Migration news roundup 3 April 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

The People's Café in Cumbria celebrated Spring with a pay as you feel Syrian lunch, prepared by a local Syrian woman. And Little Amal, the Syrian refugee puppet, has returned to London to bring a message of hope and help people empathise with refugees. (Sources: Cumbria Crack, BBC)

Classical cellist Abel Selaocoe has created a 'Soundwalk' through Leeds centre during April, with music inspired by Leeds architecture and his African roots - book a set of free headphones and enjoy the 40 minute musical stroll. (Source: Opera North)

International news

In Germany, independent asylum counsellors were denied access to asylum reception centres by the courts. In the Mediterranean sea, the humanitarian Ocean Viking rescue vessel was deterred from rescuing migrants by gun shots fired by Libyan coast guards. A report by the Council of Europe identifies a clear pattern of inhumane treatment of people seeking asylum across Europe. (Sources: Info Migrants, the Guardian)

Outside Europe, a deadly fire claimed the lives of 38 men and left many injured at a migrants' detention facility in Mexico. A

UN spokesperson said the secretary general has called for a thorough investigation into the tragedy. (Sources: Al Jazeera, the Guardian)

UK borders and migration policy

On the Illegal Migration Bill:

- The government avoided a potential Conservative rebellion in the House of Commons, with ministers reassuring some MPs over their concerns the bill is not tough enough.
- Government produced a new factsheet about the bill.
- Opposition continues to be voiced by many, including the UK representative at the UNHCR who expressed concern the legislation sets a precedent which could lead to the 'collapse' of the international system for refugee protection. The Council of Europe stated the law would be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The head of Human Rights Watch also strongly criticised the bill. Over 60 MPs, NGOs and academics wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to withdraw the proposed legislation.

(Sources: BBC, Evening Standard, Home Office, the Guardian, EURACTIV)

Government also published a new factsheet on safe and legal routes. (Source: Home Office)

The Prime Minister met his Albanian counterpart Edi Rama for face to face talks, with topics including irregular migration to the

UK. (Source: Independent)

On the Rwanda scheme:

- Rishi Sunak's comments have cast doubt over previous suggestions of flights taking off by the summer.
- The Home Office is to review the case of an Afghan pilot who fought alongside British soldiers and is now facing possible removal to Rwanda. He claimed asylum after arriving on a small boat. (Sources: the Guardian, Independent)

The Migration Advisory Committee is to undertake an inquiry into the Seasonal Worker visa, which will include considering the scheme's potential for exploitation and poor labour market practice. To safeguard workers' rights, stakeholders in the sector collaborated to create a Seasonal Workers Scheme Taskforce. Relatedly, this new digital exhibition illustrates the experiences of migrants in the agriculture sector. (Sources: Migration Advisory Committee, Stronger Together, Museum of English Rural Life)

Specific migrant groups

Government announced new measures to support Afghan refugees to move on from bridging hotels as they close. This includes additional funding for local authorities to help overcome barriers to accessing housing. Government also published a series of evaluation documents on resettlement routes including the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. (Source: Home

Office)

On asylum:

- Government published a series of factsheets about specific accommodation sites in response to reports that ex-military sites are to be used . The immigration minister Robert Jenrick confirmed Catterick Garrison in North Yorkshire as a potential site.
- The statistics watchdog said ministerial statements about the asylum decision-making backlog 'do not reflect the position shown by the Home Office's statistics'
- A new poll suggests more than half of the UK public think there should be safe routes for people to travel here to claim asylum.

(Sources: Home Office, Sky, ITV, UK Statistics Authority, Care4Calais)

The Prime Minister argued for children to not be exempt from government's plans to detain and remove those who arrive in the UK illegally. Rishi Sunak suggested that to do otherwise would incentivise families to bring children with them. In response to these plans, concerns have been raised about the effect this policy would have on children, with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) suggesting 'all new legislation must be child focused and protect their rights' and the Children's Commissioner's office stating their priorities for amendments to the bill. (Sources: Independent, BBC, ADCS, Children's Commissioner)

An unaccompanied asylum seeking child won £10,000 compensation from the Home Secretary for breach of his ECHR Article 8 rights. The recently orphaned child from Afghanistan was denied family reunion rights with family in the UK and spent 13 months waiting in Greece, including months spent in the Moira refugee camp in Lesvos. (Source: Doughty Street Chambers)

New research highlights increasing risks of sexual exploitation for Ukrainian refugees. (Source: the Guardian)

Modern slavery stories this week all relate to the Illegal Migration Bill:

- This explainer focuses on the modern slavery provisions in the bill.
- This briefing examines the potential implications of the bill for survivors.
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said the bill will increase risks for trafficking survivors, and published a briefing presenting three facts about modern slavery in the UK, contesting the claim that the system is being abused and highlighting current challenges.
- Former Prime Minister Theresa May said provisions in the bill should not apply to modern slavery victims.

(Sources: Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, University of Nottingham Rights Lab, IOM, the Guardian)

Cohesion and integration

A culture of ‘othering’ was identified by the Housing Ombudsman investigating social landlord Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, following the death of Awaab Ishak, a two year old refugee boy whose home was affected by mould. Within the topic of ‘treating residents fairly’, the report revealed ‘prejudices, lazy assumptions and an attitude towards people seeking asylum and refugees that is wholly unacceptable’. (Source: Housing Ombudsman Service)

Following research from universities in Hull and Nottingham, the Guardian launched a special series exploring its own historic links to transatlantic slavery through the wider Lancashire cotton trade, also announcing a programme of restorative justice. (Source: the Guardian)

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https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/news/migration-news-roundup-3-april-2023