



The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

23 March 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

CC: Immigration Minister

I am writing as the Director of Migrant Voice to raise two urgent issues relating to the impact of Covid-19 on migrants in the UK.

We welcome the changes your Department is already making, including suspending in-person tribunal hearings and substantive interviews, and releasing some immigration detainees. However, we would also urge you to take action where leave to remain is due to expire and where caseworkers are considering issuing refusals. There is concern across the sector and the migrant community about this issue and we request that you follow Ireland's example on these matters.

We urge you to:

1. Issue automatic extensions of limited leave to remain for all migrants currently in the UK until at least September 2020.
2. Suspend all refusals and issue those affected with discretionary leave to remain until at least September 2020.

We request that there are no conditions attached to either of these measures, unlike the automatic extensions announced in February for Chinese nationals. I understand ILPA has recommended similar measures, and we echo their calls.

The need for such measures is clear. Many migrants face losing employment and will not be able to raise the funds necessary for renewals or fresh applications. Many will be unable to access the legal advice they need due to self-isolation or reduced legal services available. Many will be unable to access the required documents or would normally rely on the use of library computers to prepare their applications, but now face months of library closures. Others will have been planning to leave the country and are not eligible for a new visa, but they are now unable to travel.

No migrant should be forced into overstaying due to this pandemic and forced to face the vulnerability and repercussions that this entails. The extension must apply to all migrants with no exceptions.



One group we are particularly concerned about are those international students who were wrongly accused of cheating on the English Language Test known as TOEIC in 2014 and who have recently won an appeal. As you know, we have been working with many of these students for some time. After winning an appeal, many are issued with a 60-day letter, or 3-6 months discretionary leave, in which they must find a Tier 4 sponsor.

Due to Covid-19, there are very few university courses currently running in which they can enrol, and very few universities are currently assessing applications for the next academic year. They face their leave expiring through no fault of their own. They must be included in any scheme to automatically extend leave to remain.

Thank you for your time and the actions you have taken thus far. We hope you will act with urgency on these matters and we stand ready to assist with further information if required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nazek Ramadan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Nazek Ramadan

Executive Director and Company Secretary