



Home Office

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Rebecca Pow MP
House of Commons
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25 April 2022

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your email of 31 March to the Home Office on behalf of Mr Ben Grant of Taunton Amnesty Group about the Nationality and Borders Bill. I am replying as the Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration. I note that I previously wrote to you, in response to an earlier letter from Mr Grant, on 17 January 2022.

I am glad to read that Mr Grant supports the action the Home Secretary has announced to support people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. The whole country is united in its horror at President Putin's grotesque war and is standing with the Ukrainian people. The images we are seeing on our television screens and the reports we are reading are incredibly distressing. Nothing could be more depraved and disgusting than bombing a children's hospital – and yet that is only one of the innumerable evils that have been visited upon Ukraine. In stark contrast, President Zelensky and the people he serves are being truly heroic. And the UK will not walk by on the other side. The UK Government has imposed unprecedented economic and diplomatic sanctions, as well as providing military equipment and training. We will continue to take every responsible action we possibly can. Putin must fail in Ukraine.

I would also like to assure Mr Grant the Government remains committed to welcoming refugees from around the globe through resettlement. I touched on some of these routes in my letter of 17 January, but I hope it will be helpful for me to provide an update.

The UK Resettlement Scheme, which was launched in February 2021, prioritises the resettlement of refugees, including children, in regions of conflict and instability. The number of refugees we resettle each year depends on a variety of factors, including local authorities' capacity to support refugees and the number of community groups willing to take part. There were 1,131 refugees resettled in the UK through that scheme in the year ending December 2021.

The Community Sponsorship Scheme enables local community groups to welcome refugees to the UK and provide housing and support. In the year ending December 2021, there were 144 refugees resettled through that scheme.

The Mandate Resettlement Scheme was launched in 1995. This global scheme resettles refugees with a close family member in the UK who is willing to accommodate them. Since published statistics began in 2008, there have been 435 refugees resettled through that route, as of September 2021.

Refugee family reunion allows a spouse or partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled the country. There is discretion to grant leave outside of the Immigration Rules for extended family members in exceptional circumstances. We have granted over 40,000 refugee family reunion visas since 2015, of which more than half were granted to children. In 2021, there were 6,134 family reunion visas issued, which was an increase of 28% on the previous year. Again, more than half were issued to children.

In August 2021, we announced the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, one of the most generous schemes in our country's history. That scheme will give up to 20,000 people at risk a new life in the UK, including women and girls, members of ethnic or religious minorities and people who are LGBT+.

In addition, under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life are offered priority relocation to the UK. Through that route, we have relocated more than 7,000 locally employed staff and their family members since April 2021, in addition to 1,400 former staff and families who were relocated under the previous ex gratia scheme for Afghan interpreters.

The Ukraine Family Scheme, which was launched on 4 March, allows British nationals and people settled in the UK to bring family members to the UK. That covers immediate family members as well as parents, grandparents, children over 18 and siblings, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins and in-laws. Individuals will be granted leave for three years and will be able to work and access public services and benefits. As of 20 March, 61,100 applications had been started, 31,500 had been submitted and 10,200 visas had been issued. Those figures have come on considerably since then.

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme, which was launched on 14 March, allows individuals, charities, community groups and businesses in the UK to bring Ukrainians to safety, including those with no family ties to the UK. There will be no limit on arrivals and, again, those who come here will have access to public services and benefits.

It is also worth noting that over 103,000 British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders and their family members have now applied for the BN(O) route we created in January 2021.

Mr Grant raises concerns regarding our proposals for the differential treatment of refugees. Currently, all those who seek our protection are treated in the same way, regardless of whether they undertook dangerous journeys facilitated by evil criminal smugglers, or have been illegally present in the UK for a long period of time. We will change this by introducing a new form of temporary protection status for people who require refugee protection, but who have not come directly to the UK, or who have not claimed asylum without delay once here. This group will be regularly reassessed for return.

A person granted temporary protection status will have unrestricted access to the labour market and will be provided with recourse to public funds if they are destitute or at risk of destitution. Family reunion will be permitted for this cohort where refusal would be a breach of our obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. I would like to assure Mr Grant that no one will be returned if doing so would put them in danger. It is

right, however, that people should return home when their grounds for asylum no longer exist and their country of origin is safe.

This policy is compliant with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention, which allows for differentiation where a refugee has not come to the UK “directly” from the country of persecution, did not present themselves to the authorities “without delay”, and did not “show good cause for their illegal entry or presence” (Article 31). It is also compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

I note Mr Grant’s comments about data. I set out the position in my letter of 17 January and say respectfully that I have nothing further to add.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to write and I trust that this reply is helpful.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'T'.

Tom Pursglove MP
Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration