

What is causing the present exodus?

The simple causes are war and/or oppression and/or a failed state and/or religious extremism and/or the inability to survive with adequate food, shelter & medicine. People are fleeing for their lives to find safety and protection.

Refugees have been struggling to get to Europe for many years. The numbers mushroomed in 2015, with well over a million refugees arrived into the EU in 2015, but only 292540 receiving official refugee status. The majority of refugees coming into Europe in 2019 were from Afghanistan, Syria and sub-Saharan Africa. 95000 crossed the Mediterranean from January to November 2019. There were more than 1000 confirmed deaths. The most common route was to Greece, followed by Spain, Italy, Malta & Cyprus.

Politicians will argue over the reasons people risk their lives to come to Europe but the following are all likely to be contributing.

1. The underfunding in the UNHCR camps in the Middle East which make survival almost impossible.
2. The spread of barbarism and fighting in Syria and elsewhere.
3. People smugglers being well-organised.
4. Social media giving advice and encouragement on how to get to Europe.
5. A perception that it is possible to succeed in relocating and that some countries will welcome you.
6. Poverty and/or family encouragement to make the journey for economic reasons.
7. A sense that there really is no other choice but to leave everything and everyone and take the perilous journey to Europe

Where would you like to go if you were a refugee? It is natural that refugees want to go to a place of peace, safety and freedom and where they perceive that the nation will welcome them and help them to settle. If given a choice, many seek to go to a country where they have contacts. Many will choose a country whose economy is strong enough to cope with new people and where they can find work and/or education.

No country wants loads of refugees. Indeed, it would be better if there were no refugees needing sanctuary. But they exist. For political reasons, many European nations have now closed the door firmly to any more refugees, regardless of their existence. This means many are automatically deported to countries where they will face persecution. Many others are left in a desperate situation in host countries like Greece which feels overwhelmed and abandoned to cope. It also means that The Turkish government can threaten to pass on its 3.6 million refugees to Europe at any time.

Stories from overcrowded refugee camps are terrible. Moria camp, for example, in Greece was designed to house 3000 people but, at the end of 2019, was home to 13000. People have died from violence and fire. Children are traumatised. But it would be too simplistic to blame Greece for this situation when other European Member States refuse to shoulder the responsibility of care.

Let's pray that this desperate situation can end.

Source [UNHCR](#)