

World leaders must keep their promises to Syrian refugee children

Written by Mariela Baeva on 8 March 2017



Syrian refugees | *Photo credit: Press Association*

Despite promises from the EU, nearly one million Syrian refugee children are still out of school, writes Mariela Baeva.

The leaders of the G7 countries are currently preparing for their summit in May. The Syrian crisis will be high on the agenda. The demand of the international community is for light to be thrown on access to education for large numbers of refugee children. As Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan host most of the refugee children, expanding formal and informal education facilities is a critical challenge for those countries.

The European Union and the World Bank have signed grant agreements with these three countries. The grant signed with Turkey, for example, will benefit about 40,000 out-of-school refugees and children from host communities. The school construction programme could cost up to €150m.

The positive outcome has come after months of campaigning for the EU and international donors to release money to support education for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

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800,000 Syrian refugee children, however, are still out of school in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The G7 summit in May will need to put this burning issue at the top of the agenda. A promise was made a year ago at the Supporting Syria conference in London that 1.7 million children would get an education during the 2016-17 school year.

The endeavour would protect them from the risks of extremism, child labour and exploitation. Yet the gap between pledge and delivery has been growing. The #YouPromised campaign has kept up pressure on the need for the donors to deliver now.

Hadeel, a Syrian girl, sends her message to the EU and world leaders to get their attention before the G7 summit. It reads:

"Dear Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Donald Trump, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Council Donald Tusk, and Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe, Paolo Gentolini, Theresa May, and Justin Trudeau,

You'll be sitting down with other G7 world leaders in May. You've plenty to discuss. But there's one thing I'd like you to do.

In February 2016, a promise was made to get every Syrian refugee child in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey back into school.

Nearly one million children are still waiting for that promise to be kept because not all of the money has been handed over to make it happen. I'm asking you to keep your country's promise, hand the money over and put every single one of those children where they belong: in a classroom.

Each of them deserves the chance of a better future. You have the power to make that happen."

The EU has demonstrated international leadership and has mobilised funds to deliver on its pledges. Other donors, too, need to be held to support access to education for all Syrian refugee children.

Join the #YouPromised campaign and send your message to world leaders.

About the author

Mariela Baeva is a former ALDE group MEP for Bulgaria

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