, and advocating for peace in warring states. The UK should also encourage other European countries and global leaders to help address the refugee crisis. Finally, the United Kingdom should also provide a safe route to a sanctuary to protect vulnerable refugees. The strategic measures will ensure refugees seeking refuge in the UK are accorded the most appropriate help.

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