Thousands of asylum seekers face destitution due to UK's "Illegal Migration" legislation

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Britain's Conservative government is intensifying its attacks on refugees and asylum seekers, spurred on by fascistic elements led by Home Secretary Suella Braverman.

After her speech to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington in September, Braverman told the Tories annual conference last week, that "The future could bring millions more migrants to these shores, uncontrolled and unmanageable, unless the government they elect next year acts decisively to stop that happening." She complained that Britain had "become enmeshed in a dense net of international rules that were designed for another era." She said of "the misnamed Human Rights Act… I am surprised they didn't call it the Criminal Rights Act."

Braverman is enforcing a brutal agenda threatening asylum seekers with being made homeless and destitute if they refuse to get aboard unsafe barges or under tents as they await deportation. They are also denied the right to work and forced to survive on small payments for food.

The British Red Cross (BRC) issued a statement October 5 warning, "More than 50,000 (53,100) refugees could be made homeless by the end of the year if the Government doesn't take urgent steps to support them as it clears the asylum backlog".

This is due to the government pledge to process all "legacy" asylum applications made before June 28, 2022 by the end of the year. The BRC warn that that even if this target is not met, 26,000 could still be at risk of destitution and homelessness.

The time given to refugees to move from state-funded asylum support to finding accommodation, employment and benefits has been slashed from a 28 day "move-on" process to seven days. This began in August and since then the BRC Refugee Services report a "140% increase in destitution for people they support with refugee status, from 132 people in June and July, to 317 people in August and September."

The Home Office now counts the 28 days from the time when asylum seekers receive their asylum decision letter, rather than when they receive their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), which is needed to apply for Universal Credit.

Alex Fraser, BRC Director for Refugee Support, said, "People who have been forced to flee their homes have already experienced unimaginable trauma… It takes at least 35 days to start getting Universal Credit and local authorities need at least 56 days to help them find accommodation."

The *Independent* reported that Charity Refugees at Home, which matches refugees with rooms, has seen referrals increase from 70 in September 2022 to 223 last month. One Sudanese refugee, Hamad, 20, now supported by the charity, had to live in a London Park after he was granted refugee status in Britain and was given seven days to leave his hotel accommodation.

Carly Whyborn, executive director of Refugees at Home, said, "Since the changes, we have had a five-fold increase in the number of referrals from refugees desperate for somewhere to live, and the situation is getting worse. We are urgently trying to reach out to new hosts, particularly in major cities, who may be able to offer a temporary place to stay."

Homelessness charity network NACCOM said 2022-23 was the first time since it started collecting data a decade ago that more than half the adults given help were refugees.

Major cities London, Glasgow and cities in the North West of England have higher numbers of asylum seekers at risk in addition to housing shortages.

The *Guardian* reported Seána Roberts, the manager of the Merseyside Refugee Support Network in Liverpool, saying, "I've never seen anything like this in my 25 years in the sector. Normally we might have seen one or two

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people present themselves as street homeless in a year. Now we've got 50 people in the space of six weeks." Roberts had handed out sleeping bags to a number of refugees in the past six weeks. "They chose not to take tents because they didn't want to be visible or feel vulnerable in the park," she added.

Steve Smith, the chief executive of the charity Care4Calais, warned of a refugee homelessness crisis this winter. "Hundreds if not thousands of refugees are facing homelessness or destitution. Refugees are telling us that they are being forced to buy tents and sleep rough in the streets."

The impact of the passing of the Illegal Immigration Act in July will make conditions for asylum seekers unbearable. Its attacks are the subject of a report by the Refugee Council, "The Truth About Channel Crossings and the impact of the Illegal Migration Act." The main elements of the Act, it notes, "include the creation of a duty for the home secretary to arrange for the removal of anyone who arrives irregularly into the UKincluding, but not limited to, those who arrive by small boat. Anyone who is covered by the duty to remove will have any asylum application or relevant human rights claim deemed automatically inadmissible."

The Refugee Council analyses Home Office statistics and shows that "three in every four of the people who have crossed the channel so far this year would be recognised as refugees if the UK Government processed their asylum applications. This is higher than the Refugee's Council previous analysis of those who made the journey in 2022, which found it was almost two-thirds."

It notes that more than 54 percent who have made perilous crossings are from five countries—Afghanistan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, and Sudan, all devastated by the imperialist powers.

Once the Illegal Migration Act comes into force:

"Each year, over 27,000 refugees who cross the channel will be denied status in the UK.

"As few as 3.5 percent of those people arriving by small boat, 1,297 people, will be removed from the UK to their own country.

"35,409 people who arrive in the UK by small boat could be left in limbo each year, having had their asylum claim deemed permanently inadmissible but not having been removed.

The Act states that asylum seekers deemed to have arrived in Britain illegally can be deported to a "safe third country". The report notes, "Even with a safe third country agreement in place with Rwanda which allows for up to 10,000 people to be removed there annually at least 25,409 people will be left in a state of permanent limbo each year and could be as high as 35,409."

Many future asylum seekers will receive no state support while also denied the right to live and work in the UK indefinitely. The report states, "It is highly likely these people will disappear into the margins of communities and be at risk of long-term destitution, exploitation and abuse."

Last month more than 140 refugee and homelessness organisations sent a letter to Braverman and Housing Secretary Michael Gove pointing out that the government policies were causing "severe hardship for refugees, as well as placing unnecessary pressures on local authorities who are already facing challenges finding accommodation for other groups." The organisations warn, "The significant number of refugees already made homeless by this change is also placing huge pressures on the voluntary sector, including refugee hosting and housing schemes and mainstream homelessness services …The demands are quickly becoming unsustainable. It is already inevitably leading to increased rough sleeping, undermining government targets to end it."

The full force of the state is being brought down on a few thousand people fleeing poverty stricken and war-torn homelands, as a result of decades of imperialist war and geopolitical intrigues. This agenda is shared by the Labour Party, which takes every opportunity to try to outflank the Tories on anti-immigration rhetoric. Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper declared in an interview with the *Telegraph*, as Labour's annual conference began, "Net migration is now at a record high. We expect it to come down, we think it should come down."

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