Migration news roundup 11 December 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

Photographer Pattie Boyd created a series of portraits, ‘Beyond the Headlines’, highlighting six refugees in the UK and their individual human stories based on actual news stories relating to their experiences. (Source: UNHCR)

Read a touching short story written by 9 year old Isaac Rossell from Bradford. The story features Ali, a Syrian pianist, who fled to the UK to seek asylum and came to stay with Isaac’s family. (Source: Royal Mint Museum)

‘Breaking Barriers’ refugee employment project in Manchester teamed up with Barings Law firm to offer pro bono advice to help refugees reunite with their families. (Source: Business Manchester)

We were very sad to hear the news that Benjamin Zephaniah has died after a short illness. His poems often covered issues affecting refugees and multiculturalism in Britain; here are just a few for you to enjoy. (Source: the Guardian)

International news

Germany introduced new deportation legislation to facilitate the return of unsuccessful asylum seekers to their home countries. Meanwhile, the Italian Cabinet agreed a draft law to transport

migrants rescued by Italian authorities in non-EU waters to Albania. (Sources: SchengenVisaInfo.com, InfoMigrants)

Ireland saw a steep increase in the number of asylum applications in 2022, even when excluding Ukrainian people seeking asylum, whose applications are counted separately. (Source: Big News Network)

Pakistan's Supreme Court opened a hearing after human rights groups filed a petition to stop the deportation of undocumented Afghan migrants. Meanwhile, two more boats carrying over 100 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar arrived in Indonesia, during the highest period of arrival since 2015. (Sources: Al Jazeera, France24)

UK borders and migration policy

There has been a big week of migration news, as the Home Secretary announced new plans to cut net migration and tighter requirements for visas including:

- Increasing the minimum salary threshold to sponsor dependents under the family route from £18,600 to £38,700, ignoring the Migration Advisory Committee's advice (many couples learned their plans to build lives together in the UK are now thwarted due to no longer meeting the threshold)
- Increasing the minimum salary for a visa under the skilled worker route from £26,200 to £38,700

- Removing the ability for those on health and social care visas to sponsor dependents to join them in the UK
- Replacing the Shortage Occupation List with a new, smaller Immigration Salary List.

(Sources: Home Office, BBC, OpenDemocracy)

The Home Secretary travelled to Rwanda to sign a new treaty which the government hopes will resolve the issues that led to the Supreme Court finding the Rwanda scheme unlawful last month. An emergency 'Safety of Rwanda' Bill and policy paper on the UK-Rwanda treaty were published alongside a new parliamentary briefing on Rwanda. Analysis suggests key changes include more detail on reception and accommodation arrangements and a new multi-national appeal body. The government also confirmed families with children can be relocated to Rwanda. Further, the Bill allows government to ignore some human rights law that previously contributed to the blocking of removals. Meanwhile, a minister acknowledged some asylum seekers could be returned from Rwanda to the UK under a number of circumstances. (Sources: Home Office, UK Parliament, Free Movement, BBC, the Guardian)

Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick resigned, saying the planned legislation ‘does not go far enough’. The Immigration Minister remit has now been divided between two ministers. (Sources: BBC, Prime Minister’s Office)

The number of people crossing the Channel so far in 2023 is already the second highest recorded annual total despite the Prime Minister pledging to ‘stop the boats’ this year. This article explores how a future Labour government could approach the small boats challenge. (Sources: Independent, Foreign Policy)

Specific migrant groups

On asylum and refugees, a new report examines the poverty experienced by those living on asylum support. The High Court ruled that the government can use emergency planning powers to house asylum seekers at two former RAF sites in Essex and Lincolnshire. Elsewhere, a change to DWP policy means newly granted refugees can now start a Universal Credit claim without a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). Delays in issuing BRPs have been one of the main causes of destitution for newly granted refugees. (Sources: Asylum Matters, BBC, Free Movement)

On children and young people:

- The EU is considering fingerprinting children seeking asylum as young as six years old. If agreed, the legislation will allow the EU to also process their facial images, using force if necessary. (Source: EU Observer)
- The President of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) said the current requirement for age assessments to be carried out by social workers should be removed, to reduce the pressure on councils' social work capacity. Instead, other professionals could carry out the

checks but he does not specify who those professionals would be. (Source: Community Care)
- Bath and Northeast Somerset Council announced it is 'putting a hold' on taking any more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The Council is required to take UASC under the Home Office's mandated National Transfer Scheme, but they claim there is too much financial pressure on their Children's Services budget. (Source: Bath Echo)

Plans for a national Windrush museum have been announced by Baroness Floella Benjamin, with the National Maritime Museum named as the host venue. The museum will tell the stories of families who came to Britain from the Caribbean 75 years ago, showcasing personal belongings including photographs, passports, letters and other artefacts provided by Windrush pioneers. (Source: Independent)

There are several modern slavery stories this week:

- It's been alleged the Home Office failed to issue discretionary leave to 1,600 modern slavery survivors awaiting decisions on their asylum claims, contrary to a November 2021 court ruling. (Source: the Guardian)
- New research reveals challenges relating to identifying and supporting survivors in UK prisons. (Source: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)
- This research study explores challenges faced by UK lawyers representing survivors, relating to immigration policy, the legal aid system, and political anti-lawyer

rhetoric. (Source: Monash University)

- This new report on adult sexual exploitation was produced by the STAGE project, bringing together charities in Yorkshire and the North East. It highlights the additional risks experienced by those with insecure immigration status, recommending that this should be taken into account in any national strategy development. (Source: Changing Lives)

Cohesion and integration

Read this interview with the new Doctor Who star Ncuti Gatwa about his experiences in the role, his escalating acting career and his own background, including his experiences with homelessness. (Source: Big Issue)

Day three of Bristol 24/7's online advent charity calendar covers a multi-ethnic, multi-faith organisation that specifically targets the needs of refugee women in Bristol. (Source: Bristol247)

The Life Cycle project in Derby plans to upcycle 150 used bikes and donate them to refugees around the city. The charity teaches former offenders, prisoners and volunteers the skills to refurbish used and unwanted bikes and will work closely with Red Cross and Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity Group to get the bikes to those in need. (Source: BBC)

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