

UK Labour government legislates Trump-style anti-migrant agenda

Steve James**12 February 2025**

The Starmer Labour government's flagship Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Bill 2025 deepens the criminalisation of any immigration not carried out through strict "official" channels, seeking to jail, deport, and tag as many migrants as possible.

The Bill's second reading in the House of Commons on Monday followed a campaign by the government, embraced by large sections of the press, to present Labour as clamping down on "illegal" migration. Labour aims to prove itself more hostile to migrants than both its Conservative predecessors and Nigel Farage's far-right Reform UK.

Labour is stoking a putrid hysteria to scapegoat migrants for the social crisis and legitimize widespread police dragnet measures ultimately directed at the entire working class. It is proving itself to be a far-right formation in its naked emulation of Donald Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) Republicans.

Britain's right-wing media celebrated the Home Office's figures crowing that the Labour government had deported 18,897 "foreign criminals" since last year's general election, the highest figure since 2017. Fully 39 charter flights were hired, with around 10 percent of passengers handcuffed or suffering other forms of restraint as they were expelled against their will. Some were physically carried onto aircraft.

Between July and September 2024, flights took off to destinations in France, Brazil, India, Albania, Romania, Turkey and China. Replicating the public humiliation of migrants by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Home Office released a set of videos Monday showing migrants first being arrested in dawn raids and footage of them being bundled onto a plane by Border Force staff and flown out of Britain.

The *Independent* reported that the government is offering a contract to a company that could be worth almost £400 million to oversee the booking and management of deportation flights for up to seven years.

Another Home Office release hailed a "blitz on illegal working" carried out in January, with 509 people arrested

during 828 raids on business premises where migrants were suspected of working. Nail bars, car washes, convenience stores and restaurants were targeted.

Since July, over 1,000 civil penalty notices, which can amount to as much as £60,000, have been served on companies employing migrants deemed illegal. It was trailed in the media that Blairite Home Secretary Yvette Cooper will personally participate in a dawn raid herself this week.

At the same time, Labour has dropped all party branding, including its traditional red colour, to launch a series of social media adverts that are in the same sky blue shade as that used by Reform UK. One advert, showing a group of asylum seekers being deported in silhouette, reads in block capitals: "Breaking News, Breaking News: Labour Hits 5 Year High In Migrant Removals".

The Home Office has also changed the "good character" citizenship rules from February 10, so that migrants who "previously arrived without a required valid entry clearance or electronic travel authorisation, having made a dangerous journey will normally be refused citizenship."

This is aimed at the most vulnerable and desperate people, forced to risk their lives in small boats in the English Channel, or in shipping containers, risking drowning or suffocation. The change, not part of the immigration bill, will create a layer of permanent non-citizens, deprived of the right to vote, excluded from some jobs and liable to be deported should they set a foot wrong.

The Conservative Party opposition, led by Kemi Badenoch, complained that Labour was repealing Section 32 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 which "prevents people who enter the country illegally from gaining citizenship" and therefore weakening overall anti-immigration policy.

The Labour-supporting *Guardian* noted, "Labour is getting rid of the Tory law that was supposed to stop people arriving on small boats from claiming asylum. But being granted asylum is not the same as getting citizenship, and the Home Office is at the same time tightening guidance to make it harder—in fact, almost impossible—for small boat arrivals to claim citizenship."

Over 70,000 people who have already successfully applied for asylum will now be barred from claiming UK citizenship, in a major attack on international law in place for decades. Article 31 of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention says: “The contracting states shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees.”

Leading immigration barrister Colin Yeo noted that Labour’s policy “creates a class of person who are forever excluded from civic life no matter how long they live here. It’s also a clear breach of the refugee convention.”

The government’s assault on migrants presents immigration as a form of “serious organised crime” against which “counter terror style tactics” are to be deployed. The bill sets out the powers of the Border Security Commander, leading the Border Security Command (BSC) established last year, to require cooperation from “partner agencies” including HMRC (tax office and customs), the Foreign Office, the Border Force, the National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and the police.

The intelligence services (the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ) and the armed forces are also obliged to establish cooperation arrangements.

The BSC itself has been staffed initially with 300 officials and 100 specialist investigators tasked with building European and global partnerships to “investigate and break people smuggling networks” while directing ever more cases through the courts.

Migrants, particularly those crossing the English Channel and people assisting their complex and desperate journeys in any way (“facilitating migration” criminal or otherwise), are demonised as a danger to public safety.

Clauses 13 to 15 of the Bill creates new offences directed against those supplying “articles for use in immigration crime”, carrying sentences of up to 14 years. According to a government briefing, this could involve “[s]elling, offering to supply, or receiving small boat parts and supplying forged identity documents” or “anything of substance” that does not involve food, medicine, shelter or life-saving equipment.

Clause 16 is wide ranging, “criminalising the collection, recording, possession, viewing, or otherwise accessing by the internet, of information ‘of a kind likely to be useful to’ a person organising or preparing for a journey to the UK which would result in an illegal entry or arrival offence,” according to a summary by the Electronic Immigration Network.

As well as travel timetables and routes, this could be extended to looking up weather reports, for which crime a sentence of up to five years could be imposed. Clause 17 states that these “offences” would apply to acts done “inside or outside” of the UK.

Clause 18 specifically targets “unauthorised sea crossings”

to the UK, creating an offence of illegal entry by water from France, Belgium or the Netherlands and if “at any time between first leaving dry land and reaching dry land in the UK, did an act which caused or created a risk of death or serious physical or psychological injury to another person”. This might include acts by migrants themselves when boarding a vessel in shallow water, and might, or might not, exclude parents whose children are on the vessel. No actual harm needs to have been caused.

Clauses 19 to 26 extend legal powers to seize, search and save data from electronic devices, following a 2022 ruling that the Home Office had acted illegally when, in 2020, all mobile phones held by migrants arriving by boat were seized and searched. After the Bill becomes law any immigration or police officer can forcibly seize any device they consider may, at any time, have been involved in a “facilitation offence”.

In a particularly vile move, Clause 38 denies people access to identification and support as victims of modern slavery. It retains and strengthens anti-migrant measures introduced by previous administrations and which the Labour Party, in opposition, professed to oppose.

The Westminster debate consisted largely of government figures insisting Labour was more consistently and effectively hostile to migrants than the Tories. By abandoning the Sunak government’s plan to deport migrants to Rwanda, Labour had, said Cooper, freed up staff and resources to increase enforced deportations. She boasted of a 24 percent increase since Labour took power, while new biometric checks and enforcement measures had already been deployed.

The Bill was passed by a majority of 194. A handful of feeble interventions from Labour and “independent” lefts, such as former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, calling for safer migration routes, were swatted aside.

Labour intends to follow up the Bill by hosting a Border Security Summit at the end of March, at Lancaster House. Some 40 countries as well as international institutions have been invited to a showcase of Labour’s far-right, anti-migrant and anti-democratic credentials. Among these will be the fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni who is enforcing some of the most brutal anti-immigration measures on the planet—which Starmer has repeatedly cited as a model for his government.



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