

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Refugee Resettlement and Withdrawal of the Family Links Information Sharing (FLIS) form

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FAQ 1 - Refugee Resettlement to the UK

Question 1: How does refugee resettlement work?

In some countries, UNHCR works with Governments to register asylum-seekers and refugees. We also work in these countries to protect refugees and to find long-term solutions that allow refugees to live in dignity and peace (these are often called “durable solutions”). Resettlement may be one of those solutions. Generally, UNHCR identifies refugees for resettlement when there are no other solutions to their forced displacement. Because there are many refugees in need of resettlement, UNHCR prioritizes those who have particular protection concerns. Refugees do not apply for resettlement. Rather, it is UNHCR’s role to identify refugees through our work with refugee populations.

Further details about UNHCR’s resettlement process are available in UNHCR’s Resettlement Handbook (available online at <http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>). If a refugee is identified for resettlement by UNHCR they may be referred to the UK or they may be referred to another resettlement country.

When UNHCR submits refugees for resettlement to the UK, the UK Government makes the final decision about whether to accept their case. The organizations supporting resettled refugees in the UK (e.g. local authorities and community sponsorship groups) do not have a role in deciding or influencing which refugees are resettled to the UK.

Here is a diagram which explains the resettlement process in more detail: https://www.unhcr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Resettlement_EN.pdf

Question 2: Now that I am in the UK, can I apply with UNHCR to bring my family members to the UK through resettlement?

Resettlement is not a way to bring family members to the UK. When a refugee, or someone in their case file, is identified for resettlement, they will typically be resettled with their immediate family. This usually includes spouses and children aged under 18, but may also include other dependent family members in the same case.

Once a refugee is resettled, they do not have a right to have additional family members join them through resettlement (for example, parents, brothers, sisters or additional children aged over 18). Being resettled to the UK does not make it more likely that your family members will be prioritized for resettlement.

Question 3: Can my family members come to the UK through resettlement?

Resettlement is a pathway available to a very small percentage of the world's refugees who are identified by UNHCR based on their protection concerns and vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, global resettlement needs far exceed the current number of places offered by resettlement countries, like the UK, and typically, less than one per cent of refugees worldwide are ever resettled.

UNHCR prioritizes and submits refugees for resettlement for whom there are no other durable solutions, and whose lives are at risk in the host country. It is important to understand this, since the overall likelihood of members of your family being prioritized for resettlement by UNHCR is unfortunately very low and it depends on their individual situation. The decision on who is prioritized for resettlement is not linked to a refugee already having a family member in the UK. The decision on who is prioritized for resettlement is also outside of the control of the organization or group supporting you in the UK.

Question 4: Is resettlement free of charge for refugees?

Yes. At no point in the resettlement process should a refugee be asked to pay money or to provide any sort of service, either by UNHCR, an external NGO, or any other individual or organization. Anyone that is approached for money or services with the promise of being resettled should raise the incident with their local UNHCR office through confidential complaints boxes or hotline numbers.

If you have complaints about fraud, you can also contact the independent Inspector General's Office for UNHCR. More information is available here: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/inspector-generals-office.html>

Question 5: I am worried about my family members who are refugees living outside the UK. What can I do to help them?

If your family outside the UK are asylum-seekers, refugees or stateless persons and they have concerns for their safety or wellbeing, they should contact their nearest UNHCR office. Depending on their issues, they may be referred to UNHCR programmes, Government services or other support organizations in their country of asylum.

Contact details for UNHCR offices outside the UK can be found [here](https://www.unhcr.org/uk/contact-us.html) - <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/contact-us.html>. Many UNHCR offices have online information for refugees about how to access services and specific counseling times for contacting their nearest UNHCR office. These can be found here: <https://help.unhcr.org/>.

You are also welcome to contact UNHCR in the UK if you are concerned about relatives' wellbeing in other countries, particularly if your relatives have not been able to contact their nearest UNHCR office to raise their concerns directly. We can be reached via telephone on 0203 761 9500 (Extension 2) or via email at gbrlo@unhcr.org during working hours.

Please note that UNHCR in the UK is not normally involved in the resettlement process and we do not have direct access to case files that are registered in other countries. Also, we cannot provide
UNHCR in the UK, 0203 761 9500, gbrlo@unhcr.org

confidential case information. This means our office in the UK may not be able to provide updates on the cases of refugees outside the UK and we will normally suggest that your refugee family members contact their nearest UNHCR office directly.

Question 6: Can I apply for my family to come to the UK with the UK Government?

The UK Government has a Refugee Family Reunion procedure. This is an entirely separate procedure from UNHCR resettlement and applications are made to the UK Home Office. Family Reunion is a process where recognized refugees (and those granted Humanitarian Protection on or after 30 August 2005) can sponsor their existing immediate family members to join them in the UK. Typically, only spouses/civil partners and dependent children under the age of 18 would be entitled to be reunited under this process.

It may also be possible for applications for other, extended, family members to apply but other criteria may apply. Children (under the age of 18 years) with refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK do not have a right to sponsor their family members within the UK Immigration Rules. However, all individuals in the UK wishing to be reunited with family abroad should seek specialist legal advice; preferably from a UK-based advisor.

You may also like to consider contacting the nearest office of the British Red Cross details of which can be found at www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Refugee-services/Our-services-for-refugees and / or the nearest [Citizens Advice Bureau](#).

FAQ 2 – Withdrawal of the Family Links Information Sharing (FLIS) form

Question 1: What has changed about the FLIS form process?

As of 23 October 2020, UNHCR is no longer receiving FLIS form. Any forms we receive after 23 October 2020 will be returned together with this information about why the process has changed and where you and your family members can go to for further information.

Question 2: What was the purpose of the FLIS form?

The FLIS form was a way to let UNHCR offices in Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan know that a refugee who was registered with them has family members in the UK. It was never an application for resettlement or to bring your family members to the UK. If a refugee's case was already being considered for resettlement sometimes the form was helpful in identifying which resettlement country was most suitable for UNHCR to submit their case to.

Question 3: Why can't I send a FLIS form anymore?

UNHCR has spoken with refugees, the UK Home Office, local authorities and other organizations in the UK. Based on these discussions, we have decided that the FLIS form was no longer serving a useful purpose. It was often misunderstood as an application for families to come to the UK through a UK Government immigration channel or an application for resettlement, which was not the case. As a result, refugee families had unrealistic expectations that they would be able to bring their family members to the UK through resettlement. We have therefore decided to withdraw the form.

UNHCR will normally already hold information about family members of refugees and there are other, well established, ways for refugees to raise their concerns with UNHCR.

Question 4: Are my family less likely to be resettled because I cannot send a FLIS form?

No. The withdrawal of FLIS form will not have an impact on the likelihood of your family members being resettled to the UK. Refugees who are prioritized for resettlement (based on their protection needs and vulnerabilities) are always asked about the location of their relatives so this will already be known to UNHCR.

In addition, UNHCR country and field offices already have ways for refugees to communicate with them about their protection concerns and problems (FAQ 1: Refugee Resettlement to the UK, Question 5).

Question 5: What happens if I have already sent a FLIS form?

For all FLIS forms received before 23 October 2020s, individuals will receive a response acknowledging that the form has been received and passed to the relevant UNHCR office. As has always been the case, UNHCR cannot provide updates on the individual cases of refugee family members outside the UK and your relatives should contact their nearest UNHCR office. If you have not received an acknowledgement that we have received your form, please contact us.

Question 6: Without the FLIS form how do I let UNHCR know about my refugee family members living outside the UK? What can I do to help them if they have problems where they are located?

Withdrawal of the FLIS form does not mean UNHCR is not aware of your relatives. Refugees who are being considered for resettlement will always be asked about their relatives. If you were resettled to the UK, you would have mentioned your relatives at the time of the time of your resettlement interview and UNHCR already has these on file.

Information on what to do if your refugee family members have concerns for their protection is in (FAQ 1: Refugee Resettlement to the UK, Question 5).