**Template letter for politicians – amend as you wish**

Dear X

We are writing to you from X City of Sanctuary group regarding the ongoing Channel crossings and the UK Government’s response. Over recent weeks, we have become increasingly concerned about the dehumanising and dangerous portrayal (fuelled by the UK Government and national media) of people seeking sanctuary on UK shores.

In 2015, in response to the heart-breaking image of Alan Kurdi, a three year old Syrian boy who drowned in the Mediterranean, many people in all parts of the UK joined the Sanctuary Movement to make the UK a welcoming place of safety. We are calling for all politicians to stop dehumanising the plight of people seeking sanctuary crossing the Channel. As a collective movement we are urging all politicians to respond with the same empathy and humanity that we did in 2015 – desperate people making the dangerous journey across the channel are someone’s father, brother, son and friend.

We are calling for all politicians to stop dehumanising the plight of people seeking sanctuary and be very clear that it is entirely legal for a refugee to enter the UK without documents in order to seek asylum. The UK should be aspiring to be a country that stands up for sanctuary and welcomes people seeking safety. Will we wait for the body of another Alan Kurdi to be washed up on a Kent beach before we show some empathy and solidarity with families forced to risk their lives because they have run out of options? The small number of people seeking sanctuary have family or loved ones in the UK, are at risk of exploitation by people traffickers and smugglers and are fleeing war or persecution. It is simply unacceptable that politicians and the media alike have repeatedly referred to the crossings as ‘illegal’ or ‘criminal’. No one wants to risk their lives on a boat unless it is the only way forward and there is no way back.

In addition, we are asking you to write to the Home Secretary urging her to introduce safe and legal routes to the UK to prevent risk and exploitation. The UK does not provide a visa route to make a claim for protection, nor does it provide adequate resettlement or refugee family reunion, the only way to make a claim is to do so on British soil. The Government must take a compassionate approach and listen to the evidence and recommendations from people with lived experience and experts on the humane and effective solutions to make refugee journeys safer. Introducing safe and legal routes would be the easiest way to make the Channel ‘unviable’ to refugees. If people had a safe and legal route they would take it.

Kind regards

X City of Sanctuary