

EMBARGOED UNTIL SATURDAY 11 JULY 2020 00:01



Launch of [Status Now Network](#): Calling for the Government to grant access to healthcare, housing and food for all UK residents

More than 65 organisations will call on the Government to grant #StatusNow4All at the [launch of the Status Now Network and campaign on Saturday 11 July](#).

The online launch event will celebrate the newly formed Network with cultural events, and will include discussions from people with lived experience of being undocumented, MPs, Trade Unions and some of our signatories, and a press conference.

The Network is calling on the British Prime Minister and Irish Taoiseach to grant leave to remain to all undocumented or destitute migrants and to all migrant people in the legal process in both the UK and Ireland, to ensure their and others' safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thirty-four MPs have signed an [Early Day Motion](#) supporting this call in the last two weeks, while a [petition](#) has gathered 3,800 signatures (and rising).

Currently, migrants who are destitute and/or undocumented live in the shadows and fear what will happen to them if they try to access healthcare, emergency shelter and food, or report or seek protection from domestic violence, rape, exploitation and other abuses – levels of which are rising. (See [this recent report](#) by Status Now member, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium, detailing the devastating impact of hostile environment policies on many precarious migrants during Covid-19.)

Status for all would mean every human, irrespective of their nationality or citizenship, can access healthcare, housing, food and the same sources of income from the State as everyone else. It would also enable everyone to access Covid-19 testing and tracing schemes (and any future vaccination programmes) and to follow public health directives, and therefore to contribute openly and without fear to keeping themselves and those around them safe.

A [letter sent in March and signed by 65+ organisations](#) calling for #StatusNow4All went unacknowledged and unanswered by both the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

The Network's diverse membership includes migrant-led organisations such as [Kanlungan Filipino Consortium](#), [RAPAR](#), [Migrant Voice](#), [Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group](#), and [Regularise](#), as well as the [Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union](#) and [ATD Fourth World](#), a global anti-poverty organisation.

Shaista Raja, RAPAR Trustee, said:

"My family includes undocumented people and I feel frustrated, embarrassed and guilty that only some family members can work and study and travel. During lockdown some of my family members were too scared to visit the GP in case they had coronavirus symptoms; they thought they might be reported to the authorities and/or be held in detention. With Status Now we can all equally participate, as a family."

Anna, a Kanlungan member in London, said:

"Undocumented migrants struggle to access health services. Even if we have the symptoms, we keep it to ourselves as we are afraid to visit the hospital, we are afraid that our status will be asked. And also, those who lost their jobs were unable to pay their rent and to buy food for our everyday basic needs."

Several undocumented migrants and asylum seekers are available for interviews (see below for details of some of these people), as are leaders from within RAPAR, Kanlungan and Migrant Voice.

Contact press@migrantvoice.org or call 07467 299335 for more information, access to interviewees or a Zoom link to the launch event.

Some of those happy to be interviewed ahead of/on Saturday:

Helen* is from Eritrea and first claimed asylum in the UK in March 2015. Her claim was refused and she's been appealing that decision since then. She hasn't heard anything from the Home Office for two years now. She lives in shared accommodation in Birmingham and has been struggling to afford to buy enough food to eat during the pandemic. "Food is so expensive now," she said. And she's been terrified of catching Covid-19 too. "The situation in my accommodation is terrible – we're sharing everything, there are kids playing – I have no control. It's very scary." (*Helen* is happy to be interviewed anonymously for written articles.*)

Kelly* is from Nigeria and has been waiting for a decision on her asylum claim since March 2019. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she's been living in shared accommodation in the West Midlands and she's been terrified of catching the virus. "It's been hell," she said. "I'm scared about getting infected, because nobody cares about you." She's been suffering from severe stress and has struggled to sleep over the last few months. In spite of this, she's been continuing to study Maths and English online (despite having no laptop and little internet access) and to volunteer with Baobab Women's Project, helping women in a similar position to her. (*Kelly* is happy to be interviewed anonymously for written articles.*)

Rachel* is from Jamaica and came to the UK 18 years ago. She worked in a shop for five years and also as a carer. In around 2010, when renewing her visa, the Home Office or the courts lost her passport and other documents, leaving her unable to prove her status or renew her visa. She's been undocumented and trying to resolve this problem ever since then. At the start of the pandemic, she lost what little work she had and had to move out of her house. She's now staying in temporary accommodation where she has to share a room. (*Rachel* is happy to be interviewed anonymously for written articles or TV/radio.*)

Michael* is from Zimbabwe and has spent the last 17 years in the UK. For the last seven years, he's been undocumented, with no stable income and homeless for much of that time. In this situation, he says it's almost impossible to form relationships of any kind. During the pandemic he's been worried about catching the virus, and his big fears now are becoming homeless again and the Government's contact tracing scheme – he wants to take part, but is scared that his data could get shared with the Home Office. (*Michael* is happy to be interviewed anonymously for written articles or radio.*)