

Press release: UK steps up work to protect women and girls from trafficking and provide winter care for vulnerable refugees

The UK is helping migrants return home rather than risk their lives continuing perilous journeys to Europe, and protecting men, women and children in danger of trafficking and sexual violence, Prime Minister Theresa May announced today.

Speaking at the Valletta summit in Malta, which is focused on tackling the migration crisis, the Prime Minister announced a new package of more than £30 million in UK aid to provide desperately needed assistance to refugees and migrants across Greece, the Balkans, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Sudan.

This will include life-saving supplies for refugees facing freezing conditions across eastern Europe and Greece, such as warm clothing, shelter and medical care. The UK has also set up a special protection fund that will provide care and support to women and girl refugees in the Mediterranean who may be cut off from family and friends, vulnerable and at risk from trafficking, violence and exploitation.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Global Britain is stepping up its support for the most vulnerable refugees who are at risk and need our help. Conflict, drought and political upheaval have fuelled protracted crises and driven mass migration. We cannot ignore these challenges.

This latest support from the UK will help those who decide they want to return home to do so safely, protect men, women and children from exploitation, and ensure that those caught in freezing conditions get the basic help they need to survive.

The support announced today will be delivered by trusted humanitarian partners such as the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Start NGO network. It will:

- provide 22,400 life-saving relief items including tents, blankets, winter clothes such as hats and gloves and hygiene kits including mother and baby products;
- protect more than 60,000 vulnerable refugees and migrants from physical or mental suffering. This includes emergency medical care including for those rescued at sea, visits to people in detention centres, provision of legal support, and training of frontline workers to better identify,

protect and prevent violence and trafficking of women and girls in camps and in transit;

- allow up to 22,000 people to reunite with family members they have become separated from during their journey, to access legal processes such as registering as refugees, or to return home voluntarily where possible, including with advice, facilitating travel and helping with reintegration on their return;
- help countries that might be able to resettle refugees put the infrastructure and systems in place to do so, potentially including countries in Asia and Latin America, as well as providing advice and support to help governments in countries such as Greece, Egypt and the Balkans better integrate refugees into local communities;
- provide more than 1,500 refugees in Egypt, including those fleeing Syria and other conflicts, with urgent health assistance including medical care for those suffering from malnutrition, exposure, dehydration and other life-threatening conditions as a result of their travel, as well as providing 1,000 educational grants to migrant students making it easier for them to cover the costs of getting back in to school and so encouraging them to settle in Egypt;
- monitor standards and conditions for migrants in detention, including support to the Greek government to improve living conditions in closed camps and conducting visits to 14 detention centres and 5 sea ports in Libya to improve sanitation and hygiene conditions, benefitting 10,000 people;
- fund the running of a newly-established migrant centre in Sudan, replicating a successful model in Niger to provide emergency assistance to migrants in transit and enable voluntary returns home when safe.

In addition to renewed efforts to address the migration of people through Libya, the UK is providing new humanitarian support to people inside the country affected by the conflict. This includes trauma kits and training for frontline medical personnel in medical centres; blankets, mattresses and emergency food aid to those who have been forced to flee their homes by the fighting; as well as supporting the UN to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of its response in Libya by seconding expert staff to support this work.

Notes to editors

1. In addition to this new package of £30.3 million, the UK has set up an £8 million special protection fund to keep women and girl refugees in the Mediterranean region safe from trafficking, violence and exploitation. The humanitarian response inside Libya is a further £2 million, and includes support for the work of the UNHCR and other UN agencies.
2. Overall this brings total UK humanitarian support in response to the Mediterranean migration crisis to more than £100 million since October 2015.
3. In addition to the UK's funding migration for the response in European and North African countries, we have pledged £2.3 billion for the Syria crisis, our largest ever humanitarian response. By focusing support on

meeting basic humanitarian needs in the region as well as providing jobs and education, we are helping Syrians stay in the region and close to their homes.