Migration news roundup 4 December 2023

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Stories that inspired us this week

Two men who fled from Syria celebrated achieving university degrees: Mohamed Hady Taresh graduated with a masters in cyber security from the University of Gloucestershire thanks to a Sanctuary Scholarship, and Harout Marderossian was the first student of Italy's online University for Refugees, having studied engineering. (Sources: BBC, InfoMigrants)

International news

In Europe there are some important developments:

- Switzerland has introduced a fast-track asylum process which aims to process applications within 24 hours, to reduce pressure by making quicker decisions on claims from countries with low success rates. (Source: Le News)
- The Finnish government has decided to close its border with Russia, in an attempt to reduce unauthorised crossings. (Source: BBC)
- The EU Commission has proposed a new plan to tackle smuggling, intended to punish smugglers without targeting migrants themselves. (Source: InfoMigrants)

The EU has expressed concern that Niger's repeal of anti-smuggling laws could result in an increase in the number of migrants attempting to reach Europe. (Source: Euronews)

286,000 Afghans (80% of whom are women and children) have returned to Afghanistan since the start of October, after Pakistan set a deadline of November 1 for them to leave the country. Save the Children has reported an outbreak of infections linked to unsanitary conditions and a lack of access to clean water for those returning. (Source: The New Arab)

UK borders and migration policy

The government faced pressure at the Home Affairs Select Committee regarding the fact 17,000 asylum claims had been withdrawn this year, acknowledging that they do not know where these individuals are. You can watch a clip here. (Sources: the Guardian, X)

Also at the Select Committee, it was suggested that Rwanda might be receiving more than the agreed £140m per year. Meanwhile a new research report from the Refugee Council says the Rwanda scheme will not deter people from crossing the Channel in small boats. It also suggests that many unaccompanied children are likely to go missing from care to avoid being removed later under the Illegal Migration Act. (Sources: Sky News, Refugee Council)

After last week's immigration statistics revealed further increases to net migration, Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick has seemingly distanced himself from the Prime Minister's policy approach. He's also promised tougher measures to curb net migration in the future, indicating that a cap on migration might

be explored. (Sources: the Guardian, BBC News)

This article explores some potential future problems relating to the asylum system, including questions around the future for withdrawn claims, newly granted refugees and refused asylum seekers. (Source: Free Movement)

A trade union has said that migrant care staff are being exploited by employers through unpaid hours and hidden fees. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

On asylum and refugees, a new inspection into the use of asylum contingency accommodation has been launched. (Source: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration)

This article voices councils' concerns that thousands of refugees are facing homelessness over the Christmas period due to the increase in asylum decisions and a lack of notice and available housing. (Source: Local Government Association)

On children and young people:

- Kent County Council is in discussion with the Home Office regarding opening new reception centres to temporarily accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children. (Source: Independent)

- The Children’s Commissioner has expressed concern that vulnerable unaccompanied children were not receiving the care they needed while accommodated by the Home Office in hotels. (Source: Children’s Commissioner)

On Hong Kong, a new Channel 4 Dispatches investigates Chinese state sponsored repression of pro-democracy Hongkongers involved in protests and now living in the UK. (Source: Channel 4)

This new briefing focuses on migration of EU nationals to the UK post-Brexit. (Source: Migration Observatory)

Here is a blueprint for how higher education institutions, supported by the Universities of Sanctuary Network, can become places of safety, solidarity and empowerment for people affected by forced migration. (Source: Times Higher Education)

Cohesion and integration

This article explores how to address community tensions related to the Israel-Gaza conflict here in the UK. (Source: Third Sector)

These two articles add to the debate following the recent publication of net migration figures: the first discusses the Labour party’s potential approach to addressing immigration, and the second considers how migration statistics are used in support of certain arguments. (Sources: the Guardian, the Big Issue)

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