

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**24 March, 2021**



*Migrant Voice statement in response to the Home Secretary's ['New Plan for Immigration'](#) focusing in particular on an overhaul of the asylum system.*

[Home Secretary Priti Patel's proposed "biggest overhaul of the UK's asylum system in decades"](#) is based on false premises – particularly on the actual availability of legal routes – and tears apart the principle of the right to claim asylum.

The proposals create a two-tier system that punishes those who manage to find their own route to safety and condemns them to a life in limbo with restricted rights.

People fleeing persecution and death have the right to seek sanctuary. That is the starting point, and no policy should undermine it. We are dealing here with human beings: they cannot be treated like commodities.

The only way forward is the creation of legal routes for people trying to protect their lives. Yet the Home Office proposals do not tackle how more legal routes can be established. Its only example is the current "generous" limited international resettlement scheme that resettles only 1 per cent of those who need it and are recognised by the United Nations. The other 99 per cent are left abandoned for years in harsh conditions. Our fear is that the government will use the resettlement scheme to severely reduce the number of people accessing protection in the UK and create offshore asylum processing centres that leave vulnerable people stuck in precarious, uncertain situations for years.

The government's rhetoric about people smugglers is a diversion. Smugglers are irrelevant in this equation: they are the product of current policies, opportunistically filling a gap in the market. Legal routes would put them out of business immediately.

The idea of the two-tier system is dangerous. It runs counter to every human instinct and every treaty and law on international protection that allows you to seek safety in any way possible. In reality, most of those ways are clandestine. While we call for more legal and safe routes and for an improvement on existing resettlement routes, it is unacceptable to punish those who are simply trying to reach safety and do what anyone of us would do.

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