**Home**

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We aim to provide a platform for refugees arriving in Scotland which can help with integration and everyday life. Through our open events and mentor program we strongly encourage solidarity and underline that they way forward for humanity is building bridges. You will also find updated information regarding the refugee crisis and current refugee initiatives in Scotland.

**About**

Refugee Action Scotland (RAS) was started as a response to the plight of refugees and migrants in the UK and across Europe. We aim to show solidarity with people uprooted from their homes for whichever reason, be it war or economic hardship, through creating a platform where people can come together to support each other. We assist refugees arriving in Scotland through events, practical help and our mentorship program.

Current team: - Logistics coordinator: Ane Louise W. Gundersen (alwg@ras.com) - Event coordinator: Sasha Ding (sd@ras.com) - Mentorship coordinator: Alexandra Kristin Spencer (aks@ras.com)

**The Crisis**

The European refugee crisis began in 2015 when a rising number of people arrived undocumented in the European Union (EU), traveling across the Mediterranean Sea or overland through Southeast Europe. The unauthorized foreign migrants came mostly from Muslim-majority countries of regions south and east of Europe, including Western Asia, South Asia, and Africa. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the top three nationalities of entrants of the over one million Mediterranean Sea arrivals between January 2015 and March 2016 were Syrian (46.7%), Afghan (20.9%) and Iraqi (9.4%).

Since April 2015, the European Union has struggled to cope with the crisis, increasing funding for border patrol operations in the Mediterranean, devising plans to fight migrant smuggling, launching Operation Sophia and proposing a new quota system both to relocate asylum seekers among EU states for processing of refugee claims to alleviate the burden on countries on the outer borders of the Union, and to resettle asylum-seekers who have been determined to be genuine refugees. Individual countries have at times reintroduced border controls within the Schengen Area, and rifts have emerged between countries willing to allow entry of asylum-seekers for processing of refugee claims and others countries trying to discourage their entry for processing.

Several serious accidents and deaths have occurred in Europe as a result of migrant smuggling, both in the Mediterranean Sea, due to the capsizing of crowded and unseaworthy migrant vessels, and on European soil, due to the use of standard cargo trucks by smugglers to transport migrants. The vast majority of deaths occurred while persons were being illegally smuggled across the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, and spiked at 5000 death at the end of 2016 according to UNHCR.

**Triggers of the summer 2015 crisis**

Factors cited as immediate triggers or causes of the sudden and massive increase in migrant numbers in the summer of 2015 along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan route (Turkey-Greece-Macedonia-Serbia-Hungary) include:

On 18 June 2015 the government of Macedonia announced that it was changing its policy on migrants entering the country illegally. Previously, migrants were forbidden from transiting Macedonia, causing those who chose to do so to take perilous, clandestine modes of transit, such as walking along railroad tracks at night. Beginning in June, migrants were given three-day, temporary asylum permits, enabling them to travel by train and road.

* The opening of the Macedonia route enabled migrants from the Middle East to take very short, inexpensive voyages from the coast of Turkey to the Greek Islands, instead of the far longer, more perilous, and far more expensive voyage from Libya to Italy. According to the Washington Post, in addition to reducing danger, this lowered the cost from around $5–6,000 to $2–3,000.
* On the 25th of August, 2015 - according to *The Guardian* - 'Germany’s federal agency for migration and refugees' made it public, that “The #Dublin procedure for Syrian citizens is at this point in time effectively no longer being adhered to". During a press conference, "Germany’s interior minister, Thomas de Maizière, confirmed that the suspension of the Dublin agreement was “not as such a legally binding act”, but more of a “guideline for management practice”.
* According to the *Washington Post*, German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s public pledges (at a time of diplomatic standoff with the government of Hungary at the beginning of September, when tens of thousands of refugees were attempting to cross Hungarian territory without getting processed for asylum application in the country) that Germany would offer temporary residency to refugees, combined with television footage of cheering Germans welcoming refugees and migrants arriving in Munich, persuaded large numbers of people to move from Turkey up the Western Balkan route.
* Syrian President Bashar al-Assad blamed Europe and the United States for the migrant crisis, saying most of the refugees are fleeing the “terrorism” that he accuses the West of fomenting by supporting elements of the Syrian opposition. Meanwhile, the Syrian government announced increased military conscription, and simultaneously made it easier for Syrians to obtain passports, leading Middle East policy experts to speculate that he was implementing a policy to encourage opponents of his regime to leave the country.

**Current Status**

In 2015 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognized that there are 21.3 million legally refugees as per the UN definition. However, the total number of forcibly displaced persons is 65.3 million. The European Refugee Crisis succeeded in shedding light on the large number of displaced people all over the world, and the outrage and engagement has successfully put this issue at the front of human rights issues in the world.

**Local Solidarity**

Volunteer with us!

Have you lived in Scotland for five years or longer? Are you passionate about people and unity? Then get in touch with us to volunteer as a mentor!

We host a variety of events in St Andrews and Edinburgh, but are always looking to expand. If you would like to bring RAS to your hometown, or become a part of an existing team, please get in touch.

**Are you a refugee?**

Connect with Us

Need help? We are here for you! Wether be emotional support, transport, material goods or legal help we have people on staff that can guide you. In addition, we host socializing events where you can meet people from all over the world living in Scotland. These events are open for anyone. Please fill out this form and we will get in touch!

Mentorship Program

Are you a refugee that has arrived in Scotland within the last year and would like to connect with a Scottish citizen to help you integrate? Please submit this form and we will email you within two working days!

**Contact Us** Contact us! 19 Southgait 118 South Street St Andrews Fife KY16 9UZ

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