

# UK Starmer government proclaims its anti-immigration plans to be the “central issue”

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Britain’s Labour government announced policies Monday and Tuesday stepping up its assault on asylum seekers.

This was the Starmer government’s response to the furore whipped up by the far-right, backed by a xenophobic media, after the Court of Appeal decision to allow asylum seekers to remain in a hotel in Epping—reversing an earlier legal ruling that they had to leave.

On Monday, in the first statement from the government as Parliament returned from recess, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper suspended new applications under the existing family reunion route for refugees—which historically applied to spouses, partners, and children under 18. Families of refugees are now barred from entering, with Cooper telling MPs that this will allow the government to formulate an even stricter border regime.

Refugees will only be able to reunite with family members under standard family visa rules, with much stricter requirements such as earning a minimum £29,000 per year which millions of workers in the UK are nowhere near earning. The sponsor would have to demonstrate that they have adequate housing for their family and that a family member has a sufficient grasp of the English language.

A tougher system would be announced later this year, said Cooper, with “some of those changes in place for the spring [of 2026]. These would include “looking at contribution requirements, longer periods before newly granted refugees can apply, and dedicated controlled arrangements for unaccompanied children and those fleeing persecution who have family in the UK.”

Solidarising herself with the far-right led protests that have besieged asylum seekers in hotels for weeks, she added, “I understand and agree with local councils and communities who want the asylum hotels in their

communities closed, because we need to close all asylum hotels—we need to do so for good.”

In an interview with the BBC the same day, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said of Labour’s policy to end the housing of asylum seekers in hotels before the next election scheduled for 2029, “We’ve said we’ll get rid of them by the end of the parliament. I would like to bring that forward, I think it is a good challenge.”

Cooper laid out Tuesday on LBC the further dehumanisation of asylum seekers after they are evicted from hotels by Labour. The government’s aim was to “to shrink the whole asylum system. So we actually need to have fewer people in the asylum system in the first place”. Instead of hotels in which many asylum seekers are already forced to share a room, “we do also want to see alternative sites, more appropriate sites, including looking at military and industrial sites as well.”

Pressed by right-wing presenter Nick Ferrari whether this meant asylum seekers being housed in warehouses, Cooper replied, “That’s one of the things that’s been looked at.”

None of this differs in essence from the concentration camps for asylum seekers that Nigel Farage, leader of the far-right Reform UK, announced last week as a flagship policy for his government, were he to be elected, preparatory to the mass deportation of hundreds of thousands.

Starmer made going “further and faster” on cutting migration the “central issue” of his government at Tuesday’s cabinet. Ahead of a ministerial meeting later that afternoon his spokesman said, “[Starmer] said it was easy to understand the frustration people feel at the level of illegal crossings and the site of asylum hotels in their communities.”

The government would continue “to work with the

French authorities [to prevent asylum seekers reaching the UK],” work on “accelerating the closure of hotels” and was “driving further progress returning people with no right to be here.”

Asked Monday by the BBC if he would be comfortable with his daughter having to walk past an asylum seeker’s hotel, Starmer insisted he “completely” understood the concerns of residents, adding: Local people by and large do not want these hotels in their towns, in their place, nor do I. I’m completely at one with them on that.”

Central to the anti-immigration hysteria being whipped up by the neo-Nazis is the plastering of towns and cities—even including painting over roundabouts on roads—with England Saint George’s cross flags and Union Jacks. Starmer again used his BBC interview to solidarise with the far-right. Asked if he back the “Raise the Colours” campaign, he replied while sat in front of a Union Jack: “I’m a supporter of flags ... I’ve got one behind me.”

He added, “In our flat, which is upstairs from here [Starmer was speaking in Downing Street], as you know, we’ve got a St George’s flag in our flat.”

Worshipping the English and UK flags is emblematic of Labour’s transformation into a political cesspit, ready to do whatever it takes to carry out an agenda of rearmanent, war and austerity. “I’m the leader of the Labour Party who put the union jack on our Labour Party membership cards,” Starmer declared. “I always sit in front of a Union Jack. I’ve been doing it for years, and it attracted a lot of comment when I started doing it.”

Starmer made these statements just a few months after his notorious anti-migrant rant in which he aped the far-right Enoch Powell’s notorious “Rivers of Blood” speech (1968)—declaring that without strict immigration controls, “We risk becoming an island of strangers.”

Labour doubled down on Starmer’s xenophobic interview Tuesday, with Cooper stating, “I’m going to confess I have not just the St George’s flag, I have St George’s bunting. I have also Union Jack bunting which is currently still hanging up in my garden shed.”

Asked if people should continue “putting up flags on motorway gantries”, Cooper replied of activity previously deemed dangerous and illegal, “Oh, put them up anywhere. I would put them up anywhere.”

The statements of Starmer and Cooper confirm that there is no “left/right” conflict between the Labour government and its would be replacement in Reform UK and the Tory party. The main parties, without exception, all speak the same language of social reaction—with the vile competition as to who is toughest on asylum seekers the precursor to a wider and far more extensive assault than anything seen in the post-war period on the social position and democratic rights of the entire working class.

The need to dispense with “unaffordable” asylum seekers is proclaimed by the same forces—with Labour cabinet ministers leading the way—insisting that spending on the National Health Service, education, housing and benefits must all be slashed in recognition of the “end of the peace dividend” and the need to ramp up military spending by tens of and hundreds of billions of pounds.

Events this summer vindicate the Socialist Equality Party’s refusal last year to join the pseudo-left groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and Revolutionary Communist Party in supporting the election of a Starmer government. In May, weeks before the mobilisations outside hotels began, the WSWs, calling for a political struggle against the government, wrote, “Shorn of its name, conjuring images of a long-abandoned connections to reformism, the Labour government is a far-right formation.”

In the weeks since, due to its refusal to enact any policies to bring respite to the working class, Labour’s and Starmer’s own support has plummeted to record lows, with the far-right the immediate beneficiaries. A YouGov poll published Tuesday found that Labour’s net approval rating has fallen to -59. In a poll taken between August 23-25, just 11 percent approved of the government with 70 percent disapproving.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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