Migration news roundup 22 January 2024



- 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

A BAFTA is being awarded to June Givanni who established an archive of Pan African cinema and is being celebrated as a 'pioneering force in the preservation, study and celebration of African and African diaspora cinema'. (Source: the Guardian)

On the global stage, watch this short video by Deline, a young woman leading youth climate action in Kakuma, the Refugee Camp where she lives in Kenya. On the subject of climate, this article explains how migration can aid sustainable solutions to environmental issues. (Sources: YouTube at 1:57 minutes, The Conversation)

You can attend an online Holocaust Memorial Day Lecture from York University about Ruth Wiener's story. She was born in Berlin, moved to Holland as a child with her family, and survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. It's on Tuesday 23 January at 6.30pm. (Source: University of York)

International news

The European Court of Justice has declared that women suffering gender based violence are eligible for EU refugee status. Meanwhile, the UNHCR urged Hungary and Belgium, the two

countries holding the EU Presidency in 2024, to implement a proposed Migration and Asylum Pact aimed at helping to protect the rights of people seeking asylum. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Outside of Europe, in Niger, the new military government, has started offering military escorts through the Sahara Desert in exchange for cash from those seeking to depart for Europe via North Africa and Mediterranean. (Source: InfoMigrants)

UK borders and migration policy

The Safety of Rwanda Bill has been voted through the House of Commons, after a potential major Tory rebellion was averted. Some Conservative MPs attempted to amend the bill to ensure human rights law cannot prevent removals to Rwanda from going ahead. Deputy chairs Lee Anderson and Brendan Clarke resigned after the amendments were voted down. The proposed legislation will now be considered in the House of Lords, where significant opposition is anticipated. Barrister and peer Lord Carlile said the government is 'elevating itself to an unacceptable level above the law'. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian)

Meanwhile, the supreme court's concerns about Rwanda's safety are unlikely to be assuaged by the new treaty with the country, according to legal experts. The UNHCR says that the scheme will still breach international law. New figures about the Rwandan asylum system also raise questions about the country's capacity to manage the scheme, and its decision-making – 421 claims were considered in the last 5 years, and three-quarters were

refused, including from countries such as Afghanistan and Syria. There are ongoing concerns about human rights abuses in the country. (Sources: the Guardian, Independent, inews)

Tragedy struck in France when five people lost their lives attempting a small boat crossing to the UK. A new report calls for safe routes to be expanded. (Sources: BBC, Refugee Council)

There are concerns in the struggling hospitality sector about the potential impact of the upcoming increase to the minimum skilled worker salary threshold. In other news, Home Office have been accused of 'systematically' refusing visas enabling dependent children to join their mothers in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

There are a few items on asylum accommodation:

- The Home Office has reportedly shelved plans to procure more vessels as asylum accommodation after the Bibby Stockholm's highly publicised issues. (Source: Independent)
- There has been criticism of the government's exclusion of asylum accommodation from new protections against substandard housing conditions in the Social Housing Act 2023. Home Office say this is because the Act is only applicable to landlords registered as social housing providers, which asylum accommodation is not. (Source: the Guardian)

- This new report on the experiences of LGBTQI+ people finds that many feel unsafe in asylum accommodation. (Source: African Rainbow Family)

On EU nationals, the Home Office updated its EUSS guidance to caseworkers expanding reasonable grounds acceptable as a justification for a late application. This includes enabling those who mistakenly applied for permanent residency rather than settled status, to make a late EUSS application. (Sources: Home Office, the Guardian)

From 6th February, many migrants, including BN(O)s and their family members, will be required to pay an increased Immigration Health Surcharge, as per the Immigration (Health Charge) (Amendment) Order 2024 approved by Parliament. The fee will raise by over 60% and it was first announced by the government last July. (Sources: Electronic Immigration Network, legislation.gov.uk)

This new guide aimed at migrant workers explains what work exploitation is, and what their rights are. (Source: Right to Remain)

This article describes financial pressures upon universities and the impact on home and international students. York University is reported to be taking a more ‘flexible’ approach to entry requirements for international students. (Sources: The Pie News, BBC)

On children and young people:

- Kent County Council are reviewing multiple sites for use as temporary reception centres for recently arrived unaccompanied children seeking asylum. (Source: Kent)
- Several UK councils such as Dorset, Hertfordshire, Bath and North East Somerset highlighted the lack of sufficient funding to support caring for unaccompanied children. (Sources: Dorset Echo, East Anglia Bylines, Midsomer Norton).
- Finally, this briefing looks at local authority duties to support children under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. (Source: Free Movement).

Cohesion and integration

A new policy paper has been released by the University of Warwick on the variety of integration needs of refugees, as well as their unique aspirations. (Source: University of Warwick)

The Centre for Homelessness Impact has published a blog on how compassionate reforms to the refugee system can improve housing access for all. (Source: Centre for Homelessness Impact)

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