# Syrian grandmother with terminal cancer allowed to reunite with family in UK



A Syrian grandmother in dire health has received permission to travel to the UK to spend her final days with her grandchildren for the first time. Soaad Al Shawa, who is suffering from terminal liver cancer and has been given weeks to live, will be reunited with her daughter, Ola Al Hamwi, son-in-law Mostafa Amonajid, and their three children, aged seven, five, and one, who currently reside in Glasgow.

The family fled Syria in 2015 after enduring a tragedy that saw them lose their baby due to a bombing in their home in Damascus. Unable to bring Al Hamwi’s mother with them at that time, the family has relied on video calls for communication since their departure.

Initially, Al Shawa's application for a refugee family reunion was rejected by the Home Office following her cancer diagnosis late last year. However, after an appeal, a judge in the first-tier tribunal of the immigration court ruled in favour of the family in April. Elated by the decision, the family began preparations for Al Shawa to travel. Their hopes were subsequently dashed when the Home Office indicated its intention to appeal the judge's ruling, causing distress for Al Hamwi, who described the situation as “breaking my heart.” The potential delay from this appeal could have kept Al Shawa from travelling in time, as doctors anticipated her condition was worsening rapidly.

However, in a significant turn of events, the Home Office has informed the family's legal representatives that it is withdrawing its application for an appeal. The government will now allow Al Shawa to enter the UK and expedite her visa application. Her family hopes that the visa will be processed at a centre in Jordan over the weekend, from where Amonajid is set to collect her. Given that refugees are not permitted to return to their homeland, Al Hamwi and Amonajid are unable to travel to Syria, which makes the upcoming reunion particularly significant.

“My mum really perked up when she heard the news and started to eat more,” Al Hamwi remarked, reflecting the emotional impact of the news. “All she wants to do before she dies is to see us and the kids.”

Amonajid expressed gratitude for the Home Office’s change of stance and expedited process, highlighting the excitement of their children. “The kids are so excited they are finally going to meet their grandmother. She will be sleeping in their bedroom and they are fighting over who will sleep next to her,” he stated.

The family’s solicitor, Usman Aslam from Mukhtar & Co, welcomed the decision, underscoring the importance of familial connections, particularly in critical times. “We now hope that a daughter and mother can spend whatever time the mother has left together. Refugees are no different from anyone else. They too have lives, families and dignity,” he said.

Home Office sources clarified that Al Shawa’s entry into the UK was granted outside of established rules, citing compassionate grounds for expediting the visa process. This shift in policy underscores the complexities and challenges surrounding immigration as families navigate personal crises amidst broader geopolitical issues.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion> - This UK government page outlines the eligibility criteria and application process for refugee family reunion, detailing how partners and children under 18 can join or stay with a refugee in the UK.
2. <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/imm-refusal/> - This resource explains the right to appeal against a Home Office refusal in immigration cases, including the process and deadlines for lodging an appeal with the First-Tier Tribunal.
3. <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/preparingappeal/> - This guide provides detailed information on preparing an appeal after a Home Office refusal, including steps to submit an appeal, what to expect after submission, and how to prepare for a hearing.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-reunion-instruction/family-reunion-accessible> - This official UK government document outlines the policy and application process for refugee family reunion, emphasizing the importance of family unity and the procedures for reuniting families in the UK.
5. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/57371/uk-family-reunion-system-is-broken-warn-leading-charities> - This article discusses the challenges and backlogs in the UK's family reunion system, highlighting the difficulties faced by families seeking to reunite and the calls for policy reforms.
6. <https://tribunalsdecisions.service.gov.uk/utiac/38035> - This tribunal decision provides insights into the eligibility criteria for family reunion applications, including considerations for pre-existing families and exceptional circumstances for other family members.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/03/dying-syrian-grandmother-allowed-to-come-to-uk-in-home-office-u-turn> - Please view link - unable to able to access data