

Sinn Féin 10 point plan on refugee crisis

Preamble

The recent track record of this State in supporting and protecting asylum seekers is frankly shameful considering our unique history of emigration. Since 2003, Ireland is the only State in the European Union to opt out of EU Directives laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

For 15 years, this State has placed asylum seekers into the discredited Direct Provision System, condemning them to long years in limbo, living on a paltry allowance and denying them the right to work. One third of those living in Direct Provision today are children. Over half of those living in this system have done so for over four years. This injustice must end.

The Irish Government has a responsibility to its citizens as well as international responsibilities. This responsibility includes the provision of accessible and affordable public services and housing for all citizens and all asylum seekers. There is a both a domestic and international responsibility to be met.

(1) Ireland should commit to taking one refugee per every 1,000 of our population

This would see Ireland take approximately 4,500-5,000 refugees this year. It is important to note that Sinn Féin would not put an upper limit on it. We must not only do our fair share, but more than our fair share given our own emigrant history.

(2) Develop a National Action Plan

This plan should be both short-term and long-term focused. The Government should immediately set up a working group, made up of immigration experts and other civil society groups, to speedily identify the infrastructural requirements and other needs and logistics necessary to make our response to the crisis as successful as possible.

The Government should also engage with the Northern Executive and the British Government to work on a common approach across the island. In particular, Sinn Féin calls for the immediate implementation and enhancing of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme in the north.

Sinn Féin continues to fully support the use of the Irish Naval Service in search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean and call on the Government to ensure that these missions continue. We will not support the use of the Irish Naval Service or Defence Forces to partake in offensive military actions under the EUNAVFOR Med mission.

(3) End the Direct Provision System

Direct provision must be scrapped. It is not fit for purpose. Sinn Féin believes that there is a need to ensure that we have a system in place that respects the dignity and human rights of asylum seekers.

(4) Call for an emergency summit of Member States to be convened immediately

This summit would be responsible for drafting a new, comprehensive action plan to address the needs of asylum seekers and it would also be tasked with examining conflict resolution strategies.

(5) Call for others to play their part on setting up safe and legal access to Europe

This could be done through a UN Security Council Resolution, as well as all European Member States working together in the spirit of Article 80 of the TFEU to make this happen. This could also include the provision of the issuing of humanitarian visas for those travelling from conflict zones.

(6) Suspend Dublin regulations

Ireland must suspend these regulations to ensure effective access to asylum. The regulations usually means that the responsible Member State will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. The Dublin regulations establish a hierarchy of criteria for identifying the Member State responsible for the examination of an asylum claim in Europe. This is not practical under the present circumstances.

(7) Call on the European Commission and Member States to activate the Temporary Protection Directive

Temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide displaced persons from non-EU countries and unable to return to their country of origin, with immediate and temporary protection. It applies in particular when there is a risk that the standard asylum system is struggling to cope with demand stemming from a mass influx that risk having a negative impact on the processing of claims. This Directive and its concrete proposals must be immediately activated in light of the current situation.

(8) Call on the Commission and Member States to stop cooperation with third countries which aim at preventing asylum seekers from reaching a safe place in Europe and we would call for an end of negotiations of any such agreements with third countries that do not guarantee the protection of refugees and respect for fundamental rights, such as Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Egypt.

(9) Ireland should opt back in to the Common Euro Asylum System *The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 and the New York Protocol of 1967. It seeks to address needs which have arisen from, among other things, the processes flowing from the Schengen Agreement, the relaxing of borders within the EU, the resultant need for agreement on the regulation of the EU's external borders and the gradual expansion of EU powers to create an 'Area of freedom, security and justice' grounded in the Tampere Program (1999 – 2004).*

(10) Address the root cause of the crisis

Call on EU member states to strengthen long-term efforts to resolve the root causes of the refugee crisis by advancing political solutions to conflict and inclusive socio-economic

development across Africa and the Middle East. Military interventions by European States in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have left a bloody legacy and continue to fuel conflicts in the region which has created this refugee crisis. EU countries need to use their influence in these regions to find inclusive political solutions, rather than establishing military alliances with countries seeking to prolong and deepen these conflicts.