Migration news roundup 11 March 2024



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Stories that inspired us this week

Novels telling stories of migrants' experiences around the world are nominated for the 2024 'Women's Prize for Fiction Award'. (Source: ABC news)

After Home Office U-turn, the Afghan Youth Orchestra (AYU), a musical band of young migrants who fled Afghanistan, has been granted visa to come and perform in the UK. (Source: Sky news)

International news

After eleven months of conflict in Sudan, neighbouring country Chad has been hosting the vast majority of displaced Sudanese, prompting United Nations concern of an impending crisis. (Source: UNHCR News)

Closer to home, the head of the European Commission declared her support for new EU-wide policies similar to the UK- Rwanda scheme, which are intended to reduce the number of arrivals ahead of EU elections in June. Meanwhile, the Dutch High Court has decided to end legal protection for third-country nationals who have arrived in the Netherlands from Ukraine, granting them 28 days to prepare for departure (Sources: the Guardian,

Al Jezeera)

UK borders and migration policy

The government suffered a setback to its plans to fast track the Safety of Rwanda Bill after the House of Lords has voted through five new amendments including that the Bill is compliant with international law and that Rwanda cannot be declared ‘safe’ until the treaty is fully implemented. Two days later, they suffered a further five defeats on proposed amendments, increasing the likelihood that the Bill could ping pong between the two houses. Also on Rwanda, the National Audit Office published its report on the costs of the scheme, highlighting that costs could rise to £370m over five years and that the UK has already spent over £220m despite no refugees actually being sent to Rwanda yet. It could costs as much as £1.8m per asylum seeker removed to Rwanda. (Sources: the Guardian, UK Parliament, BBC, National Audit Office)

Following its latest meeting with the Calais Group – a partnership of UK, France, Germany Belgium and Netherlands, the government has issued a new policy paper outlining new commitments to tackling smuggling activities and irregular migration including across the Channel. New measures include working with social media companies and a new deal with the EU Border agency Frontex. More specifically on small boats, news reports highlight that despite government efforts, the number of arrivals this year are akin to the previous year, while this article revealed that children including babies may have been left adrift

by UK coastguards in a serious of incidents in 2021 which led to the loss of at least 27 people. (Sources: Gov.uk, Huffington Post, the Guardian)

This opinion piece says former Chief Inspector David Neal was sacked for exposing the truth. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

The Home Office has published responses to some of the 14 new inspection reports published last week:

- In their response to the report on Afghan resettlement schemes, the Home Office is accepted most of the recommendations, though notably is refusing to commit to publishing its Equality Impact Assessments on the schemes.
- Here's commentary on the findings of the report on asylum casework.
- The report covering the re-inspection of e-gates found that many EU nationals have difficulties using the automatic border system due to out-of-date entries on Home Office databases.
- Following the release of a report into the use of hotels to house unaccompanied asylum seeking children, several organisations including Refugee Council and the British Association of Social Workers have called for an inquiry into the treatment of these young people, which they described as 'distressing and dystopian'.

(Sources: Home Office, Free Movement, ICIBI, BBC)

A new toolkit to support councils with the integration of people who arrived to seek asylum has been developed by Great London Authority with partners including British Future. (Source: Greater London Authority)

Read how the changes to the Ukraine Scheme will make it more difficult for people from Ukraine to come to the UK, and why lawyers warn the government to anticipate legal challenges against the changes. (Sources: Free Movement, Politics Home)

The Domestic Violence Concession has been extended so that dependents on the student, work or graduate visa schemes can now apply for temporary access to public funds. However, they will not be able to access indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse. (Source: NRPF Network)

A new report from a 'group of experts' claims that the UK government has relied on out-of-date data to allege that the number of overseas students who entered the UK is too high and needs to be cut down (Source: University World News).

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed the funding for year 4 of the Hong Kong BN(O) Welcome Programme, including continued funding for Welcome Hubs, English and destitution support via local authorities, and national projects focusing on employment and mental health and wellbeing, while the funding for regional VCSE projects has been axed. (Source: DLUHC)

On modern slavery:

- This article looks at risks to employment rights in health and social care, in light of the latest migration statistics. (Source: Work Rights Centre)
- For frontline support staff, there's a new briefing on identifying trafficking risks in relation to the war in Ukraine – this linked briefing lists relevant training courses. (Source: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)
- New research has found that there is a lack of cultural competence in service delivery for people from Albania. (Source: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)
- This report explores the concept of the 'continuum of exploitation', which places modern slavery at the extreme end of a spectrum of experiences ranging from decent work to employment right breaches, to exploitation. (Source: FLEX)

The latest data on Windrush compensation shows that by the end of January 2024 £80.06 million had been paid out to individuals through the scheme, and over 80% of claims have had a final decision. (Source: Home Office)

Cohesion and integration

In the week that a poll found 21% of Brits hold negative opinions about Muslims, compared to 9% about Jews and 7% about Christians, former Home Office minister Robert Jenrick has claimed 'soaring immigration' has made it impossible for people to integrate. In particular, he blames anti-Semitism and Islamic extremism on migrants, despite the fact that Prevent referrals

are just as likely to relate to far-right activity. (Sources: The Mirror, The Telegraph – paywall, the Guardian)

Following recent discussions surrounding Islamophobia within the Conservative Party, this article explores the assertion that certain areas of the UK, such as parts of Birmingham and London, are 'no-go-zones' for white people. This narrative has been promoted by 'rightwingers' since the early 2000's and moved to the mainstream more recently. (Source: the Guardian)

On a more positive note, Cumberland Council has responded to community tensions by forming a working group to address misinformation regarding refugees and people seeking asylum in their area. (Source: News & Star)

Finally, Tower Hamlets in London designated 'Cockney' to be a community language, following a community petition and research with Londoners who identified as 'Bengali Cockney, Black Cockney, East End Cockney, Essex Cockney, Jewish Cockney and Sylheti Cockney'. (Source: The Conversation)

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