

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from Migrant Voice in response to [BBC report into cheating on Life in the UK test \(4 February 2019\)](#)

We were troubled to learn that some migrants may be using fraud to pass the Life in the UK test, as reported by the BBC on 4 February.

Any criminal activity relating to this test, whether organised by criminal groups or undertaken by individuals, must be exposed and punished. Those who are choosing to use fraud are undermining the credibility of those who have passed the test while following the rules.

However, the situation contains echoes of another BBC exposé almost exactly five years ago.

On 10 February 2014, a BBC Panorama documentary revealed some cheating at a test centre in East London where international students were sitting an English test known as TOEIC.

Theresa May's Home Office severely overreacted, taking action against more than 56,000 students. They revoked or refused more than 35,000 visas and accused around 22,000 of having "questionable" test results. Many were wrongly accused but given no real way to fight the allegation.*

Five years on, they are still in limbo and fighting to clear their names.

We are concerned that today's report by the BBC could trigger a similarly over-the-top reaction, given the government's continued hostile environment policy and anti-migrant agenda.

Such a reaction could leave thousands more people facing wrongful accusations and years of expensive court battles as they try to prove their innocence.

The ongoing fiasco related to the TOEIC test is the result of a series of catastrophic decisions by the Home Office. The first was to ask ETS – the education provider running the TOEIC test – to find out how many students had cheated, despite ETS also being under criminal investigation for facilitating the fraud.

The second was to accept their findings without question. Subsequent court cases have shown the evidence to be largely absent – where it does exist, it's fundamentally flawed.

In 2016, the Home Affairs Select Committee was highly critical of the actions taken by the Home Office in the TOEIC case, saying that the scandal "raises serious questions about the conduct of the Home Office".

In his response to the BBC report, the Home Secretary must take a different path to that taken in 2014. We urge him to act with transparency, fairness and respect for the rule of law, and to ensure that the TOEIC students are the last to experience such injustice.

[ENDS]

* For more info about this issue, read [our July 2018 report here](#), read about [the Westminster Hall debate in September 2018 here](#), and read about [our recent demonstration and Parliament event with 100 of the affected students here](#).

Migrant Voice Director, Nazek Ramadan, is available for interview, as are several students wrongly accused of cheating on the TOEIC test in 2014 and still fighting to clear their names. More details available on request.