

# Anti-migrant rhetoric dominates debate on UK membership in the EU

Robert Stevens  
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The Socialist Equality Party wrote in April that during the referendum over the UK's membership of the European Union, "The British population will be bombarded over the coming months with propaganda from two right-wing campaigns."

We stated, "While the Leave campaign is headed by right-wing Thatcherite forces within the Tory party and the leader of the anti-immigrant UK Independence Party (UKIP), Nigel Farage, the Remain side has the backing of the deeply unpopular government of Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron and the vast majority of the opposition Labour Party."

Our warning, and call for workers and youth to reject both campaigns with an active boycott, has been vindicated.

The Leave campaign is now focusing almost exclusively on whipping up hysteria over immigration, with claims that without a British exit from the EU the UK will be deluged by millions, if not tens of millions, of migrants. Last week a poster campaign was launched showing an EU passport as an open door next to the words: "Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU. Vote Leave, take back control."

Conservative Armed Forces Minister and Leave supporter, Penny Mordaunt, said as it was released, "A remain vote in this referendum is a vote to allow people from Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey to move here freely when they join the EU soon."

She added, "Many of these countries have high crime rates, problems with gangs and terror cells as well as challenging levels of poverty." ITV's headline on Mordaunt's comments, which was rapidly spread online by pro-Leave forces including fascists, stated, "Vote Leave: 'Murderers and terrorists from Turkey will head to UK'."

No slur on Turkey's overwhelmingly Muslim population was too base. Vote Leave stated, "Since the

birthrate in Turkey is so high, we can expect to see an additional million people added to the UK population from Turkey alone within eight years. This will not only increase the strain on Britain's public services, but it will also create a number of threats to UK security. Crime is far higher in Turkey than the UK. Gun ownership is also more widespread. Because of the EU's free-movement laws, the government will not be able to exclude Turkish criminals from entering the UK."

The Leave camp's decision to focus so heavily on immigration is to some degree shaped by the impact of warnings by everyone from United States President Barack Obama to the G7 and the International Monetary Fund that the UK faces dire economic and political implications if it exits the EU. According to the BBC, a "Brexit minister" told its flagship current affairs programme, *Newsnight*, "Vote Leave does not want to major on immigration, but the problem is that on the economy we are playing defence. We are continually having to respond to this tsunami from the Treasury, the Bank of England and the IMF. The only issue we can go on the offensive is on immigration."

However, anti-immigrant/asylum seeker rhetoric was always central to the Leave campaign. Last week, UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage echoed the notorious speech of the right-wing Tory MP Enoch Powell, who said in 1968 that if immigration into Britain was not halted, there would be "blood on the streets."

Speaking to the BBC, Farage said, "I think it's legitimate to say that if people feel they have lost control completely—and we have lost control of our borders completely as members of the European Union—and if people feel that voting doesn't change anything, then violence is the next step."

It is unsurprising, therefore, that this week's issuing by the Office for National Statistics of the latest figures on migration into the UK was the occasion for a torrent of

xenophobia.

These are the final such figures before the referendum is held on June 23. They show that net migration to the UK reached 330,000 last year. Boris Johnson, the former Tory mayor of London tipped as a future party leader, said in response that there was “no public consent for the scale of immigration we are seeing” and the situation was “completely out of control.” A vote for the Remain camp would mean “kissing goodbye permanently to control of immigration,” he declared.

Farage tweeted, “Mass immigration still hopelessly out of control and set to get worse if we Remain in EU.” In another he cited an article from the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* and commented, “England’s population to explode by 4 million. Our infrastructure cannot cope with open borders. We must Leave EU.”

The pro-Leave *Daily Express*, for whom Farage is contributing a campaign diary, responded, “How long will it be until the migrants from Africa and the Middle East are granted citizenship by their new European homes? When that day comes they too will be free to come and live here.”

The figures were released on the same day as the first of three “referendum debates” hosted by the BBC. The subject of immigration came up during the debate, with massive media coverage given to audience member Emily Wood, a music producer from Poole, who blamed immigrants for the fact that her disabled mother was unable to secure a local authority bungalow. “Immigrants are bumped up the [social housing waiting] list,” she declared. “Am I right to want to leave [the EU]?”

Wood was picked up by right-wing media outlets that specialise in the bogus assertion that immigrants and asylum seekers are immediately handed vast sums in welfare benefits and social housing. In an interview with the *Daily Mail*, she stated that her mother had been rejected for six bungalows. “When we have gone round to see who has ended up in the property, it has usually been immigrants,” she claimed.

In reality, such has been the onslaught against the right to social housing for all that in the UK, as research from the House of Commons Library notes, “There is no general entitlement to social housing for anyone in England, including British citizens.”

“Foreign nationals do not get any extra priority,” it adds.

Since 2006, in order to even qualify for social housing, EU nationals must be “working lawfully,” “self-sufficient or have a permanent right of residence (following five

years lawful residence).”

Poole is a coastal town with an estimated population of just 150,000 people. Almost 96 percent of its inhabitants are classed as “White British.” Council housing is allocated according to need, with priority given to emergency cases—thanks to the acute shortages created by cuts imposed by successive governments. There is a two-year residency criteria in Poole itself before anyone is considered.

Miss Wood confirmed that this was the case, stating that her mother had repeatedly made the “final 20” seeking a bungalow. Those she claimed had jumped the queue did so “because they have nowhere to go, no friends or family and they need help because they haven’t got a roof over their head.”

The filth being promulgated by the Leave campaign in no way means the Remain campaign is any more progressive in comparison. Cameron, along with Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, did nothing to oppose the demonization of Turkey’s population.

Cameron merely stated, “It is not remotely on the cards that Turkey is going to join the EU any time soon. ... At the current rate of progress they will probably get round to joining in about the year 3000 according to the latest forecasts.”

His government’s support for the Remain vote is based on the deal agreed between Cameron and the EU, of which the main planks are an “emergency brake” on EU migrants claiming in-work benefits that will last for seven years, the restriction of child benefits for EU migrants to the rate of their home country, and the right of the UK to impose a temporary brake on financial regulations that impact the City of London financial swindlers. Cameron declared in the Tories’ last election manifesto that his government’s aim, while remaining in the EU, was to reduce net migration down to below 100,000.



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