



Refugee Rights

#FamiliesTogether

#WordsthatBurn



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In a Nutshell

Everyday family life can be full of wonderful moments we all take for granted. But refugees in the UK – including children - often find themselves separated from their families because of unfair government rules. This creates additional trauma for people who may have already suffered brutal experiences of conflict and persecution as they fled their homes.

We are asking youth groups to:

- Write a collaborative group poem about the importance of family (don't worry, you don't have to be an aspiring poet!). This is part of our [Words That Burn](#) project.
- Send your poems to us so we can forward them to the Home Secretary to ask that more refugee families can be reunited.
- Send your poems to your local MP or invite them to your school/college to ask that more refugee families can be reunited.

We would love to publish your contributions so make sure you send them in to:

anne.montague@amnesty.org.uk

The Problem

The Home Office rules prevent many families from being together. They don't allow separated child refugees already in the UK to bring any family members to join them. The rules only allow adult refugees to sponsor their husband or wife and any children under 18 to join them in the UK. Any child who has turned 18 cannot automatically come to live with them, even if that child is still dependent on them.

You can find out more about the issue here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

The Solution

We are urging the UK government to:

- Allow child refugees in the UK the right to sponsor their close family to join them, so they can rebuild their lives together and help them integrate in their new community.
- Expand who qualifies as family, so that young people who have turned 18 and elderly parents can join their family in the UK.
- Reintroduce legal aid for refugee family reunion cases, so that people who have lost everything have the support they need to afford and navigate the complicated process of being reunited with their families.

Take Action

Write a collaborative group poem

We would like each youth group to create a collaborative poem highlighting the importance of family. We would like to use your poems to put pressure on the Home Office to reunite more refugee families. This is part of our [Words that Burn](#) project - a national project to explore and express human rights through poetry, in partnership with Cheltenham Festivals.

This is a great activity for new members and beginning of term meetings. Here's how to do it:

- Introduce the issue using the above information or [website](#)
- Distribute post-it notes or paper to participants
- Choose **one** starter sentence about the importance of family and ask all participants to complete the sentence and write it down

Here are some suggestions for starter sentences:

- *Family is...*
 - *Being with my family is like...*
 - *Being without my family is like...*
-
- Bring together everyone's responses (post them anonymously on a wall; ask people to read them out; it's up to you!)
 - Spend some time reflecting and discussing the outcome of the activity
 - Ask a volunteer to write up your collaborative poem in an order that makes sense to everyone.

Send your poems to: anne.montague@amnesty.org.uk.

You may have a chance to have your contributions published and invited to a parliamentary event!

Want to do more?

- Tweet your poem to [your local MP](#) highlighting the issue and our suggested solutions. Please include [#FamiliesTogether](#) and [#WordsthatBurn](#) in your tweet. You can send it by post, if you would prefer.
- Invite your MP into your school/college to hear your poem and discuss the issue. We can help you prepare for this.
- Contact your local media about the issue. We can help you with this.
- Ask the whole school to take part e.g. during tutor times

Refugee Rights

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to seek, and to enjoy in other countries, asylum from persecution. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugee Convention) builds on this.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects your right to respect for your private and family life. This is part of UK law through the Human Rights Act.

Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them.

Definitions

Refugee: A person who is forced to leave their country of origin and seek protection in another country because of 'a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees).

Asylum seeker: A person who has fled to another country, has made an application for protection as a refugee and is waiting for that country to decide if they will be recognised as a refugee.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child: Anyone under 18 years of age who is separated from both parents and without an adult caring for them, and is seeking asylum.

Refugee family reunion: A process by which refugees can be reunited with their family; it is a right attached to being recognised as a refugee. In the UK, only very few family relations qualify; currently, the sponsor has to be an adult refugee in the UK and can only apply for a partner and children under the age of 18 to come to join them.

Further Information

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

(this also links to a short video highlighting the issue)