

# UK Labour government mounts anti-immigration offensive targeting over 14,500 people

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21 August 2024

This week the Home Office of Labour government Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced a “major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity, to make sure that immigration and asylum rules are respected and enforced”.

This includes “new plans for the next 6 months to achieve the highest rate of removals of those with no right to be here, including failed asylum seekers, for 5 years.”

With Sir Keir Starmer’s Labour pledged to be a government of war, anti-immigration, and austerity in the service of big business, Cooper announced within two days of taking office the creation of a Gestapo-like Border Security Command. Central to it was setting up a Returns and Enforcement Unit to swiftly deport anyone deemed a “failed” asylum seeker.

On Wednesday, the Home Office issued its “progress” report as it announced a raft of further anti-immigration measures befitting the most right-wing government in British history.

In the next six months the government plans to deport around 14,500 people deemed to be illegal migrants, topping the two previous six-month highs set during Conservative government rule of 13,410 in 2018 and 14,389 last year. The Home Office said meeting this target was required in “reversing the damaging drop in enforcement over recent years.”

It stated, “This enforcement surge, overseen by Bas Javid, the Home Office’s Director General for Immigration Enforcement, is part of the government’s plans to transform the asylum system and secure UK borders.”

Bas Javid is the brother of Sajid Javid, the former Tory home secretary who played a major role in revoking the British citizenship of a 15-year-old girl, Shamima Begum.

Cooper is already overseeing a “summer blitz of illegal immigration raids” involving over 1,000 “Immigrant Enforcement” officials. The mass round-up, said the Home Office, necessitates, “increasing detention spaces to support

the higher pace of removals including reopening Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) at Campsfield and Haslar and adding 290 beds there. This increase will ensure there is additional capacity to facilitate higher levels of enforcement and returns so that rules are properly respected.”

The Immigration Removal Centre detention camps have been widely condemned by human rights groups as inhumane, with detainees brutalised by a sadistic regime. When the Hampshire-located Haslar IRC closed in 2015, this was partially due to a 2015 parliamentary review of IRCs which Rob McNeil, Deputy Director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, said had found “that immigration detention had been expensive and damaging to detainees.”

Campsfield House in Oxfordshire, closed in 2018 after years of atrocious conditions under successive Labour and Conservative governments that resulted in multiple complaints, protests including sit-ins, hunger strikes, and stand-offs in which detainees were confronted by specialised riot squads.

The Socialist Equality Party, in opposing support for Labour in the general election, insisted that Starmer’s party had no fundamental differences with the Tories. In reopening Campsfield and Haslar, Labour is implementing plans to bring them back into operation previously advanced by the Johnson/Truss Tory governments in 2022.

What is different from the Tories is the speed at which Labour is enforcing its pledge to remove “illegal” migrants and “secure the borders.” Labour has ditched the Tories’ policy of attempting to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda—which it denounced as an ineffective and expensive “gimmick”—and has switched the resources earmarked for the Rwanda scheme to ensure swift deportations to other countries.

The Home Office statement announced, “Staff are being redeployed to increase removal of failed asylum seekers,

which had dropped by 40% since 2010. Three hundred caseworkers have already been reassigned to progress thousands of failed asylum and returns cases, including enforced and voluntary returns.”

Flights that had been primed for Rwanda deportations have been repurposed to deport immigrants to a host of countries. The Home Office boasted that the further deportations would be “Building on 9 successful returns flights in the last six weeks, including the largest-ever chartered return flight, the government is redeploying personnel and resources to support further activity.” The “largest-ever chartered return flight” was the deportation of more than 200 people to Brazil earlier this month.

The *Telegraph* had the Home Office plans as their second main front page story in Wednesday’s edition, under the inflammatory headline, “I’ll lock up and deport more migrants, vows Cooper.” It referred approvingly to “New returns agreements... signed with Vietnam, which has accounted for the biggest rise in Channel migrants, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Serbia and Georgia following the fast-track removal deal with Albania.”

Much of Labour’s anti-immigrant policy is being formulated in discussion with key European leaders as part of their overall “Fortress Europe” policy, including the fascist Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, with whom Starmer has developed a close relationship.

The Home Office statement noted, “This work builds on the Prime Minister’s meeting at the European Political Community last month, where he held discussions with the migration working group alongside Italy, Albania, Germany, Malta, Denmark, Hungary, The Netherlands, and Slovakia. The European leaders discussed border security, their joint efforts to tackle people-smuggling, and the ambition to work collectively with other countries to deliver solutions.”

Labour is enforcing mass deportations under the guise of “smashing the criminal smuggling gangs” organising the perilous cross-Channel sailing to the UK. The Home Office announced “up to 100 new specialist intelligence and investigations officers deployed to the National Crime Agency (NCA)” to tackle the gangs.

Far more personnel, including the 300 reassigned caseworkers, and resources are going towards removals and persecutions of asylum seekers and immigrants, beyond anything carried out by previous Conservative governments, including that of Theresa May, which boasted of creating a “hostile environment” for asylum seekers and refugees.

Cooper announced a “new intelligence-driven illegal working programme will be rolled out to target, investigate and take down unscrupulous employers who illegally employ those with no right to work here... Those caught working illegally and eligible for removal will be detained,

pending their swift removal.”

The acceleration of Labour’s anti-immigration drive comes just days after a week of riots by fascists demanding further clampdowns against asylum seekers. While the government was forced to arrest and sentence many of those involved to bring the situation under control, the far-right were only able to organise in any number because of the frenzied anti-immigration atmosphere whipped up by Labour and the Tories as they competed over who was best placed to “Stop the Boats.”

The SEP noted the response of the *Sun* newspaper in the aftermath of the riots. After demanding Starmer, in terms of arrests and prosecutions, “throw the book” at “far-right thugs,” it insisted that the new government had to deal with “the twin problems of violent crime and illegal migration.”

We warned that the *Sun*’s editorial “can be read as the Labour government’s playbook in the coming weeks.”

These developments are a political indictment of all those such as Stand Up To Racism and groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, who insisted that stopping the fascists grouped around Tommy Robinson and within Nigel Farage’s Reform UK could be isolated from a political struggle against the Starmer government, so that alliances could be formed with various trade union bureaucrats and Labour “lefts.”

Labour is already proving to be a greater danger to asylum seekers than the fascist mobs which it encouraged through its use of vile xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric to legitimise war and austerity. And it will use the strengthened powers for the police, including setting up of a national riot force targeting “extremism,” against the working class.



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