# Migration news roundup 18 December 2023



- Stories that inspired us this week

- International news
- UK borders and migration policy
- Specific migrant groups
- Cohesion and integration

## Stories that inspired us this week

The Leeds Compassionate City Awards celebrated projects and people supporting migrants including Leeds City of Sanctuary, Guiding Light Leads, DAMASQ project and Hala Wadi. (Source: Leeds City Council)

A chef in Bradford shares how she keeps her Palestinian heritage alive through cooking. (Source: Telegraph and Argus)

Outside of the region, Waheed Arian, a British doctor, is determined to help refugees heal from war-related trauma through his charity in Chester which mixes exercise with therapy. (Source: Al Jazeera)

A farmer in Bristol who came to the UK as a refugee from Syria in 2017 has forged a successful business under the name Rocketman, while Paintings by Hong Kong raised British painter, displayed at the Crypt Gallery in London last weekend, focus on silent political protests happening in the city. (Sources: Bristol 24/7, VOA News)

## International news

According to Frontex data, 2023 is a year with the highest arrival of migrants  considered irregular to the EU since 2016. In Italy, 82,550 applications from non-EU workers were submitted on the first day of seasonal worker visa cycle. (Source: InfoMigrants)

This article shares tragic stories of people who attempted to cross from Russia into Finland during the period of border closure. (Source: the Guardian)

Meanwhile, Italian government's plan to build two migrant reception centres in Albania has been suspended by the Albanian court. (Source: BBC)

Outside of Europe:

- The Global Refugee Forum, the world's largest gathering dedicated to refugee issues co-hosted by the UNHCR, was formed last week. (Source: UN News)
- This article explores a current situation and journey of Afghan refugees through 11 countries, trying to cross the US-Mexico border to reach the US. (Source: BBC)
- Amid increasing anti-Rohingya sentiment in northern Sumatra, where most of the 1,500 Rohingya arriving from Myanmar on boats since November have settled, the Indonesian government has called on the international community to strengthen efforts to resolve the Rohingya refugee crisis. (Source: ABC News)
- In Hong Kong, the government is continuing to crack down on political dissent, including warrant arrests for oversees

activists. (Source: Al Jazeera)

## UK borders and migration policy

The Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons this week despite some Conservative MPs abstaining. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is expected to face a bumpy ride during the next stages of the parliamentary process in the new year. Critique of the bill continues with the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights highlighting inconsistencies with the UK's obligations under international law. Several high profile figures, including football commentator Gary Lineker, have written to the government asking it to abandon its plans. This article reports on the potential for individual legal challenges, as well as possible legal action by a trade union. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian, UK Parliament, ITV)

Following recent announcements of measures to reduce net migration:

- The government has published a new factsheet, including an overview of the changes, while this briefing answers some questions about the changes, acknowledging that in some cases the detail is as yet unclear or undecided. (Sources: Home Office, House of Commons Library)
- This analysis considers what the increased salary thresholds could mean for migration numbers. (Source: Migration Observatory)

- This article considers the implications of the measures from an employer perspective, with the Royal College of Nursing saying that staff shortages will be exacerbated by the plan to prohibit workers from abroad bringing dependants. (Sources: Free Movement, Nursing in Practice)
- There's anger and concern about the potential impact of the planned new minimum salary requirement of £38,700 for those wanting to apply for a family visa. (Source: the Guardian)

Meanwhile, as government procurement activity indicates plans to continue to run large scale sites to process small boat arrivals until at least 2030, 79% of people think the government is doing a 'bad job' of managing immigration, according to a new poll. In other news, amended data protection legislation allowing immigration data to be exempt from being released to an individual, has been declared unlawful. (Sources: BBC, Ipsos, Free Movement)

## Specific migrant groups

Spotlight is on the living conditions of the Bibby Stockholm following the tragic news that one of the residents died by suicide this week. Elsewhere, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) minister Michael Gove has spoken about homelessness issues for new refugees, highlighting that the lack of notice to leave asylum accommodation is creating pressures. (Sources: the Guardian, the Big Issue)

A Home Affairs Committee report expresses concern that the government is no longer treating modern slavery as a priority as a result of its focus on irregular migration, and questions claims that new arrivals are 'abusing' the National Referral Mechanism. The report is critical of leaving the role of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner vacancy for 18 months, and of the delay in developing a new modern slavery strategy. It also cites a change in ministerial responsibility. (Sources: UK Parliament, Independent)

The latest data on Windrush compensation shows that by the end of October 2023 more than £73 million had been paid out to individuals through the scheme, and over 77% of claims have had a final decision. (Source: Home Office)

## Cohesion and integration

Following the sad news of Benjamin Zephaniah's death last week, here are two interesting articles on how he challenged racist perceptions of Rastafarians, especially by the Police, and how for many children, his poetry and literature would have been 'the first time they encountered published literature written in a language that represented how they spoke and talked about things that mattered to them'. (Source: the Conversation)

Two interesting articles here relating to housing and poverty in England. Researchers have created a new 'ethnic group deprivation index' to address the hidden poverty of, predominantly ethnic minority populations living in otherwise

wealthy or gentrified neighbourhoods. (Source: the Guardian)

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