

‘We Will Never Let That Go’: 30+ Influential People Call for Refugee Family Reunion in New Campaign by Women for Refugee Women

London, UK – 20 October 2026

More than 30 influential women and men - including actors, artists, authors, campaigners, comedians and other public figures - have pledged to stand up for the rights of refugee families to be reunited as part of Women for Refugee Women (WRW)’s new campaign, *We Will Never Let That Go*ⁱ. The campaign calls for the Government to urgently reinstate refugee family reunion to ensure families can safely rebuild their lives together.

Signatories include Aisling Bea, Peter Capaldi, Annie Lennox, David Morrissey, Dame Harriet Walter, Laura Whitmore and many moreⁱⁱⁱ. Together, they call for urgent action to reinstate refugee family reunion, after the Government abruptly suspended the route in September 2025 with only a few days’ notice^{iv}. Refugee family reunion was one of the only safe routes available for people with refugee status to bring their families to safety and reunite with them in the UK without having to undertake dangerous journeys.

Women and children are disproportionately affected by the suspension, as they account for more than 92% of refugee family reunion visas granted before the route was closed^v. Since then, thousands of women and children have been prevented from safely reuniting with loved ones, with many trapped in danger.

We Will Never Let That Go highlights the devastating harm of family separation for refugee women. The suspension of refugee family reunion forces families apart, leaving women who have survived war, violence and persecution facing prolonged, if not permanent, separation from their children, spouses, and loved ones. Keeping families apart deepens trauma, undermines recovery, and denies refugee women the foundation they need to rebuild their lives in safety.

The signatories pledge:

- I believe refugee families belong together;
- I stand with refugee women who are separated from their children and loved ones by borders and bureaucracy; and
- I stand for the rights of families to be reunited.

Other signatories include Max Porter, Ali Smith, Caroline Lucas, Kamila Shamsie, Juliet Stevenson, Natasha Walter, David Oyelowo, and Isabella Hammad.

Sabeen, a refugee woman from Pakistan who WRW successfully supported with refugee family reunion for her husband before the suspension, shared:

"I am worried all the time about whether we will be able to have a baby. If we did not have to wait so long to be reunited, we might have a child now. I am not sure if I can still have children and the years wasted when we were apart haunt me."

Jane, who is seeking asylum from Sierra Leone and is separated from her children, shared:

"These policies are slowly killing us. I have been separated from my children for over four years – it is so painful and heartbreaking. Every day I wake up in tears. I miss them, I am worried about them. With the new changes to family reunion, it feels like my hope is being taken away."

I am not asking for special treatment. I am asking for fairness, clarity and humanity. I came to the UK for safety. I just need a chance to heal from what I have been through, to rebuild my life, and to live again."

Onjali Q. Raúf, author and founder of Herstory, said:

"It is shameful that a country which once prided itself on helping save thousands of refugee families during WWII, now actively works to tear refugee children from their mothers. And for what end? How will creating generations of newly traumatised children help the UK? This deeply cruel, deeply racist, and staggeringly short-sighted suspension of the basic rights of both women and children must be ended."

Andrea Vukovic, Co-Director at Women for Refugee Women, said:

"Right now, families are being kept apart. Mothers are unable to tuck their children into bed at night. Women are being forced to watch family milestones unfold from thousands of miles away. The Government suspended Refugee Family Reunion in September 2025, leaving families in limbo and facing indefinite separation ever since."

While Ministers take their time deciding what happens next, the consequences are being felt in real people's lives every day. For some, the uncertainty and pain caused by separation forces them to undertake dangerous journeys to reach safety and reunite with family."

The Home Secretary has acknowledged that many women face horrific violence on their routes to safety, including sexual violence and rape. So why is the Government not acting with greater urgency to restore one of the few safe routes that predominately supports women and children?"

WRW is now inviting the public to join these influential voices by signing the pledge and calling on the Government to restore refugee family reunion.

/ENDS

For further information or any questions, please contact Women for Refugee Women's press team on press@refugeewomen.co.uk or +44 (0)7518 397 761.

ⁱ Women for Refugee Women is a charity based in London (charity number: 1165320) which supports refugee and asylum-seeking women to challenge the injustices they face and to rebuild their lives, on their own terms. See www.refugeewomen.co.uk or @4refugeewomen.

ⁱⁱ Watch the campaign video here (embargoed until 20 October): <https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/16x9-Final-Film-We-Will-Never-Let-That-Go.mp4>

ⁱⁱⁱ Pledgers: Itab Azzam, Aisling Bea, Lotte Bowser, Sita Brahmachari, Peter Capaldi, Kirsty Dillon, Esther Freud, Sabina (Girl vs Globe), Linda Grant, Isabella Hammad, Charli Howard, Nicola Kelly, Alex Lawther, Annie Lennox, Adrian Lester, Emma Stevenson (Choose Love), Caroline Lucas, David Morrissey, Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, David Oyelowo, Max Porter, Onjali Q. Raúf, Tracey Seaward, Kamila Shamsie, Ali Smith, Kate Smurthwaite, Juliet Stevenson, Patsy Stevenson, Caroline Walker, Natasha Walter, Dame Harriet Walter, Zoë Wanamaker, Laura Whitmore

^{iv} Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC1298, 4 September 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-of-changes-to-the-immigration-rules-hc-1298-4-september-2025/statement-of-changes-to-the-immigration-rules-hc-1298-4-september-2025-accessible>

^v Refugee family reunion visa grants detailed datasets, year ending June 2026. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a85c40bc9205b515d421eed/family-reunion-visa-grants-datasets-jun-2026.xlsx>