

# UK: Rudd resigns as home secretary after lying to Parliament over migrant deportation targets

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Amber Rudd's resignation as home secretary brings the ongoing Windrush scandal over the mistreatment of legal Caribbean migrants to the UK to the very door of Prime Minister Theresa May.

Her downfall was all but assured after she was caught lying to Parliament by denying the existence of Home Office deportation targets. However, it was under May, then home secretary, that the much criticized "hostile environment" policy was introduced as part of a vicious anti-immigrant strategy.

Rudd's replacement, Sajid Javid, now gives the impression of a changed, sympathetic Home Office—Javid's parents moved to Britain from Pakistan in the 1960s. But despite insincere government apologies, the crocodile tears shed by the media and the pose of opposition by the Labour Party, there will be no real change regarding the anti-immigrant agenda shared by the entire establishment.

At the heart of the Windrush scandal is a cynical attempt to use the fate of vulnerable workers to further the factional dispute which commands the interest of British ruling and mainstream media circles: Britain's exit from the European Union.

The "hostile environment" at the Home Office, out of which the targeting of migrants with decades of residence in the UK emerged, was never previously challenged by its belated critics. The phrase was first used in a Labour-run Home Office in 2010 by the home secretary of the time, Alan Johnson. Its principles were then energetically pursued under the subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and majority Tory Governments, with many of the policies and measures involved enshrined in the 2014 Immigration Act, against which only 18 Labour MPs voted.

Following the Brexit referendum in 2016, Labour Party

leader Jeremy Corbyn has repeatedly insisted that freedom of movement would come to an end under Labour. Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott was challenged on Radio 4's *Today* programme to answer, "What exactly the Government has done wrong" by setting targets for deporting illegal immigrants. Abbott replied that "any government would have targets and performance indicators," but their use had been "too broad." This Monday, Abbott clarified on *Good Morning Britain* that "The Labour party isn't calling for an amnesty" and refused to answer questions about how Labour would treat illegal immigrants.

Next to no comment has been made on broader issues of immigration policy, like the 40,000 people who left the UK "voluntarily" in 2016 after receiving threatening letters from the government.

The current debate over immigration has been carefully focused on the very specific case of Windrush-era Caribbean migrants, who were invited to Britain from the late 1940s onwards from Commonwealth countries to fill a labour shortage. This is both to make clear that anti-migrant measures are to be generally supported and to score political points against the advocates of Brexit.

The atrocious story of how Caribbean migrants—many of whom have lived and worked in the UK for decades—were being denied jobs, homes and health care and threatened with deportation first started to be reported by the *Guardian* last November. However, it reached a peak of intensity in mid-April this year, coinciding with the Commonwealth summit in London.

Amelia Gentleman, the lead reporter on the issue, said of the newspaper's coverage, "It was only when the Barbados high commissioner revealed that Downing Street had rejected a formal request from all 12 Caribbean high commissioners to meet with Theresa May at the

Commonwealth heads of government meeting that the story became huge. We put that on the front page, and then reported [Labour MP] David Lammy's outraged letter to the government signed by 140 cross-party MPs, and within 24 hours Amber Rudd was apologising for the 'appalling' behaviour of her own department."

The Conservative government had hoped to use the summit as an advert for the prospects of a post-Brexit turn to the Commonwealth for immigration and trade deals—that was supposed to compensate for lost trade and skilled migrants from the European Union. But this was torpedoed by the strongly pro-Remain *Guardian*. Speaking for powerful sections of the ruling class who have opposed the anti-free movement stand of the hard Brexit Tories as inimical to the basic needs of industry, the *Guardian* ran a podcast, titled, "EU citizens' rights and the shadow of Windrush," which asked, "Will EU nationals find themselves treated in similar fashion to the Windrush generation?"

Brussels "was already shocked by the treatment of dozens of EU citizens who have tried to apply for permanent residency in the UK since the Brexit vote," it stated.

"The shameful Windrush saga has struck fear into EU nationals' hearts," wrote Tanja Buelmann, while the *Guardian* editorialised that "many more are suffering from the 'hostile environment' Theresa May created. ... Most immediately, these cases fuel concern over how EU citizens will be treated after Brexit."

Only this underlying concern explains the *Guardian's* hymn of praise for the former home secretary whose removal their own campaign just achieved.

Rudd is considered an important voice for a "soft Brexit" within the Tory party and therefore an important ally in any manoeuvre against hard-line Leavers.

Pippa Crerar and Anne Perkins were therefore tasked with boosting the reputation of Rudd in an article just hours after her resignation, in what reads like an apology for having caused her so much inconvenience.

"No one who knows her thinks she believes in May's cherished ambition of cutting net migration to below 100,000," they write. "Until a fortnight ago, it was generally understood Rudd was a natural liberal oppressed by the demands of the security state ..."

Much of the rest of the article is given to a heavily spun version of Rudd's CV:

"Her fortitude in turning up for a television debate during last year's general election, which May herself had refused to do, just 48 hours after her father had died won

her the respect of MPs from right across the Commons."

"Her personal history is that of a woman who would always have intended to reach the top ...

"Her backstory is typical of many women on the A-list of candidates David Cameron set up to symbolise his modernisation programme ...

"Rudd's glamour and energy won her the marginal seat of Hastings in 2010 and 2015 ...

"In the anguished team that ran the 2017 election campaign, Rudd blossomed, warm and authentic against May's clumsy reserve."

As to why the proven liar and wilful executor of a home office policy, likened by some civil servants to that of Nazi Germany and which had a devastating impact on many people's lives, is now being recast as an empowered, glamorous and warm MP of great fortitude, the article included this barely veiled advice:

"[W]hile her absence around the cabinet table, with its delicate balance of remainers and Brexiters, will be keenly felt, she is also returning to the backbenches knowing exactly where all the bodies are buried ...

"Rudd has been unswervingly loyal to the prime minister so far, but she might not feel so inclined to be on the backbenches."

Continued criticisms from the media of the government's immigration policy and calls for the buck to stop with May, therefore, have nothing to do with the plight of migrants and everything to do with pushing this campaign to its intended conclusion: undermining the hard-Brexit wing of the Tory party.

It should be noted that the lead reporter for the *Guardian* on Windrush, Amelia Gentleman, is married to the Conservative Universities Minister Jo Johnson, described by the *Evening Standard* last year as "an important member of the growing clan of the [soft Brexit] 'Sensibles,' led by deputy PM Damian Green, Chancellor Philip Hammond and Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary."



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