



TO ALL MPS AND PEERS

BY EMAIL ONLY

13 November 2022

Dear colleague,

TACKLING ILLEGAL MIGRATION

The Prime Minister has made it his priority to tackle illegal immigration. Over 40,000 people have illegally crossed the Channel in small boats this year – it's not fair, it's not right, and it's putting unsustainable pressure on our local public services. We have already taken action on this issue, delivering the largest ever small boats deal with France last month, but more must be done. That is why we have announced a series of new steps, including new legislation, to make sure those who enter the UK illegally should have no route to remain. There is no silver bullet or overnight fix, and this is not easy, but we will take a tough but fair approach to tackle illegal migration and stop the boats.

The problem

There are 100 million globally displaced refugees, and many more living in less developed countries – and this number will continue to grow. Over 40,000 people have illegally crossed the Channel in small boats so far this year, putting pressure on our schools, hospitals and housing. Accommodating arrivals in hotels costs £5.6 million a day, and we have spent over £3.5 billion this year on the asylum system.

Many originate from, and travel through, safe countries. That is unfair on those who come here legally, unfair on those who have a genuine asylum claim – and unfair on the British people who play by the rules. We must act now to tackle illegal immigration and put the UK in a better position to support those who need it most.

New measures being announced today

We need to go further to stop the boats, which is why we have announced five new steps that will make a significant difference.

This year, nearly a third of people arriving by small boat were from Albania – a safe and prosperous country. Germany, France Sweden, and Belgium reject almost 100% of Albanian asylum claims, yet our refusal rate is just 44.6%. We are reforming our system to change that.

Firstly, we are introducing new guidance for caseworkers making it clear Albania is a safe country. We are also creating a new dedicated unit of 400 specialised caseworkers to deal

with Albanian claims and expedite cases within weeks. We have agreed a Joint Communique with Albania, allowing us to return people with confidence their modern slavery needs will be protected. This will limit the ability of Albanian nationals coming to the UK illegally to resist removal on the grounds that they are considered a potential victim of modern slavery and, once implemented, should bring our acceptance rate for Albanian asylum seekers down. We will also have Border Force officers embedded in Tirana airport to stop people coming here illegally in the first place, with Albanian officers based in Kent. As a result, there will be weekly flights until all Albanians in our backlog have been removed, with new Albanian illegal migrants swiftly returned.

Secondly, we are setting up a new, permanent, unified Small Boats Operational Command. With an additional 730 dedicated staff, military support for specialist planning and operational advice and supported by the National Crime Agency, this unit will coordinate intelligence, interception, processing and enforcement. It will reduce the fragmentation in our policing of the Channel. Intercepting every boat will mean no-one arrives on a beach undetected. This will also ensure staff are no longer pulled from other priority work areas, such as immigration enforcement, in order to deal with small boats arrivals.

Thirdly, we are strengthening enforcement measures, increasing our ability to disrupt the activities of gangs facilitating small boat crossings and those making it possible for illegal immigrants to live in the UK. We will add more than 200 new staff and double the funding given to the National Crime Agency to tackle organised gangs. This extra resource will free up immigration officers to go back to enforcement – which will increase illegal working raids by 50 per cent. We will set up a taskforce to drive cross government action on illegal working and restart data sharing with banks and other financial institutions to stop illegal migrants being able to open bank accounts.

Fourthly we will use cheaper accommodation sites, so we can end the use of expensive hotels. The use of hotel accommodation for asylum seekers is unfair and unsustainable – with the cost rising to £5.6 million every day. We have located sites to house 10,000 people – and will seek to add thousands more places in the coming months, at half the cost of hotels, saving the taxpayer around £1 billion. This includes MoD sites, and we are looking at a range of alternative sites such as disused holiday parks and former student halls.

Finally, we will clear the initial asylum backlog by the end of 2023. We need to process claims in days or weeks, not months or years. We have already doubled asylum decision makers and we will double the number of caseworkers again to 2,500, while radically simplifying the casework process – with shorter guidance, fewer interviews, less paperwork and specialist case workers by nationality. We will also reduce the cooling off period for modern slavery referrals from 45 days to 30 days, bringing out process in line with Germany's.

Whilst these changes will help to address some of the issues in our asylum system, we must go further.

Future measures

That is why early next year we will be introducing new legislation that will ensure that if a person comes to the UK illegally, they should not be allowed to remain in the UK – instead they will be detained and swiftly returned either to their home country or to a safe third country where their claim for asylum will be considered. They will no longer be able to frustrate attempts of removal with late or spurious claims – and once removed, they will

have no right to re-entry, settlement or citizenship. Legislation will be brought forward to Parliament in due course.

By cracking down on illegal migration, we will also be able to be more generous with those that really need our help. Once illegal migration is under control, we will expand safe and legal routes for those identified as most at risk, whilst continuing to honour our existing commitments. Our legislation will introduce an annual cap on the number of refugees coming through safe and legal routes, set by Parliament, and in consultation with local authorities. We will incorporate the lessons from our successful existing routes, such as the UK Resettlement Scheme, community sponsorship, and Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Building on action already taken

We have already taken significant steps to address this situation – and this announcement builds on that.

We will make our partnership with Rwanda work so that we can safely send people there. They will reside there while their asylum claims are considered under Rwandan law. Those with valid claims will be resettled there – and nobody will be returned to the UK. Under our Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, the UK has invested £120 million into economic development, alongside an agreement for illegal migrants' humanitarian protection claims to be lodged there instead of in the UK. The UNHCR already has its own partnership with Rwanda to voluntarily relocate Libyan refugees. We are continuing the plan for removals to Rwanda, pending litigation in the courts, and are expecting a judgment in the High Court imminently.

We also recognise this is a shared problem, and so will continue to work closely with our allies. The number of illegal arrivals across Europe is up over 50 per cent, and France alone received 100,000 asylum applications this year. Our co-operation with the French has led to 31,000 small boats crossings being stopped in 2022 – almost 50 per cent of the total. We have also put the Calais Group of Northern European Nations on a permanent footing, and started negotiations with Frontex, the EU's border control agency. Next year, there will be a joint-UK French summit, delivering on the Prime Minister's strong relationship with President Macron, to deepen our partnership further, and build on the landmark deal that we have just struck.

As the Prime Minister said in his statement, this is a fair way to address this global challenge. Tackling this problem will not be easy, by taking these steps we will be tough but fair, tackle illegal migration and stop the boats.



Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP