

UK Labour Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood targets children for brutal treatment in asylum seeker crackdown

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Britain's Labour government is pressing ahead with draconian attacks on asylum seekers.

New measures, sadistically targeting families and children, mark a significant escalation in Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood's immigration regime, prompting widespread opposition from charities, policy groups, and refugee organisations.

In a joint letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer on April 27, almost 150 organisations—including social care workers, refugee charities, and fostering groups—accused the government of a “sustained attack on children's rights. This followed the announcement by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood of plans to increase deportations of “failed” asylum-seeking families, which would involve the use of physical force against children.

The *Independent* revealed: “The government's consultation document makes clear that a child can be physically handled if they are resisting their deportation. Immigration officers will be allowed to carry children and handcuff them if necessary, the document says... It lists a parent refusing to release a child's hand as an example of non-compliance with deportation.”

These proposals will cause “distress, trauma and lasting emotional damage to children.” The letter states, “To describe such harm to children as ‘unfortunate but necessary and justified’ is abhorrent.”

Attacks already imposed by Mahmood include immigration changes that directly impact children, such as delaying routes to settlement for families already in the UK and removing support from families refused asylum.

Mahmood is extending the current five-year pathway to settlement to 10 years or more, meaning hundreds of thousands of children will have to wait at least a decade or more before knowing if they can stay in the UK.

Analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research

estimates that the Home Office's changes to settlement, which will make it harder for foreign nationals to stay permanently in the UK, could prolong poverty for up to 90,000 children by the end of the decade. Foreign nationals who have been dependent on public funds or who entered the UK “irregularly”, such as on a small boat, will be further penalised, having to wait 20 or 30 years before they can apply for permanent settlement.

Asylum seeker families with children denied the right to stay are being offered up to £40,000 to leave the country immediately, or face deportation.

Mahmood stepped up her offensive by traveling to Zuydcoote in northern France on St George's Day (April 23)—in a move to curry favour with the most right-wing forces—to sign a £662 million three-year agreement with French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez. The signing was framed as if the plight of migrants and their treatment by state authorities, including in France and the UK, was a major concern. The narrative is that asylum seekers and migrants were being exploited by “people smugglers” and this could only be resolved by a clampdown on those organising the perilous small boat journeys.

That it is nothing of the sort was clear in the Home Office's announcement that riot-trained police will be sent to beaches in France to stop “illegal” migrants from crossing the English Channel. The deal will see at least 50 police officers trained in “riot and crowd control tactics” deployed to tackle what are described as “hostile crowds.”

The ruling class everywhere sees the onslaught on asylum seekers as the spearhead of a broader offensive against the working class. This was evident in Starmer's language when describing the deal: “This historic agreement means we can go further: ramping up intelligence, surveillance and boots on the ground to

protect Britain’s borders.”

The Home Office has said the number of officers sent to curb attempted journeys from northern France to the UK will rise by about 42 percent when the new agreement comes into force in the summer. It will involve almost 1,100 law enforcement, intelligence, and military officers in northern France deploying drones, helicopters, and camera systems and tasked with tracking down migrants and preventing them from boarding boats.

France will also supply a new vessel and more than 20 additional maritime officers to target “taxi boats.”

Around £500 million will be spent on boosting enforcement action on beaches, with additional funding of £160 million to be handed to France if the new tactics to curb crossings succeed. The BBC reported, “For the first time, ministers have said around £100 million of UK funding could be redirected or withdrawn after a year if not enough journeys are stopped.”

The Home Office will pay for a 140-capacity removal centre in Dunkirk, on the French coast—first announced by the previous Conservative government—staffed by more than 200 officers, to be completed by the end of the year. Once built the centre will corral migrants—headed for the UK—from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Vietnam, and Yemen, the top 10 countries of origin of people making small boat crossings last year.

Under a previous deal signed in 2023, the UK government paid £476 million to French authorities for extra patrols to disrupt migrant smuggling gangs. It included unpublished “metrics to measure progress and success” and saw both governments commit to increasing the rate of small boat interceptions.

The arrangement, which involved around 700 law enforcement officers patrolling beaches in France, is set to expire. Under the new deal, the UK Home Office seeks the removal of hundreds of migrants per year from French beaches, with deportations carried out to their home countries or European Union countries they have passed through.

In August 2025, the Labour government signed a separate “one-in-one-out” deal with France, allowing the UK to return some small boat arrivals to France, while admitting only a similarly low number of migrants from France considered to be legitimate refugees and who have not attempted to come to the UK.

As the latest deal was signed, the Home Office boasted, “Nearly 60,000 illegal migrants and foreign criminals have been sent back or deported since this UK

government came to power, an increase of 31 percent.”

In March, the government used a state visit by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to announce a “New UK–Nigeria partnership to speed up removals,” centred on increased deportations.

Many of the migrants targeted by the Dunkirk removal centre are from countries—Iraq, Afghanistan, and others—invaded and destabilised in UK military operations. Thousands fleeing conflict or instability in the Middle East and Africa now face a wall of steel at Europe’s borders.

For all Mahmood’s vicious policing operations against asylum seekers, the ruling elite demands far more. Commenting on the UK/France deal, a *Times* editorial called for migrants to be made to understand that arrival in Britain does not guarantee “permanent access to Britain and its health and welfare systems,” demanding the removal of benefits, asset seizures, temporary residency, and enforced return. The government had to fully “revisit the third country option,” it wrote, pointing to Denmark’s “draconian” system and European Union plans for offshore “hubs” to process and deport asylum seekers.

Former Conservative MP Robert Jenrick, now aligned with the far-right Reform UK, denounced the deal as a “complete waste of money,” insisting that “you do not rely on the kindness of the French to protect our borders.”

Rather, “the only way to stop the boats” is for Britain to abandon the European Convention on Human Rights and impose a regime in which “absolutely everyone... knows that they will be detained and deported and they will never have a life in the UK.” Calling for a “proper deterrent,” Jenrick advocated deportations “wherever that is, even if it’s Afghanistan,” declaring migrants “have no business coming to the UK.”



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