

Today marks World Refugee Day and the start of Refugee Week. This year's theme – 'welcome' – is simple and fitting. But how do we, as individuals, as communities and as a country truly say to refugees 'you are welcome'?

As the Jewish voice for human rights, René Cassin draws on Jewish experience and values for an answer to this question. That experience and these values demand a sense of responsibility to those who seek asylum from persecution. Welcoming strangers and guests is lauded throughout Jewish text and Jewish culture.

We are witnessing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. Jewish communities have been quick to respond – by organising regular trips to Calais, providing basic necessities such as nappies, baby milk and food, raising money, leading resettlement plans or lobbying for fairer and more humane asylum policies at home and in Europe.

Yet, whilst we are experiencing heart-warming levels of generosity, we are simultaneously seeing the rise of xenophobic and racist scaremongering. So, we cannot sit back and say the job is done.

To truly say 'welcome' means to do more for vulnerable unaccompanied children in Europe, it means reuniting families that have been torn apart by war and it means abolishing the practice of indefinite immigration detention in the UK.

We hope that on this day next year – at the start of Refugee Week 2017 – we will be able to say we have made progress on all those things. This is a generation defining issue and we hope you will join us in moving towards a culture that is more humane and more welcoming– and one where the term 'asylum seeker' evokes empathy, honour and respect.