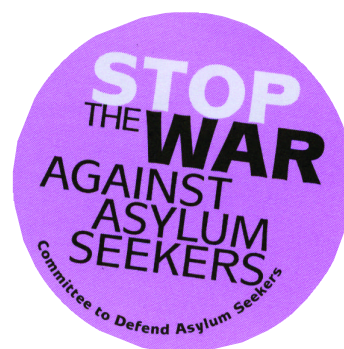


Don't believe the lies about asylum seekers

The fascist British National Party failed in its attempt to make a breakthrough in June's European, local and London elections, but it still managed to bamboozle large numbers of people into voting for Nazi candidates. And its most potent weapons were the lies and distortions about asylum seekers which many mainstream politicians have encouraged or failed to challenge, and which UKIP has adopted

Far from "scrounging", asylum seekers have made a huge contribution to the UK
More than half of nurses recruited to the NHS come from overseas. Many refugees are professionals such as doctors and teachers who are in short supply. Teachers in schools where there are asylum seekers say their presence improves standards because they bring different cultures and languages. The costs of the asylum system are far outweighed by the £2.5 billion that the Home Office says migrants contribute to the UK economy. Much of the cost of the asylum system goes on policing and supporting asylum seekers, who are banned from working.

Britain does not take more refugees than other countries
Pakistan and Iran alone host almost one-third of the world's 12 million refugees. Poor countries such as Tanzania, Guinea and Armenia each take more refugees than Britain. Within the EU, Britain comes tenth in terms of asylum applications per head of population.



Asylum seekers do not leave their families and homes on a whim

Most come from countries that abuse human rights. When the situation improves, people are much less likely to seek asylum. Hardly anyone from Zimbabwe claimed asylum before 1999. But in 2002, almost 10% of asylum claims were from that crisis-ridden country. War-torn Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo produced large numbers of asylum seekers in the 1990s. But in the three years to 2003, there were fewer than 250 from all three countries combined.

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers

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Refugees do not bring disease to Britain

The British Medical Association found asylum seekers do not bring TB into Britain. Just like an increasing number of UK citizens, those asylum seekers who had contracted TB did so as a result of severe overcrowding and poverty. The millions of people who travel abroad every year on holiday are more likely to bring diseases into Britain.

Asylum seekers are not “health tourists”

Asylum seekers come to the UK to seek safety, not medical treatment. The illnesses they suffer are often the result of the persecution, torture and trauma from which they have fled. GPs and healthworkers are circulating a petition condemning the government for repeating the lies about health tourism. The problems in the NHS are to do with a lack of resources, not a tiny number of asylum seekers who become ill.

Asylum seekers do not receive large cash hand-outs

Hundreds of asylum seekers have been refused any financial assistance or housing and are homeless. What cash people do receive comes from the government and is just 70% of basic income support – less than £40 per week.

Refugees do not get the best housing

They are forcibly dispersed to some of the worst estates in the country. A property developer in Liverpool admitted buildings used to house asylum seekers were “not fit for human beings”.

The UK is no soft touch

United Nations figures show the UK detains more asylum seekers than other European countries, and for longer. The UK is the only European state that detains children. It has stopped people getting out of Zimbabwe to Britain despite accepting it is not safe for those who have escaped to return. Thousands of asylum seekers no longer receive any form of state assistance. The Home Office is forcibly returning Somali asylum seekers back to a country it knows to be dangerous.

Asylum seekers are not “bogus”

Asylum seekers cannot be illegal. The UN0 Convention on Refugees guarantees the right to flee using false papers if necessary, and for an asylum seeker to remain while their case is being heard. Most asylum seekers arrive “illegally” because the government demands visas from countries suffering persecution and civil war.

Campaigning gets results

Eighteen months of concerted protest by refugee groups, homelessness campaigns and lawyers forced Home Secretary David Blunkett to back down in June on a controversial policy which saw thousands of asylum seekers made destitute.

Section 55 of the the 2002 Asylum Act gave immigration officials the power to deny asylum seekers any form of state benefit if they had not applied for asylum almost immediately after they had arrived in the country.

Some 10,000 asylum seekers were left without any support whatsoever. Since they were not allowed to work, they were either forced to seek voluntary aid, or left in poverty on the streets of the UK – one of the wealthiest countries in the world. There have been several instances of asylum seekers going without food and shelter for days until voluntary organisations were able to offer support.

A campaign of lobbying, protests and court cases finally forced the government to back down from this particularly vicious piece of legislation. It shows that, even against the most hardline of Home Secretaries, protest works. It sends a message to everyone horrified by the government’s racist policies to join with campaigns and force yet more reversals from Blunkett & Co.

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