

Child refugees

In the last newsletter we noted that the situation had become particularly acute for unaccompanied child refugees in France and elsewhere on mainland Europe. The Government was refusing to offer any more places on the Child at Risk Resettlement Scheme. This was the scheme that the Government introduced in 2016 after a national campaign led by Lord Dubs to accept more child refugees, particularly unaccompanied children living in the squalid camps in Calais.

After the furore about the Government's poor record in accepting child refugees, it promised 'up to 3,000 places'. Up to date figures are not available but earlier this year it had accepted only 350 children. [There are 95,000 child refugees living in Europe awaiting a home.](#)

Since then we have heard that the Government will close, on 31 October, the Family Reunification Scheme to child refugees currently in the EU. This scheme was intended to enable children to join relatives in the UK. Children joining relatives already in the UK is, by far, the best route to resettlement and stability and was a much cheaper route than, for example, fostering. The Dublin Agreement, under which the transfers are made, is an EU agreement and, as the Government plans to leave the EU on 31 October, the provisions of that agreement fall.

However, there is no EU prohibition on continuing to take children and the government does not lack the power to take more children. It is solely the British Government's decision to use Brexit to refuse children sanctuary. The House of Lords EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee has been unable to release its report on the impact of Brexit on refugee policy due to the prorogation of Parliament but has written to Priti Patel, the Home Secretary saying

The government's failure to give evidence to the inquiry means that there is little to no up-to-date public information available on how it is working to ensure that vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers who have already experienced trauma do not face additional suffering as a result of Brexit.

We now know that the Government has taken Brexit as an opportunity to deny help to the most vulnerable. The only route now left open for children to reach the UK from France and Belgium is through unsafe channels, via boat, hiding in lorries or being smuggled.

On the 2 September we wrote on behalf of UWRSG to Julian Smith condemning the decision and a number of members wrote individually to express concern. [Many thanks to everyone's efforts.](#) It is vitally important issue. The Government's unwillingness to find ways to sustain the current (very low) minimum standards for refugee protection must concern us all.

Events

UWRSG took part in **Refugee Week** at Grassington Town Hall in June. People And The Dales (Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust) organised an exhibition and a celebratory gathering which included awards to refugee and local groups, lunch provided by Grassington volunteers and an afternoon walk. Many thanks to everyone who helped or participated.



Locally, we have raised money to help pay for a family's citizenship application (£12,000 was needed to cover the application costs for the family, including for their four children born and raised in the UK). This has raised awareness about the costs of applications and we will be looking at this more deeply in another newsletter.

There will be one more trip to Bradford this year with a **collection of household** goods for BIASAN in Bradford so if you have any kitchen equipment or cutlery, glasses and crockery. We are also currently collecting **children's winter coats** with hoods. Please contact Stella via the email address refugees@upperwharfedale.net.

We did not have a Welcome Day this summer. In the end we were defeated by other commitments and a summer that slipped away too quickly. But next year...

General election, leaving the EU and implications for refugees

At the time of writing (16 September) it looks like there will be a general election (soonish but not before November. We will be writing to all the candidates to ask about their policies in respect of refugees and will update you on their replies.

As you will see from the piece on child refugees (overleaf), Brexit will have implications for refugee policy. In ways that are not yet clear.

Who are we?

The **Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group** comprises a network of individuals living in Upper Wharfedale and Litledale who are concerned for refugees and wish to help in some way.

If you live, work or holiday in Upper Wharfedale and surrounding area and would like to be added to our mailing list or would like to help, please email refugees@upperwharfedale.net

Climate emergency, civil war and refugees

It is impossible to forget the Mozambique floods which occurred in March of this year. Tropical Cyclone Idai was one of the deadliest storms ever, quickly followed by Tropical Cyclone Kenneth. Over a 1000 people died and 240,000 houses made uninhabitable in Mozambique while 87,000 were displaced in Malawi. South East Africa is an area of the world where the climate emergency, famine and civil war combine to devastating effect leaving thousands of people homeless and displaced. Categorising people as refugees (fleeing war and persecution) climate refugees (fleeing flooding or drought) or economic refugees (fleeing starvation or the local Mafia) can hide the relationship between the different factors and split resources and solutions unhelpfully.

A number of UN camps were set up in Malawi to accommodate the cyclone 'refugees' from Mozambique. The civil war in Mozambique ended in 1991 but since 2014 hostilities have renewed and Malawi was already hosting 12,000 refugees from Mozambique when the devastation hit. Malawi was also hosting 25,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. In one refugee camp 61% are under 18. The flooding devastated crops in Malawi as well as Mozambique and has been followed by drought. Severe food shortages are already being experienced. While Malawi has been willing to help its neighbours, there are 6 million Malawians needing food. Inevitably, Malawians are wondering why people in refugee camps might get food while they are unable to feed themselves.

The term *climate change conflict* was first coined in 2007 by the UN Secretary, General Ban Ki-moon at the start of Sudan's civil war. Marshall Burke's team of international scientists undertook a study of the links between climate change and risk of conflict in 2009*. They found strong links between civil unrest and warmer years and have developed a model to predict the likelihood of future conflict based on rising temperatures. They estimated (then) that there would be 50% increase in battle conflicts by 2030. This estimate was well before the current conflicts we are experiencing just now.

Implications

We owe a duty of care to those on whom our over-consumption of the earth's resources impact. This has implications for our own personal consumption as well as the UK as a whole; the provision of International Aid; and the sanctuary we should offer to those who are devastated by our lifestyle choices.

To understand better the relationship between climate, change civil war and refugees, please come to the talk advertised overleaf.

*Marshall B. Burke, Edward Miguel, Shanker Satyanath, John A. Dykema, and David B. Lobell (2009). Warming increases the risk of civil war in Africa <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0907998106>



**GRASSINGTON AND DISTRICT
PEACE GROUP
and
SKIPTON SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**



present

"Chances for Peace in the 2020s: Climate Crisis to Peaceful Planet"

by

Professor Paul Rogers - Peace Studies Dept. Bradford University

7.30pm Thursday 10th October 2019

Judi Dench Drama Studio - Skipton Girls High School

Paul Rogers is widely acknowledged as a world expert in the field of peace, conflict and security, often asked to lecture at the highest level to military academies, governments and civil services in countries all over the world. Author of over 26 books he predicted a major terrorist attack on America such as the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001 and he accurately foresaw the dire consequences of the US/UK invasion of Iraq in 2006. With a background in biology and ecology he is expert in the climate crisis and the likely conflicts which will arise from it.

As a speaker he is so clear and so widely knowledgeable he just makes you want to listen and hang on to every word he says. At this talk he will speak for about 40 minutes, then answer questions before being available for further discussion over refreshments kindly provided by Skipton Quakers.

Entry is free. Donations welcome for Peace/Non-violence Education and local environmental activity

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