

UK Labour government unveils far-right anti-immigration programme

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“The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.”

George Orwell, Animal Farm

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood unveiled a fascistic anti-immigration policy Monday, effacing any remaining differences between the ruling Labour Party, the Conservatives, and the far-right Reform UK.

Mahmood unveiled a 33-page policy paper, *“Restoring Order and Control”*, before addressing MPs in Parliament. She trailed the document in a *Guardian* op-Ed on Monday writing, “These reforms bear down on illegal migration... They ensure that we enforce our rules more robustly, returning illegal migrants who have no right to be here.”

Labour’s plan is lifted from the programme of the Denmark’s Social Democrats Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen who oversees—in coalition with right-wing parties—one of the most vicious anti-immigration regimes in Europe.

Adopting the Danish plan is Labour’s response to months of demonstrations—centred on mobilisations outside hotels accommodating asylum seekers—organised by the far-right demanding mass deportations. These have been backed by Nigel Farage’s Reform UK, which has thrived in the noxious atmosphere created by years of Conservative and Labour governments competing over which had the most anti-immigrant programme. Labour’s failure to offer any policies addressing the needs of the working class has it polling at record low levels for a ruling party, with Reform taking a 10 point lead.

Restoring Order and Control effectively abolishes the right to asylum in Britain, preparing the ground for mass deportations to be enforced by the ICE-style Immigration Enforcement (IE) teams already in operation.

Refugees will no longer have the right to live permanently in the UK, and will be deported once their home country is no longer deemed dangerous to return to. Under Mahmood’s plan refugee status will be subject to regular review every two and half years and deportations carried out, including of

families with young children in school.

Currently, if an asylum seeker is granted refugee status in the UK they receive a five-year protection period of “leave to remain” and can apply for indefinite leave to remain after five years. Under the new plan those deemed to have arrived “illegally”, i.e., after perilously crossing the Channel on a small boat—will be forced to wait 20 years before they can apply for permanent settlement.

Ahead of Mahmood announcing the plans, Sky News quoted one of her backers saying, “The moment your home country is safe to return to, you will be removed. While this might seem like a small technical shift, this new settlement marks the most significant shift in the treatment of refugees since the Second World War.”

According to the Refugee Council the plans would require the Home Office to review the status of up to 1.4 million refugees.

Under new legislation, the Home Office will no longer have to provide financial support to asylum seekers, as is presently the case under the Human Right Act 1998 (which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law). This will be changed to a discretionary power, meaning that anyone in government funded accommodation can be removed.

Based on the Danish precedent, UK officials will be able to seize assets, including jewellery, from asylum seekers to cover the costs of their accommodation and processing. Home Office minister Alex Norris told Sky News that the only “heirloom” items would be excluded, such as wedding rings.

Labour will legislate to restrict how courts apply the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 3, protecting people from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, will be reinterpreted to “support the deportation of dangerous criminals”.

The right to family life enshrined in Article 8 of the ECHR will be reinterpreted to “rebalance public interest tests in favour of the British people’s expectations.” Only asylum seekers with immediate family in the UK, such as a parent or

child, will be able to cite Article 8 as grounds to stay in Britain.

Asylum seekers whose claim to stay has been rejected will no longer be allowed further appeals. New legislation will restrict them to arguing all grounds against their removal in a single appeal.

Mahmmod's document complains that "many families of failed asylum seekers continue to live in this country, receiving free accommodation and financial support, for years on end."

It warns, "The government will offer all families financial support to enable them to return to their home country. Should they refuse that support, we will escalate to an enforced return. We will launch a consultation on the process for enforcing the removal of families, including children."

The plan also proposes that the Modern Slavery Act be modified to prevent asylum seekers from claiming they are fleeing countries where they have been subjected to slavery!

Such fascistic policies in Denmark have slashed the number of asylum applications to the lowest level in 40 years, with the removal of 95 percent of asylum seekers whose applications were rejected.

In 2014, the year prior to Frederiksen taking leadership of the Social Democrats, a total of 14,792 asylum seekers arrived in Denmark. By 2021—two years after she became prime minister—that figure had collapsed to 2,099 and has remained at around that number since. Given that the UK's population is around 12 times the size of Denmark's and that 111,084 people claimed asylum in Britain in the year to June, a similar reduction in UK claims would see 100,000 people being deported.

Frederiksen has demonstrated that there are no limits as to the savagery that social democratic governments will impose on asylum seekers and refugees. The WSWS noted that Frederiksen's government "retained a racist policy implemented by her Liberal predecessors that permits authorities to designate low-income neighbourhoods with large immigrant populations as 'ghettos'." On this pretext such areas could be demolished and their residents driven out.

Under the Social Democrats' own 2021 law establishing "parallel society areas"—which rebranded the Liberal legislation—areas with over 1,000 residents were defined as ghettos if more than 50 percent were "immigrants and their descendants from non-Western countries."

Labour's plan will also prevent three African countries, Angola, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo—setting a precedent for others—from accessing UK visas if they fail to take back people deported from Britain. The *Times* noted that this measure originates with another

far-right politician—Kristi Noem, the Homeland Security secretary in the Trump administration.

Reform could disagree with almost none of Labour's policy, with Farage declaring only that he was for repealing the ECHR, not reinterpreting its articles.

So comprehensively have Labour adopted the policies being demanded by the far-right that the Elon Musk-funded Tommy Robinson—who in September staged the largest ever far-right demo in Britain—posted on Musk's X platform: "The Overton window has been obliterated, well done patriots!"

The Socialist Equality Party was alone of those claiming to be of the left to warn the working class and youth of the full extent of the anti-working-class character of the Starmer government. In opposition to every pseudo-left tendency, we refused to call for a vote for Labour explaining that this party and government committed to austerity and war was "on a collision course with the British working class."

The SEP warned in May, weeks before the fascist-led mobilisations outside hotels began, "Shorn of its name, conjuring images of a long-abandoned connections to reformism, the Labour government is a far-right formation."

The few MPs now comprising the Labour "left" have offered only the tamest criticism. Far from the outbreak of a "civil war" in Labour's ranks predicted by one right-wing paper, just 20 Labourites have said anything. Richard Burgon of the Socialist Campaign Group complained that "this failing Labour leadership is choosing to fight on terrain set by Farage. In doing so, it is *paving the way* for the first far-right government in our history."

Starmer's government, like Frederiksen's, is a far-right enemy of the working class. The fight ahead is the building of the SEP to mobilise the working class against the Starmer government, the far-right and the capitalist system they all defend.



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