



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14 May 2020

Dear Constituent,

Re: Refugees in Greece

Thank you for contacting me about the refugee situation in Greece.

I know from speaking with Ministers that the UK is working closely with the Greek Government, who retain ultimate responsibility for the situation of migrants in their country. However I, along with the Government remain committed to supporting Greece's efforts in dealing with the migration challenge, including through providing interpreters to support the Greek Reception Service; a United Kingdom Border Force search-and-rescue cutter in the Aegean; and over £500,000 to support the humanitarian needs of migrants on the islands for the 2019/20 winter.

On the 22nd April we signed an agreement with the Greek authorities committing to a Joint Action Plan by the UK and Greece on migration. It is only right that we build a strategic relationship focused on areas of cooperation, and support measures which complement wider efforts to cope with migration challenges in the region. These include:

- Ensuring a smooth family reunification procedure for asylum seekers in Greece with relatives in the UK who are eligible under the Dublin III Regulation.
- Dismantling migrant smuggling networks, through enhancing the already existing communication our nations have.
- Ensuring efficient transfers to the UK take place for those eligible under Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 and the EU Dublin III Regulation.
- Interpretation support and expertise exchange between the Home Office and Greece's Reception and Identification Service and Asylum Service.
- Cooperation on search and rescue operations in the Aegean between the UK Border Force and the Hellenic Coast Guard.
- Recognition that the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, further upstream and in the Greek island Reception and Identification Centres is fluid and continuously evolves

I also share concerns about the risk of coronavirus in migrant camps in Greece, given the overcrowding and limited medical facilities on the Greek Islands. The Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum announced emergency measures to contain potential coronavirus outbreaks and I am told that our Embassy in Athens continues to closely follow developments. More broadly, the International Development Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, spoke with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on 18th March and agreed to work together to minimise the impact of this crisis on refugees.

I hope this reassures you that action is being taken to support refugees in Greece and everything that can be done is being done.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley