

Motion: The Refugee Crisis

Proposed: Danny Nasr (Education Officer)

Seconded: Hani Rashid (President)

This Union Notes:

1. There is currently a refugee crisis in Europe as millions of people across various parts of the Middle East and Africa flee persecution and look for sanctuary in Europe.
2. 11 Million people have been displaced from Syria so far due to the civil war between the Assad regime and the so called Islamic State.
3. Four million Syrians have registered or are awaiting registration with the United Nations High Commission of Refugees, who are leading the regional emergency response. This makes Syrians the largest refugee population in the world.
4. Neighbouring countries have taken high levels of those displaced already: Turkey has 1.9 million people, Jordan has 600,000 and Lebanon has taken over 1.5 million people - a 25%+ increase of its population.
5. Conversely, despite some countries like Germany and Sweden offering to home higher levels of refugees, Europe has been slow to act on the 530,000 asylum claims within the EU. The current plan of homing 120,000 refugees across the continent has been deemed controversial and is still being disputed.
6. The Dublin Regulation, which is the dominant legal framework for handling asylum claims in the EU, requires the country in which the asylum seeker first entered to process their case. If they attempt to cross the border to another EU state, they will be deported back to the original country they were processed in.
7. The British Government, after much pressure, has offered to home 20,000 refugees over 5 years.

This Union Believes:

1. No-one is 'illegal' and all nations have a duty to home those fleeing persecution and war.
2. That the European Union's response has been inadequate and states like Hungary who have put barriers between those fleeing and the rest of Europe should be condemned.
3. That the current Dublin Regulation system unproportionally puts the strain on countries that have a geographical proximity to areas with high levels of forced migration, and that it infringes on the welfare rights of asylum seekers by delaying processing times and a fair examination.
4. That the current Dublin Regulation system needs a restructure which allows for decentralised responses to this crisis, and requires EU countries to take a proportionally fairer number of refugees and migrants of circumstance, rather than processing them in the first country they have landed in.

5. That although it is positive that the British government underwent a U-turn initially, their response is still inadequate and Britain can most certainly home far more than 20,000 people.
6. That students, workers and all of society have a collective duty to learn from history and help those fleeing persecution.
7. That Universities in the UK have vast wealth and property that could be utilised as part of Britain's strategy to home refugees.
8. That borders are artificial constructions that unnecessarily divide people along socially constructed racial lines.
9. That Goldsmiths Students' Union firmly believes in a free, and accessible education for all, regardless of national or ethnic origin and background.
10. That the terminology utilised by the mainstream media surrounding this crisis is perpetuating a negative public opinion and an increasingly xenophobic perspective and attitude.

This Union Resolves:

1. To offer our solidarity to all of those fleeing persecution currently.
2. To call for the British Government to take in their fair share of refugees in coordination with other European countries.
3. To lobby Lewisham Council and call for them to offer to home refugees in the borough if they haven't already, by working with local groups for example, Lewisham Refugee Council.
4. To write to the local MP on the matter on behalf of the members of Goldsmiths SU.
5. To lobby and pressure Goldsmiths University into offering a generous scholarship package for victims of these crises so people can begin rebuilding their lives.
6. To work with Goldsmiths College to investigate further ways the institution could help future refugees and migrants of circumstance, for example, by offering them places in surplus accommodation, setting up English language classes, and coordinating with the SU on fundraising activities.
7. To work with members of Goldsmiths University to set up a centralised platform for responding to this crisis, linking up the work and efforts of students, societies, and staff in order to have a proactive and effective response tactic.
8. To issue a statement on this matter and the passing of this motion.