

## PARLIAMENTARY ROUND UP 20 October – 26 October 2018

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### ACCOMMODATION

#### [180826](#)

Helen Hayes (Lab, Dulwich and West Norwood) asks the Secretary of State for the Home Department (SSHD), what provisions he plans to make in the new asylum accommodation contracts to ensure that pregnant women and new mothers have access to adequate maternity care and advice.

Caroline Nokes, (Minister of State for Immigration) 22.10.18: Under the new asylum accommodation contracts, Providers will be contractually required to take account of the needs of all those that they accommodate, including expectant mothers.

The contract will also ensure that standardised health checks are undertaken whilst Service Users are accommodated in Initial Accommodation and Providers will also be contractually responsible for securing GP registrations for Service Users. This service, where necessary, will include facilitating and providing assistance to attend medical appointments.

### ACCOMMODATION

#### [180827](#)

Helen Hayes (Lab, Dulwich and West Norwood) asks SSHD, what provisions will be in the new asylum accommodation contracts to ensure accommodation is safe for young children and infants before families are placed.

Caroline Nokes, 22.10.18: The new contracts will require accommodation providers to provide safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped accommodation that complies with the Decent Homes Standard in addition to standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

The contracts will also include provision for childcare equipment, including cots, high chairs, sterilisation equipment and child safety gates where necessary.

## ACCOMMODATION

### 180296

Alex Sobel (Lab, Leeds North West) asks SSHD if he will publish the criteria used by (a) UK Visas and Immigration and (b) providers of asylum accommodation to assess the vulnerability of tenants.

Caroline Nokes, 22.10.18: The Asylum Seekers (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2005 provide that in considering whether to provide support under Section 95 and 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to asylum seekers or their family members, account must be taken of their special needs if they are vulnerable. The Regulations define a vulnerable person as:

- A minor
- A disabled person
- An elderly person
- A pregnant woman
- A person who has been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence;
- A person who has had an individual evaluation of his situation that confirms he/she has special needs.

Accommodation providers are also contractually required to take account of any particular circumstances and vulnerability of those that they accommodate. The definition of vulnerability in the contracts is the same as the one set out in the 2005 Regulations.

The particular circumstances of other supported asylum seekers and their dependants who may have other particular vulnerabilities are also carefully considered, for example because they have care needs or health problems that require a need for a specific type of accommodation or accommodation in a particular location. Further details regarding these policies can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-accommodation-requests-policy>

<https://horizon.fcgsi.gov.uk/file-wrapper/asylum-seekers-care-needs>

<https://horizon.fcgsi.gov.uk/file-wrapper/healthcare-needs-and-pregnancy-dispersal-guidance>

## ACCOMMODATION

### 180297

Alex Sobel (Lab, Leeds North West) asks SSHD, what processes are in place to ensure that (a) service users and (b) advocates of service users are able to challenge refusals to relocate them to a different property under the new (i) Asylum Accommodation and Support and Advice and (ii) Issue Reporting and Eligibility Support contracts.

Caroline Nokes, 22.10.18: Under the new Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts, Service Users or their advocates will continue to be able to make relocation requests directly to the Home Office.

The new Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Provider will also be required to assist Service Users with applications to move accommodation. In the event of a refusal, the Service User and/or those representing will be able to submit further representations and evidence to support a relocation request.

## ACCOMMODATION

[182308](#)

Paul Sweeney (Lab, Glasgow North East) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate his Department has made of the number of asylum seekers whose housing provision has been terminated before the asylum application process including appeals has been completed.

Caroline Nokes, 25.10.18: I refer the Hon. Member to the response I gave to [UIN 171728](#) on the 7th September 2018.

## ACCOMMODATION

[181334](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and Kilburn) asks SSHD. how many asylum seekers are living in London as at October 2018.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: The Home Office publishes quarterly figures on the number of asylum seekers housed in dispersed accommodation, including under Section 95, by local authority in the Immigration Statistics release, in table as\_16q and 17q in volume 4 of the Asylum data tables. These are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2017/list-of-tables#asylum>

This does not include those asylum seekers who are accommodated with friends and family, and who are not in receipt of support.

## ACCOMMODATION

[181329](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and West Kilburn) asks SSHD, what steps he is taking to support local authorities during the transition to new asylum accommodation contracts.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: As activity to tender and procure the new asylum accommodation and support contracts comes to a conclusion, there will be a significant increase in our engagement with partners and stakeholders to plan and execute the transition to the services.

Work to plan for the mobilisation and transition has been underway for some time and is supported by dedicated central and regional teams who will engage on a local basis with all strategic stakeholders including Local Authorities, these plans will include the establishment of regional working groups and formal joint engagement boards to ensure all parties are involved and able to understand and support the appointed providers' solution.

The new asylum accommodation and support contracts will also be underpinned by collaborative principles that require Providers to develop close working relationships with stakeholders to support the effective coordination of local services delivery and help secure the safety and welfare of service users.

## **ACCOMMODATION / MOVE ON**

[181327](#) [181330](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and West Kilburn) asks SSHD:

1. what steps he is taking to (a) ensure that the new asylum seeker accommodation contracts will deliver accommodation of a good standard and (b) support people to make a successful transition from asylum-seeking to refugee status.
2. what provisions will be in the new asylum accommodation contracts to ensure that successful asylum applicants do not become destitute when they leave dispersal accommodation.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.11: The new arrangements for asylum accommodation and support contracts have been designed to improve the overall service by providing a more accessible and easy to navigate system which ensures the safety, security and welfare of service users and their host communities.

Accommodation Providers will continue to be required to provide safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped accommodation that complies with the Decent Homes Standard in addition to standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

Providers will also have a contractual duty to notify the local authority of the potential need to provide housing where a person in that accommodation is granted refugee status, including any other information about the refugee's needs that the Local Authority will need to help them provide accommodation before their support ceases.

These services will be delivered alongside other existing cross government initiatives to improve the transfer of information with Local Authorities including the Post Grant Appointments Service and the

Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Offices (LAASLO) pilot that aim to secure better outcomes for refugees within their move on period.

## **DECISION MAKING / IRAN**

[181546](#)

Dr David Drew (Lab, Stroud) asks SSHD, how many claims his Department has dealt with from asylum seekers from Iran over the last five years; and how many of those claims were (a) accepted and (b) refused.

Caroline Nokes, 24.10.18: The Home Office publishes data on the number of applications and initial decisions (including the number of grants and refusals), broken down by nationality, in the quarterly *Immigration Statistics* publication. The latest figures, up until June 2018, are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2018>

## **DECISION MAKING / DNA / FAMILY REUNION / DUBLIN**

Statement by Sajid Javid, Home Secretary, regarding the use of DNA in immigration applications. Made in the House of Commons, 25 October 2018, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

*The Home Office has carried out an internal review into instances where the provision of DNA had wrongly been made a requirement rather than voluntary in cases of Operation Fugal (operation to detect fraud in family and human rights applications); in relation to adult dependent relatives of Gurkhas and in relation to Afghan nationals formerly employed by the UK Government. The Home Office has never held the power to compel people to supply DNA evidence.*

Sajid Javid:

[...]we want to have a further review to look into this much more deeply and wanted independent assurance of that [...]we are finding practices, in the cases to which I have already referred, that might go back further. For example, in 2009 two pilots were established by the then Government: the familial testing pilot, which used DNA evidence to verify a child's biological connection with a family during asylum screening; and the human provenance pilot, which used DNA testing and a technique called isotope analysis to attempt to establish whether asylum applicants were from the country of origin that they had claimed. It is therefore important that we have a review that is thorough and goes back as long as it needs to, because, as I say, the Home Office has never had the power to compel people to supply DNA evidence [...]

Patrick Grady (SNP, Glasgow North)

[...]sometimes DNA can be the only means of proving a relationship in refugee family applications and Dublin III applications. Such tests used to be funded by the Home Office for family reunion, as many refugee families are destitute. Why not return to that position if the Government are genuinely keen to pursue a humane approach? Of course, they could also do that by adopting the private Member's Bill on family reunion promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil).

Sajid Javid: [...] The hon. Gentleman talked about the funding of DNA tests and whether there is help with funding. The key point is that if a DNA test is funded by the Government, for whatever circumstances, it should only be in a case where it is voluntary, not mandatory. [...]

Sir Edward Davey (Lib Dem, Kingston and Surbiton): I thank the Home Secretary for [...]his tone and apology. Is it not the case, however, that the DNA scandal suggests that the Home Office's hostile environment policy pushed officials to break the law? Will his structure review consider a root-and-branch reform of this nasty culture and consider giving the processing of immigration and asylum applications to a new unit that is independent from the Home Office—a unit that can ignore political pressures and simply work efficiently, fairly and lawfully?

Sajid Javid: I think the right hon. Gentleman meant to refer to a compliant environment. That is an environment in which we make sure, on behalf of British citizens, that we have a robust immigration policy that is fair to people, but that enables us to be strong on those who set out to abuse our immigration system and enter or settle in our country illegally—for example, in fraudulent cases—not least to be fair to those who use legal routes for migration to or settlement in the UK.

It is worth reminding the right hon. Gentleman that for five years he was part of a Government that worked on compliant environment policies, which began many years before that with previous Governments. He now appears to have a problem with some of those policies, but I do not remember him raising them when I sat alongside him in Cabinet. That said, there absolutely are lessons to learn from this. We must conduct the right review, with independent oversight, and learn those lessons [...]

## **DECISION MAKING** / DNA

Statement made above on use of DNA in immigration applications also made in the House of Lords by Baroness Williams of Trafford 25 October 2018 2.44pm read [here](#) watch [here](#).

Baroness Hamwee (Lib Dem) [...] The Statement refers to “how to address the root causes” of the problem. The “committed people” [...]who operate the system will naturally seek to achieve what the politicians are aiming for: they take the detail and the tone from them. I think that happened in the case of the Windrush generation, and the hostile or compliant environment is not [...] “fit for the modern world”.

That is why the Liberal Democrats have recently agreed as our policy that processing immigration and asylum applications should be taken away from the Home Office, with a new dedicated unit set up. This scandal is an example of why it is important to ignore political pressure and work fairly and lawfully in processing applications.[...]

## **DECISION MAKING**

[182725](#) [182726](#)

Jessican Morden (Lab, Newport East) asks SSHD, pursuant to the [Answer of 22 October 2018 to Question 180674](#) on Home Office: staff,

1. how many units within UK Visas and Immigration process post-decision casework; and what category of application each unit processes.

2. pursuant to the [Answer of 22 October 2018 to Question 180674](#) on Home Office: staff, where each unit that processes post-decision casework in UK Visas and Immigration is located.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: There are 6 units (this is based on a unit as a whole not individual teams) within UK Visa and Immigration that complete post decision casework. List below –

- Asylum
- Administrative Review
- Refused Case Management
- Family Human Rights Unit
- European & Settlement Casework
- International

Each unit is responsible for processing all categories of post decision casework relevant to their business areas, these include the following –

- Administrative reviews
- Appeals implementation
- Appeals review
- Varying conditions of leave
- Further submissions
- Reconsideration of decisions
- Supplementary decisions
- Curtailment
- Family reunion
- Further representations

These units are located in the following locations –

- Liverpool
- Newcastle
- Manchester
- Sheffield
- Croydon
- Beijing
- Bogota
- Manila
- Riyadh
- Warsaw
- Istanbul
- Pretoria
- Chennai
- Abu Dhabi

- Amman
- New Delhi

## **DETENTION**

Statement by Sajid Javid, Home Secretary, regarding the use of DNA in immigration applications. Made in the House of Commons, 25 October 2018, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Paul Sweeney (Lab, Glasgow North East): The Home Secretary has outlined a shocking and illegal breach of trust on the part of Home Office and immigration officials. He will, of course, be aware that the Home Office is the only Department of its kind in Europe that operates an arbitrary and non-limited form of detention. Under that system, 27,000 people were detained last year, 50% of whom were subsequently released. They included one of my constituents, Duc Nguyen, a Vietnamese national who is a victim of human trafficking and human slavery. It is against Home Office protocols to detain such people. Will the Home Secretary undertake to investigate whether coercive DNA-gathering practices have been taking place in detention centres under the Home Office?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman states that we have an “arbitrary” approach to detention; I strongly rebut that—we do not have such an approach. He should know that when anyone is detained, there must be a reasonable prospect of removal within a reasonable time. In recognising that improvements could nevertheless be made to our detention system, we commissioned the Shaw review, and as the hon. Gentleman may recall, I came to the House not so long ago to respond to the review and accepted many of its recommendations.

## **HEALTH / ENFORCEMENT**

Statement by Sajid Javid, Home Secretary, regarding the use of DNA in immigration applications. Made in the House of Commons, 25 October 2018, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Con, Totnes) [...] does my right hon. Friend agree that in building a fair and humane system, we must also recognise the importance of the confidentiality of medical records? Will he look at a letter that I received from NHS Digital on 22 October, in my capacity as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, expressing concern about revised guidance that followed assurances given in the House about the importance of confidentiality earlier this year?

Sajid Javid: [...] I strongly agree with her that mandatory DNA testing is not only unlawful but unethical. She raised the issue of confidentiality and mentioned a letter that she was sent as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee. I should be happy to look at that and to respond to her fully.

## **INTEGRATION / ESOL**

[181335](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and West Kilburn) asks SSHD, what estimate he has made of the number of asylum seekers registered to attend English for Speakers of Other Languages classes in London (a) six months and (b) 12 months after arriving in the UK in each of the last three years.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: The Department of Education funds English language provision through the Adult Education Budget. This is allocated to local providers to use in line with local needs.

Government does not centrally hold data on the number of asylum seekers accessing English language provision in different regions by date of arrival.

#### **INTEGRATION / MOVE ON**

[181331](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and West Kilburn) asks SSHD, how much funding his Department has provided to support newly-recognised refugees in London when they have moved out of asylum dispersal accommodation in each of the last three years.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: Newly recognised refugees have immediate access to the labour market and can access a range of mainstream services, including social welfare benefits, healthcare, and English language tuition.

Funding for these services is provided by the relevant Departments.

#### **INTEGRATION / MOVE ON**

[180715](#)

Paul Blomfield (Lab, Sheffield Central) asks SSHD, for what reason his Department has reduced the validity of biometric residence permits issued to people granted indefinite leave to remain from 10 to six years; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes, 22.10.18: Under existing EU technical specifications, the UK is required to ensure that all Biometric Residence Permits in circulation after 31 December 2024 meet new EU encryption technology standards.

Therefore, anyone with indefinite leave to remain, issued with a BRP after 31 December 2014 is issued with a shorter validity Permit to ensure it can be replaced with a new document, free of charge, in time for the deadline. As the UK will have left the EU by this point, we are also considering how best to document migrants' immigration status in the future border and immigration system.

#### **INTEGRATION / ACCOMMODATION / CONTROLLING MIGRATION FUND**

[181333](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and Kilburn) asks ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to expand the Controlling Migration Fund in London to support newly recognised refugees to find and sustain suitable accommodation.

Heather Wheeler (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 25.10.18: The deadline for bids from local authorities for a share of the money remaining in the Controlling Migration Fund was 1 October. Proposals are being considered and successful projects will be announced in the new year. The Government will be considering the options for the future of the Fund as part of the Spending Review process.

**SUPPORT / INTEGRATION / MOVE ON**

[181328](#)

Tulip Siddique (Lab, Hampstead and West Kilburn) asks SSHD, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities are empowered and funded to support asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees.

Caroline Nokes, 26.11.18: The Home Office provides asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute with free furnished accommodation (rent and utility free) and a weekly cash allowance to cover their other essential living needs. They also have access to free NHS healthcare and education for their dependent children.

Newly recognised refugees are able to apply for mainstream benefits and assistance from their local authority to find housing, and they also have full and unrestricted access to the labour market.

We are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that newly recognised refugees are provided with assistance to apply for any benefit to which they are entitled before their Home Office support comes to an end.

**RIGHT TO WORK**

House of Commons, Westminster Hall, 24 October 2018, 11.00, Asylum Seekers: Right to Work, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Motion brought by Dame Caroline Spelman (Con, Meridien): **I beg to move, that this House has considered asylum seekers' right to work.**

Dame Caroline Spelman:

- [...] Throughout my time as an MP, my constituency has been a dispersal area for asylum seekers, so I have seen both models—allowing asylum seekers to work and not allowing them to do so —under Governments of different political persuasions.
- since 2002, regulations have slowly changed, and now most people seeking asylum are completely unable to work.
- Until 2002, people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom could apply for permission to work if they had been waiting six months or more for an initial decision on their asylum claim.
- In July 2002, that provision was withdrawn, except in exceptional cases.
- In February 2005, there was a further change: a new immigration rule was introduced to allow people seeking asylum to apply for permission to work in the UK if they had been waiting over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim.

- Most recently, in 2010, the right to work after 12 months was extended to those who had made further submissions on their claim.
- At the same time [...]the right to work was restricted to jobs on the shortage occupation list, which is a restricted list that includes nuclear medical practitioners [...]radiographers—and classical ballet dancers.
- The Home Office’s target for decisions on asylum cases is six months. In the most recent immigration statistics [...]the number of main applicants waiting over six months for a decision on their asylum claim increased.
- For main applicants and dependents, 48% of people waiting for an initial decision had been waiting for over six months.[....]
  
- [...] A number of businesses are short of skilled labour, which [...]has held our region back, yet asylum seekers waiting for an initial decision have the kind of skills that our industries so desperately need. As a West Midlands MP, I find it difficult to ignore that fact [...]
  
- [...] As a linguist, the issue of English language learning for refugees and asylum seekers is close to my heart. If people cannot speak the language of the country that they are in, it is difficult for them to work there, so that learning is indispensable.
- [...] A number of employers in this country go out of their way to provide job opportunities for asylum seekers [...] being able to speak the language is a prerequisite [...]
  
- [...]being able to work transforms the situation of asylum seekers. It hugely helps their mental health, because they can integrate better, and they contribute to our economy, which is a positive for the host nation.
- Waiting indefinitely for the determination of a claim can have serious effects on mental wellbeing. I have seen that all too often in my constituency, because it is a dispersal area. I have seen young men in particular who are very depressed and isolated, and even suicidal at times.
- [...] if I had to live on £5.39 a day, struggling to support a family while feeling that my talents, my education, and everything I had learned was wasted, I would feel really down. Sadly, in those moments of isolation, I would be focused on the reasons I had left my country of origin, and some of the terrors that had caused me to flee my home. I have seen far too many asylum seekers in my surgery who have been depressed by their experience, and enabling them to work would, I think, be transformational.
- On the positive side [references positive experience of Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers working in food factory and lady from Congo who waited 8 years for a decision and straight away started work in a care home]
- Even the opportunity to volunteer can break the cycle of depression and hopelessness. [Gives example of gentleman who volunteered, attended employability training and found employment]
- His experiences in the asylum system have made him passionate about helping others[...]Inability to work [he argues] can lead to problems of isolation among people seeking asylum, including mental health issues, diabetes, blood pressure problems, stress, and the depression I have referred to. Worse, he has known friends forced into poverty and made vulnerable to abuse and manipulation, such as through gangs, prostitution and drug trafficking.
- There are countless human examples demonstrating the capacity of work to aid integration and promote good mental health among those seeking asylum. It is a good thing [...]

- [...]I very much support the research by the Lift the Ban coalition, which suggests that the current system is wasteful as it fails to harness the skills and talents of often well-educated individuals. Some 94% of people seeking asylum want to work. Some 74% have secondary-level education or higher and 37% have a degree, which is comparable with the UK population, where 42% of people have a degree. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has also recognised the gap, saying that allowing asylum seekers in the UK greater access to the labour markets would not only increase individuals' self-reliance but avoid the loss of skills. [...]
- Allowing asylum seekers to work could save public money as well as provide an economic boost. Lift the Ban estimates that if 50% of the people waiting six months for a decision on their initial asylum application were able to work full time on the national average wage, the Government would receive an extra £31.6 million a year from their tax and national insurance contributions. Moving them off subsistence support but retaining support for accommodation would save the public purse £10.8 million a year. The total net gain would be much as £42.4 million.
- Among European countries, the UK prescribes the lengthiest restrictions before people seeking asylum are given the right to work. In that regard, we are something of an international outlier. In comparable countries, people are largely given the opportunity to support themselves sooner. For example, the USA, Spain and the Netherlands all allow work after six months, Germany and Switzerland allow work after three months, and Canada allows asylum seekers to work on day one. In the UK, however, asylum seekers must wait a minimum of 12 months before they are given the right to work. I ask the Government to review that.
- There is an indication of a wider shift in public opinion [...]There is a letter in today's *Daily Telegraph* from 16 religious community leaders who have signed an open letter commending the efforts of Lift the Ban and calling for the right to work to be restored after asylum seekers have waited six months for a decision. [...]polling undertaken this year shows that when asked, 71% of people agree with the following statement: "When people come to the UK seeking asylum it is important they integrate, learn English and get to know people. It would help integration if asylum seekers were allowed to work if their claim takes more than six months."
- Given public support for such a change and that in these times of near full employment we are short of workers in key areas, surely we can now look at asylum seekers' right to work more holistically and in a way that better respects their human dignity. [...]

Interventions by:

Jim Cunningham (Lab, Coventry South): on "very good" qualifications held by a large number of asylum seekers. "That drives them into destitution, to say the least"

Jim Shannon (Strangford, DUP): on the need for Government to provide English language classes

Rachel Maskill (Lab, York Central) : [...]In my surgeries, I have had a City banker who is now completely destitute, with no recourse to public funds, and somebody who works in the hospitality sector, at a time when we desperately need hospitality workers and care workers. Is it not right that these people should, first of all, be able to work, but that they should at least receive some resources to be able to feed their families? [..]

Paul Blomfield (Lab, Sheffield Central): [...] is she encouraged by the poll that British Future did, which indicated that 71% of the British public support the right to work as a means towards integration? [...] Can she point us to the evidence about pull factors? The Home Office's own work on this issue indicates that the right to work is not a pull factor.

David Linden (SNP, Glasgow East) [...] given that the Government rightly put a lot of emphasis on tackling loneliness—there are all sorts of strategies about that—surely [the Minister] she can understand that one way of tackling loneliness for asylum seekers would be allowing them to work.

Thangam Debbonaire: [...] When [the Minister] gives figures on those refused asylum, do they take into account the numbers who, having been refused initially, will subsequently be granted asylum on appeal? It is those cases that I am particularly concerned about.[...] I welcome her commitment to more holistic schemes. Does she therefore agree that if we want to prevent dangerous journeys, one of the best things we can do is honour the commitments we have made under the UN global compact on refugees and actually expand resettlement? Let us make it easier so that people do not feel forced to make dangerous journeys and let us encourage our allies and other countries to do the same.

**Caroline Nokes, Minister for Immigration:**

[...]

- This debate on access to work for those claiming asylum is important.
- We can see that, for a 30-minute debate, it has provoked a lot of interest from the House.  
[...]
- I particularly want to thank the Lift the Ban coalition for its recent report, which was sent to me. It raised a number of important points.
  
- [...] UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it. This Government are committed to delivering a fair and humane asylum system. We are tackling the delays in decision making to ensure that most asylum seekers receive a decision within six months. In the year ending June 2018, we granted protection or other forms of leave to more than 14,000 people, and we are increasing integration support for all refugees to help them rebuild their lives here and realise their potential.
  
- I am sure Members share my appreciation for the excellent work that all agencies do to help and protect these very vulnerable people, but our protection does not end there. All those claiming asylum are provided with accommodation and support to meet their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute. [...]
  
- They are entitled to full access to healthcare and, for those under 18, access to full-time education. Those recognised as refugees, including those resettled here, have immediate and unrestricted access to work and other services that can support their integration.
  
- [...] I certainly recognise the importance of work when it comes to physical and mental wellbeing, building a wider sense of contribution to our society and community integration.[...]

- [To David Linden] work [...] good not only for people's financial wellbeing, but for their emotional and physical wellbeing. We know that children will have better outcomes if their parents are in work.
- I am oft to be heard talking about finding better routes into work for our refugee populations. I absolutely recognise that we have a great deal of work to do in that respect, because the employment outcomes for refugees are way below the general population, and way below where we would want them to be, notwithstanding the fact that we know that many people who come here, particularly under the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme, have specific challenges, which may be about long-term sickness or having large families or children with disabilities.
- We [...]all know that we have established many of our networks, relationships and friendships through our colleagues and through being at work. It is important that we find successful routes in.
- I am referencing refugee communities in particular, but [...]I receive many representations [...]from individual asylum seekers whom I have had the opportunity and privilege to meet. They, too, would like the opportunity to be able to make a contribution and establish the same levels of networks and friendships that we all do through work.
- I am listening carefully to the complex arguments about permitting asylum seekers to work, and I will of course consider further evidence that comes forward. [...]Government's current policy is to grant those seeking asylum in the UK permission to work where their claim, through no fault of their own, has not been decided after 12 months. Those allowed to work are limited to jobs on the shortage occupation list, which is based on expert advice from the Migration Advisory Committee. [Dame Caroline Spelman] made her point absolutely perfectly by referring to ballet dancers.
- The policy aims to protect the resident labour market and ensure that any employment meets our needs for skilled labour. Members will know that the shortage occupation list is currently under review. All asylum seekers can make a valuable contribution to their local communities by undertaking volunteering activities. [Dame Caroline Spelman] referenced the event she hosted recently alongside Refugee Action. [...]The point about language was made repeatedly [gives detail of impressive performance of refugees at event]
- [...] The work that we have done on community sponsorship, learnt from other countries such as Canada, has absolutely shown us that communities are willing to accept and welcome refugees into their midst. They are often best placed to help and are incredibly supportive, providing a network that enables refugees to make friends they can turn to for support in times of crisis. [...]
- [...] Our position is also comparable and consistent with the immigration rules for non-EEA nationals wishing to come here and work in the UK, but that approach could be undermined if non-EEA nationals were able to bypass the rules by lodging unfounded asylum claims. It is an unfortunate reality that some migrants make such claims to stay in the UK, and it is reasonable to assume that they do so because of the benefits, real or perceived, that they think they will gain.

- Currently, around half of those who seek asylum in the UK are found not to need international protection. Allowing earlier or unrestricted access to work risks undermining our asylum system by encouraging unfounded claims from those seeking employment opportunities for which they might not otherwise be eligible.
- [To Thangam Debbonaire] [...]for both original applications and appeals, the system takes far too long. We know that throughout the appeal system many people bring forward additional information that, had we had the opportunity to consider it in the first place, would have led to a case being granted at the first opportunity.
- I am firmly of the view that we need to continue to do more not simply to speed up the processes, but to make sure that the decisions made are the right decisions in the first place, and we need mechanisms whereby people can bring forward additional information throughout the process.
- [...] The headquarters in Bootle is trialling a system where we sit asylum decision makers with both junior barristers and presenting officers so that they can better understand and learn what type of case is most likely to be granted at appeal so that cases can be granted earlier. They have a much better opportunity to learn from each other and to make sure that the right decisions are made in the first place.
- I recognise that there is a significant debate about the evidence to demonstrate that policy changes made by Government act as a pull factor. I am not pretending for one moment that migration choices are not complex, and I know that isolating the impact of individual policy changes is far from straightforward, but there is evidence that policies affect migrant behaviour. It is also reasonable to assume that economic incentive is at least one element in a range of factors that encourage people to choose to move to a particular destination after first reaching a safe country.[...]
- [To Paul Blomfield] I can point to evidence from Germany, where a change in policy saw a significant increase in the numbers arriving. [...] Interestingly [...] that was a point that I removed from my speech. I am conscious that we are concerned about pull factors. We do not want anybody making risky or perilous journeys with the aim of an economic goal, as opposed to fleeing from persecution, but of course we recognise that they can be in a position where they cannot make a choice and have to make such a journey. I felt that the message given by that chunk of my speech was too harsh. We have a fantastic reputation in this country for being a safe haven for those in need, and I really want to build on that. However, I want to build on it through schemes such as VPRS, Mandate and Gateway. [...]ambitions to turn them into far more holistic and comprehensive schemes instead of what strikes me as a piecemeal approach.[...]
- [To Thangam Debbonaire] [...] we need a whole-route approach. We have to look to where we can build stronger alliances, but [...]we must make sure that refugees claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. We know that in many cases that does not happen. We also know that in many cases—I referenced this earlier—refugees who have been granted status

find it difficult to enter the job market, but that is for very understandable reasons. Rather than encourage further integration for those who might eventually not qualify for protection, our priority is focused on our efforts to support those who most need it.

- We are taking action to support refugees to integrate and find employment as quickly as possible so that they can establish themselves and build lives here. The [“Integrated Communities Strategy” Green Paper](#), published in March this year, underlined that commitment. It also set out the Government’s priorities to focus on English language, employment, mental health and cultural orientation. When I was in Jordan during the summer recess, I was struck by the work going on there on cultural orientation for people who were yet to be resettled. [...]what really struck me was the importance of doing more on that front. In many cases people who are eligible and accepted for resettlement will wait many months before they make the journey here. We should not miss the opportunity to make sure that their cultural orientation and language preparation is as good as it can be. The Syrian refugees who had some level of English were really keen to use it, practise it and have conversations, whereas others in the group clearly felt much more isolated because they did not have that opportunity.
- We will publish our response to the consultation later this autumn. There is a great deal more to be said about integration and training and employment. One of my first visits as a Minister was to Bradford, where I visited the specialist training and employment programme, which was all about moving refugees into work and helping them build a CV, improve their English and then find the great employment opportunities that we know are out there, with companies such as Ben & Jerry’s, with its ice academy, and Starbucks. Indeed, the STEP—skills, training and employment pathways—programme was working very closely with Tesco.
- [...]I want to reassure Members that I am listening carefully to the argument. There is much merit in it. [...]The issue is multifaceted and complex. I look forward to further discussions with Members and NGO colleagues. I remain receptive to the views and evidence presented to me on the right to work. However, it is important that we recognise that there is a balance to be struck and that we make sure we make the right decisions.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## **CHILDREN / DUBS**

[182235](#)

Stuart C McDonald (SNP, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) asks SSHD, how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have arrived to the UK under the Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

Caroline Nokes, 25.10.18: We remain fully committed to delivering our commitment to transfer the specified number of 480 children under Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 and are working very closely with participating States, to deliver the scheme in line with their national laws.

Over 220 children are already in the UK. We will not provide a running commentary on numbers and will publish the details once all children are in the UK.

We are working very closely with participating States and partners to deliver the scheme in line with their national laws. Relocation of children to the UK is also dependent on the availability of appropriate local authority care placements.

The Sandhurst Treaty, signed between the UK and France in January 2018, includes a number of measures to strengthen our cooperation on unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This includes a £3.6m development fund to identify projects to support transfers of eligible children under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 and the Dublin III Regulation.

## **CHILDREN / FAMILY REUNION**

Statement made in the House of Commons by Sajid Javid above on use of DNA in immigration applications also made in the House of Lords by Baroness Williams of Trafford 25 October 2018 2.44pm read [here](#) watch [here](#).

[...]

Lord Dubs: My Lords, I welcome the fact that the Government are going to review the structures and processes to make sure that they are fit for the immigration system. Will that review cover all the people who have a family relationship with somebody who is already here? I refer in particular to unaccompanied child refugees, and I very much hope that the governance review will reduce the long delays for children in the camps in Greece and northern France as they wait for the Home Office to get a move on. Can I please have some assurance about that?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Lord will know through our various conversations that some of the delays in children coming here are because we are awaiting information from other countries. I know he accepts that as a fair assessment of the situation. The full detail of the review being carried out of the structures and processes will be outlined in due course, so I will let him know when its actual terms of reference are ready. [...]

## **CHILDREN / HEALTH**

House of Lords, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018, 3.07pm, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services read [here](#) watch [here](#)

[..] Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Lib Dem): [...]what consideration is being given to refugee children who come with tremendous trauma from the camps in Dunkirk and Calais? Is any consideration given to them and the threat that when they reach the age of 18, their status changes and they can face deportation? Can we not do something to relieve that anxiety?

Lord O'Shaughnessy(): As I hope the noble Lord will know, refugee children have as much right to access these services as other children. I should also point out that a new mental health assessment trial is being funded by the Department for Education specifically to design mental health assessments for looked-after children of all kinds, including refugee children.

## **ENFORCEMENT / TRAFFICKING**

[179212](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks SSHD, what protection is provided to victims of human trafficking to enable them to report trafficking to the police without fear of deportation.

Victoria Atkins, 23.11.18: All potential victims of modern slavery who receive a positive 'reasonable grounds' decision through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) are entitled to a comprehensive package of support for a minimum of 45 days, regardless of their immigration status. This includes access to safe house accommodation, support, and medical care including counselling as required.

Those confirmed to be victims through the NRM may be granted a period of leave to remain in the UK if they are helping the police with an inquiry, pursuing compensation, or their personal circumstances merit a grant of leave. Moreover, individuals can apply for asylum if they have a genuine fear of return to their country of origin. All asylum applications are looked at on a case-by-case basis, with caseworkers giving careful consideration to the circumstances of each individual. No one who is found to be at risk of persecution or serious harm in their country of origin will be returned there

## **ENFORCEMENT**

[179265](#)

Ruth Smeeth (Lab, Stoke on Trent North) asks SSHD, what length of journey to a reporting centre is deemed to be reasonable by the Home Office.

Caroline Nokes, 23.10.18: Individuals subject to reporting can be required to attend the nearest reporting centre or other specified location, including police stations, to their home address.

There is no upper limit to the distance which an individual may be required to travel in order to attend their nearest reporting centre. When deciding reporting conditions the Home Office will give due consideration to the young, elderly and those with medical issues and the potential impact of frequent travel over long distances which is considered to involve in excess of 2 hours' journey time each way.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

[182860](#)

Ruth Smeeth (Lab, Stoke on Trent North) asks SSHD, if he will publish a list of properties in Stoke-on-Trent that were considered as alternative locations for the Stoke-on-Trent Reporting Centre.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: Our estates partners were commissioned to identify an alternative site for reporting functions in Stoke that provided adequate access to the public, security and accommodation that would enable us to provide a good level of service to the reporting population. Our partners were unable to locate any such suitable premises in the local area.

## **EU**

House of Commons, 22 October 2018, October European Council, Statement made by the Prime Minister 4.40pm read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Theresa May: [...]At the European Council, in addition to Brexit, there were important discussions on security and migration. [...]

[...] in marking Anti-Slavery Day, I welcome the continued commitment of all EU leaders in working together to eliminate the barbaric crime of people trafficking. We reaffirmed our shared commitments to doing more to tackle the challenges of migration upstream.[...]

## EU

House of Lords, 22 October 2018, October European Council, Statement above repeated in House of Lords by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal), 22 October 2018, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab) [...] I welcome the other conclusions relating to migration, internal security and external relations. It is vital that swift progress is made on illegal migration. We saw tension between member states at the June summit, leading to the important acknowledgement that this is a challenge not just for any single EU country but for Europe as a whole.

Those noble Lords who watched the BBC2 programme “Mediterranean with Simon Reeve” last night will have seen one particular interview with a young migrant who had sought refuge in Europe, but got as far as the Med. I think he said he had known no peace since he was five years old, and he had a level of despair and sadness rarely seen in one so young. Until we have left the EU’s institutions, our MEPs and Ministers should continue to offer their expertise and exercise their influence to shape an effective and a compassionate response. [*Interruption.*] I think that was an echo of the need for compassionate and effective response. I hope the Leader of the House will confirm that the UK Government intend to do just that.[...]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park [...] On the noble Baroness’s comments on migration, I confirm that we will, of course, continue to exercise all the influence we can to ensure that migrants are treated fairly and compassionately [...]

## EU / FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

### [HCWS1042](#) [HLWS1011](#)

Statement made 26 October 2018 in the House of Commons by Sir Alan Duncan (Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in the House of Lords by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

[...] *External aspects of migration*

The Director-General of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), António Vitorino and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi briefed Ministers during this session. Ministers took stock of progress and recent developments, and underlined the importance of the strategic partnership between the EU, the IOM and the UNHCR in Libya. The Council emphasised the significant results delivered through the joint efforts of the EU, its Member States and UN agencies. Irregular migration flows to Europe have significantly decreased, and efforts to tackle irregular

migration and to fight smuggling networks have been considerably strengthened, in particular through Operation Sophia. [...]

## **FAMILY REUNION / CHILDREN / CALAIS / DUBLIN**

[181311](#)

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) asks SSHD, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that minors in Calais with family in the UK are able to access family reunification procedures.

Caroline Nokes, 23.10.18: We continue to meet our commitments under the Dublin Regulation to ensure unaccompanied children with qualifying family in the UK can be transferred to the UK from Europe to have their asylum claim assessed as quickly as possible.

We are working closely with French authorities and non-governmental organisations in France to support the identification and transfer of eligible children under Dublin. We have allocated a £3.6 million Dublin development fund, as part of the Sandhurst Treaty signed between the UK and France in January 2018, to identify projects to support eligible claims through the asylum process and ensure those who are ineligible for transfer to the UK are informed of their options.

The Treaty also includes a commitment to reduce timescales for decisions and transfers under Dublin. A UK asylum liaison officer has been deployed to France to support the process.

## **FAMILY REUNION / CHILDREN**

[179213](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks SSHD, how many of the 794 unaccompanied refugee children who were granted asylum in the UK in 2017 have made applications for family reunion.

Caroline Nokes, 23.11.18: There is currently no provision in the Immigration Rules for children with refugee status in the UK to sponsor family members to join them. Allowing children to sponsor parents would create further incentives for more children to be encouraged, or even forced, to leave their family and risk hazardous journeys to the UK to sponsor relatives. This plays into the hands of criminal gangs who exploit vulnerable people and goes against our safeguarding responsibilities.

The Government believes the best interests of children are reflected in remaining with their families, claiming asylum in the first safe country they reach that is the fastest route to safety and relying on resettlement schemes to travel safely.

## **COUNTRY SITUATIONS**

### **FREEDOM OF RELIGION / BELIEF**

House of Commons, Westminster Hall, 25 October 2018, International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Wide ranging debate on persecution of religious minorities globally, including in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Nigeria, Myanmar, India, Nepal, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, North Korea,

Russia, eastern Ukraine, Nigeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and also on freedom of religion or belief in the UK

CAMPS

[181254](#)

Chris Law (SNP, Dundee West) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to protect vulnerable people in refugee camps.

Alistair Burt (Minister of State, Department for International Development), 23.10.18: The UK is strongly committed to the protection of refugees, all of whom are vulnerable, including those in camps.

DFID provides support to refugees in camps through several agencies, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). A significant component of our support to refugees is focused on protection. For example, a third of the UK's recent £70m allocation for the response to the current Rohingya crisis is being spent on protection. Amongst refugees, some people have specific vulnerabilities. The UK has policy frameworks to address multiple vulnerabilities in challenging contexts, including refugee camps. In the Rohingya crisis response, this includes; women's centres, children's safe areas, emergency nutrition and midwifery care, and support for survivors of gender based violence.

More broadly, in July this year, the UK co-hosted the Global Disability Summit where humanitarian agencies made ambitious commitments on disability in humanitarian settings. This month DFID galvanised the support of all the major international donors – covering 90 per cent of global aid to commit to worldwide standards on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[180644](#)

Helen Jones (Lab, Warrington North) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, how much funding her Department has allocated to provision of secure and properly screened toilets for Rohingya women refugees in Bangladesh in each of the last three years.

Alistair Burt, 22.10.18: The UK has been a leading donor in responding to the Rohingya crisis; since August 2017 we have committed £129m. The needs of women and girls are a key consideration of all our programming

This support has already delivered toilets and hygiene facilities for over one million people and emergency latrines for over 280,000 people. This includes the construction of 53 latrines and bathing spaces that are segregated for women and girls and have lights installed for their safety. Recent allocations to partners, including Christian Aid, UNICEF and UNHCR, will support additional latrines, tube wells, water points and bathing cubicles and 14 women friendly spaces with washing and

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[179220](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the UK's contribution to humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees includes resources to improve lighting in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp; and if she will make a statement.

Alistair Burt, 22.10.18: UK funding to ICRC has supported: light installation in 53 gender segregated latrines and bathing spaces; 13 newly constructed latrine blocks with solar lighting; 115 street lights; 8,500 solar lamps, with priority to women and girls; and 5,000 solar lanterns for Rohingya, with plans to distribute a further 36,000 solar lanterns this year. Funding to IOM and Christian Aid will support the installation of solar lamps in camps covering almost 10,000 refugees.

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[179217](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding her Department has allocated to mental health support for Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar.

Alistair Burt, 22.10.18: Up to March 2018, the £59m first tranche of UK funding to the humanitarian crisis included support to ACF and UNICEF to provide emergency psychosocial support to adults and adolescents; play sessions to ease stress and trauma for children under 16 years; and established child friendly spaces for 34,019 children.

In March 2018, a further tranche of £70m was announced and included funding to UNHCR and UNICEF to provide support to adolescents with life-skill based education and safe spaces, and support sexual and gender-based survivors with appropriate assistance.

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[179216](#) [179218](#) [179219](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) ask the Secretary of State for International Development

1. what discussions she has had with the Bangladeshi Government to ensure there are no delays in granting access to international NGOs operating in Bangladesh.
2. whether any of her Department's partners have had their permits to operate within the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar rescinded by the Government of Bangladesh; and if she will make a statement.
3. what discussions she has had with her Bangladeshi counterparts on allowing NGOs to carry radios in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

Alistair Burt, 22.10.18: We are aware of NGO concerns regarding access and ability to deliver in the camps. DFID Bangladesh humanitarian leads are in regular contact with the head of the NGO platform in Cox's Bazar and directly with our NGO partners. We and other development partners work with UN agencies to raise issues with the Bangladesh government including timely and transparent processing of authorisations.

NGOs have discussed access to radios with the UN Resident Coordinator and Government officials. Currently NGOs can only access radios through UN partners, which creates some restrictions. DFID is aware of these issues, and continues to raise this issue with the UN.

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[180315](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding her Department has allocated to educational support for Rohingya refugees in Myanmar and Bangladesh, in each of the last three financial years.

Alistair Burt, 23.10.18: Prior to August 2017, DFID supported Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh through an existing humanitarian preparedness and response programme. This focused on nutrition and support for partner coordination.

After August 2017, the Education Cannot Wait initiative, to which DFID is one of the largest contributors, committed £2.2 million for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in 2017 to help cover emergency learning needs.

DFID has also supported education experts and organisations to work with the Ministries of Education in Bangladesh and Burma to agree a curriculum and certification process for Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar.

DFID is working with the Government of Bangladesh and partners to plan for longer-term refugee needs, such as education and skills training.

BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[180135](#)

Anne Main (Con, St Albans) asks the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Bangladeshi counterpart on proposals to move Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char island.

Mark Field (Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 24.10.18: I discussed the Government of Bangladesh's proposal to move Rohingya refugees from camps in Cox's Bazar to Bhashan Char island with State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Shahriar Alam, during my visit to Bangladesh from 29 June - 1 July. We have asked the Government of Bangladesh to allow for a United Nations technical assessment to assess the viability of the island. I am clear that any relocation of refugees must be safe, dignified and in accordance with international humanitarian principles, standards and laws.

FRANCE

[182822](#)

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) asks SSHD, pursuant to the [Answer of 9 October 2018 to Question 173617 on Asylum: Dunkirk](#), what programmes the Government is funding to improve security at the shared border in northern France.

Caroline Nokes, 26.10.18: Working closely with French partners over the last 4 years, the UK has invested almost €150M to enhance border security in Northern France. This work has included physical security measures at all three Juxtaposed ports of Calais, Dunkirk and Coquelles (Eurotunnel), consisting of a combination of high security fencing, lighting, CCTV and perimeter detection technologies. Alongside this there has been the installation of secure parking areas for HGV's and coaches to protect them and to ensure the fluidity of the approach roads.

The Sandhurst Treaty, signed by the Prime Minister in January 2018, demonstrates the ongoing enhanced joint action by the UK and France to manage our shared border and tackle organised immigration crime. This includes a commitment from the UK to invest an additional £44.5m to protect the shared border. Part of this is being spent to reinforce the security measures in and around smaller ports in northern France, including Dunkirk and Ouistreham near Caen. The Sandhurst Treaty funding has also been used to establish the Joint Information and Coordination Centre ('CCIC'), which will facilitate cooperation between law enforcement bodies on combatting illegal migration.

The UK has established the Organised Immigration Crime Taskforce which brings together officers from Border Force, the National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and the Crown Prosecution Service. The Taskforce seeks to use every opportunity, whether that be in source countries, countries migrants travel through or in Europe to identify and tackle organised crime groups involved in organised immigration crime.

GREECE

[HL10488](#)

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) asks HMG what assessment they have made of (1) the UK contribution to EU funds, and (2) British seconded personnel to EU agencies to improving conditions for refugees and migrants who have entered Greece; and to what extent such work has reduced overcrowding and improved sanitation in camps on Aegean islands, particularly the Moria camp.

Baroness Williams of Trafford, 23.10.18: The UK contributes to the EU budget, through which funding has been made available for Greece. The Greek Government is responsible for the humanitarian response in Greece and makes use of EU funding for this purpose.

In support of the EU-Turkey Statement the UK continues to second experts to the EU Commission to support its efforts in working with Greece to improve living and security conditions for migrants in the camps on the island hotspots. The UK also continues to provide experts (flow managers, vulnerability experts, and caseworkers) to support the work of the European Asylum Support Office in Greece in line with the needs identified. UK experts pay attention to protecting vulnerable migrants, including unaccompanied children, from smuggling, trafficking and exploitation.

The UK separately provides interpreters to support the work of the Greek Reception and Identification Service in the island camps. Our interpreters support the processing of arriving

migrants, including through facilitating vulnerability and medical assessments to ensure those most in need of help can access it from the Greek authorities.

Our experts and interpreters receive consistent positive feedback from the EU Commission and the Greek authorities for the valuable work they continue to carry out on the islands.

## PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

### [179092](#)

Richard Burden (Lab, Birmingham Northfield) asks the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the (a) definition and (b) status of refugees in the Middle East.

Alistair Burt, 23.10.18: The Foreign Secretary maintains a regular dialogue with his US counterpart on Middle East issues, and discussed the US plan to withdraw funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) with the Special Advisor to the US President, Jared Kushner, on 22 August. I also discussed these concerns with the US President's Middle East Envoy, Jason Greenblatt, on 28 September. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials routinely discuss with their US counterparts the status of refugees in the Middle East. The UK is clear that there needs to be a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for Palestinian refugees.

## SYRIA

House of Commons, 22 October 2018, Oral Answers to Questions, Defence, 2.33 pm read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Alison McGovern (Lab, Wirral South): What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the security situation in Syria on the delivery of aid to that country by the armed forces

Gavin Williamson (Secretary of State for Defence) The UK supports the United Nations, non-governmental organisations and the Red Cross to meet the needs of vulnerable people in Syria and refugees in the region. So far we have committed £2.71 billion since 2012. [...]

## THAILAND

### [HL10528](#)

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) asks HMG what assessment they have made of reports that (1) Pakistani refugees have recently been rounded up by Thai police and taken to detention centres, and (2) Defence Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan has issued an instruction to the Immigration Bureau to detain all foreigners without visas, stating that they will be deported within a month; and whether they have assessed the likelihood that Christian and Ahmadis may face persecution when returned to Pakistan.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, 24.10.18: We are following closely the recent detention in Thailand of approximately 100 people, mainly from Pakistan, whom the Thai authorities consider illegal immigrants. This follows arrests of Cambodian and Vietnamese nationals at the end of August. We understand approximately 200 people who claim refugee and asylum status are currently in immigration detention, and that some of these are registered with the office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We believe that the recent orders are not aimed at any specific group or groups but apply to anyone whom the Thai authorities deem an illegal visa overstayer, as part of a general tightening of immigration enforcement. In September a senior official from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office raised our concerns about the treatment of those in immigration detention with the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are also working with the Thai authorities to improve conditions of detention.

We remain concerned about the treatment of minority communities, including religious minorities, in Pakistan. I discussed our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, in September 2018.

## THAILAND

House of Commons, Westminster Hall, 25 October 2018, International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Mark Field (Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

[...]the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) touched on the reports that Pakistani refugees are rounded up and placed in detention centres in Thailand when they are assessed to be of the Ahmadi religion. We are following the recent deterioration in Thailand and will continue to do so. It is particularly sad, because there has been progress in many of these areas in that country in recent years. We understand that there are approximately 100 people, mainly from Pakistan, whom the Thai authorities consider to be illegal immigrants, and this follows arrests of Cambodian and Vietnamese nationals at the end of August. We understand that about 200 people claim refugee and asylum status and are in immigration detention. Some of them are already registered under the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I am in touch with David Miliband on that matter.[..]