



Home Office

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration

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Dr Onkar Sahota AM
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29 December 2022

Dear Dr Sahota,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December to the Home Secretary raising your concerns surrounding the language used by the Home Secretary on 31 October concerning asylum seekers. I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration.

The Home Secretary continues to ensure that the UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it. Whilst we sympathise with people in many difficult situations around the world, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. There is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge.

I can assure you that we highly value all communities in the UK and continue to welcome migrants who travel to the UK legally as they contribute significantly to British society. However, it is the case that this year we are seeing large numbers of people risking their lives and making dangerous and unnecessary journeys to the UK through illegal means.

Our finite resources simply cannot meet the increase in demand from illegal arrivals. Those skipping the queue by coming here illegally directly impede our ability to assist those in greatest need. The journeys we have seen people making across the Channel are illegal, unacceptable, dangerous, and unnecessary. The Government is determined to make the use of small boats to cross the Channel an unviable option for reaching the UK. The fact is that no one needs to make a small boat crossing to reach safety. These crossings originate from our close European neighbours, such as France, all of whom have fully functioning asylum systems.

There are no quick fixes and fundamental reform of the entire asylum and illegal migration system is needed. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022, part of this Government's New Plan for Immigration, seeks to build a fair but firm asylum and migration system. The principle behind the 2022 Act and the wider plan is simple – access to the UK's asylum system should be based on need, not on the ability to pay people smugglers. Illegal migration should be prevented and those with no right to be in the UK should be removed, while those in genuine need should be protected.

The Home Secretary has signed a new agreement to ramp up joint action with France to tackle illegal migration. This builds on the work to date with France, which has seen over 30,000 crossings prevented this year, nearly twice the number compared to this time last year, and marks a next step towards even deeper co-operation on tackling these crossings. This new deal will see UK officers embedded in French operations for the first time, as well as a 40% uplift in the number of UK-funded officers patrolling French beaches – helping step up efforts to detect and disrupt crossings before they leave France. It also includes a pledge to do more with our partners across Europe to disrupt people smugglers upstream, and ministers will be meeting through the Calais group in the coming weeks to drive forward these efforts.

With regards to your concerns that asylum seekers are not receiving adequate care and support, the Home Office has a legal obligation, as set out in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to support asylum seekers (including any dependants) who would otherwise be destitute. Asylum seekers can apply for accommodation and subsistence support. We continue to ensure the accommodation provided is safe, secure and appropriate for an individual's needs, so no one is destitute. The support package usually consists of free, furnished accommodation (with utility bills and council tax paid) in flats or houses and a weekly cash allowance to meet other essential living needs.

The Home Office remains committed to providing protection to those who need it, whilst taking every step necessary to stop the small boat crossings and control our borders.

I would like to thank you for raising these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration