UK Conservatives and far-right Reform UK pledge mass eviction of foreign nationals from social housing

Robert Stevens
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The UK's main opposition Conservative Party has announced it will end social housing provision for foreign nationals in England if it enters government at the next election.

Ending new tenancies for all foreign nationals, together with current tenancies for couples where neither person is a UK, Irish or European Union (EU) citizen, would "free up" an estimated 228,144 homes for "British families", the party declared in announcing its xenophobic policy.

Any single person in social housing who is not a UK, Irish or EU citizen would lose their home, even if they have children. Couples where neither partner is a UK or EU citizen, and neither holds EU settled status, would lose theirs.

Those ruled ineligible would be given six months to vacate their accommodation, no matter how long they have lived there. Future social housing lettings would be restricted to UK nationals and holders of EU settled status, with newly arrived EU citizens excluded.

Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Helen Whately declared, "Making Britain your home should be earned by working, paying tax and integrating. It should not come with a free ride on the benefits system. Britain cannot be a cash machine for the world."

In 2024-25, 88.5 percent of lead tenants in new social lettings were UK or Irish nationals.

Nevertheless, policies scapegoating immigrants impact an estimated 470,000 non-UK and non-Irish citizens living in social housing in England. Refugees accounted for just 2.3 percent of new lettings: the most common nationalities, Afghan and Ukrainian, being people displaced by wars waged and armed by British imperialism.

The Tory's announcement was made in an echo of a more overtly fascistic statement by the far-right Reform UK. On June 14, Reform leader Nigel Farage published a 6,800-word essay, "Britain is a two-tier state—against white people", asserting that "anti-white racism was embedded into the state" and that equality legislation constitutes "social cleansing". Politicians, he wrote, had created "a backdoor for anti-White discrimination".

Farage's rant complains that "Homes fit for Heroes", an allusion to the promise made to returning soldiers following World War I, has become "homes for humanity", with social housing "redistribute[d] ... away from the White British populations who originally inhabited these areas". He listed various urban areas with a falling proportion of "White British" residents.

Farage's prescription set the benchmark for the Tories: "Under a Reform UK Government, foreign nationals will not have any access to welfare. Foreign nationals who are unable to relocate to private rented accommodation after a three-month grace period will lose their right to remain and be liable for deportation under Operation Restoring Justice."

Operation Restoring Justice was announced as Reform policy in August last year, with Farage pledging to deport hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and migrants—up to 600,000 in a first five-year Parliament—if his party wins the next general election.

Those thrown out of their home will be "liable" for deportation. At the stroke of a Reform UK or Tory pen, "liable" can be struck out, making deportation the automatic outcome of a forced eviction.

Even a three or six-month "grace period" to find private accommodation is a fiction. The aim of mass evictions of foreign nationals is to create the conditions for tens of thousands of people to be made homeless, before being rounded up, detained and deported.

Research published in July by the Citizens Advice and Crisis charities found just 2 percent of private sector rentals in Britain are affordable to people on housing benefit.

Reform's policy will apply retrospectively, tied to its plan to abolish the Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) system, which gives people rights and access to welfare benefits. Under its "Prioritising UK Citizens" policy, Reform will replace ILR with visas that force migrants, including EU citizens, to reapply every five years.

Reform home affairs spokesman Zia Yusuf, denounced Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch for not going far enough. "Kemi's 'CHANGED' Tory Party believes if you're Bulgarian, broke, and came here in 2020, you should get a

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council house... Under Reform, ALL social housing—old and new—will be for Brits."

The Tory response will be to shift further to the right, especially given the possibility of a coalition being formed with Reform UK. This is a process well underway throughout Europe. A dog whistle to Reform's activist base, it seeks to mobilise the same elements—led by known fascists—who held protests and riots outside hotels accommodating asylum seekers , demanding their removal and deportation.

Mass evictions of hundreds of thousands from social housing cannot be enforced except through pogrom-type operations. This was demonstrated in Belfast in June, when far-right mobs mobilised to burn immigrant families out of their homes, circulating target lists of addresses on social media and mounting checkpoints for non-white travellers. Farage's essay closed by threatening that unless "anti-White" policies are reversed, "we will see another Belfast".

As the Tory Party seeks to convince the ruling class that it can be trusted with power once again to enforce the necessary austerity and backing for war, nothing is off the table in terms of the personnel required. Last week Badenoch defended her party's selection of Joshua Bonehill-Paine, a fascist, to stand for election to Somerset council next year. Bonehill-Paine produces pro-Tory AI-generated videos—the "Crewkerne Gazette"—centring on scapegoating immigrants, for circulation by right-wing forces.

Only after outrage at the decision did Bonehill-Paine withdraw his candidacy, only for him to be named by Badenoch as an anti-extremism adviser to the party!

Bonehill-Paine is a convicted criminal. Speaking at a meeting of the fascist British National Party in 2014, he called on Britons to "rise up and stand as one white race united." Subsequently, he founded and led his own fascist outfit, "National British Resistance". In 2015, he was reportedly involved in the neo-Nazi group National Action, which was proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000 in December 2016.

In 2011, while still a Tory Party member, Bonehill-Paine was convicted of burglary, assault and criminal damage after breaking into a police station, receiving a 12-month community order. In 2014, he was convicted of malicious communications accusing a Leicester pub of barring serving soldiers to protect the feelings of migrants, an allegation that led to arson and death threats, again receiving a non-custodial sentence.

A further malicious communications and harassment conviction in February 2015 resulted in a three-month prison term, suspended for 18 months.

Bonehill-Paine was jailed following his conviction in December 2015 for inciting racial hatred, over a planned neo-Nazi rally in Golders Green—sentenced to three years and four months. In December 2016 he was convicted of racially aggravated harassment of then Labour MP Luciana Berger—who is Jewish—receiving a further two years to run consecutively. He was released from prison in May 2018.

Labour's response to the Tories' wholesale adoption of far-right policies underscores its own rightward shift. Housing Secretary Angela Rayner did not use the words fascist or far-right to describe the Tory policy, declaring only that the policy was an "unserious, unworkable proposal, copied from Reform" and "would do nothing to tackle the housing crisis the Tories themselves created."

The Socialist Equality Party warned—against pseudo-left parties that claimed that new Labour leader Andy Burnham could be pressured to the left—that an anti-immigration agenda was central to his right-wing programme.

Interviewed during the Makerfield by-election campaign that returned him to Parliament, he said, "I do agree with what [Reform UK leader Nigel] Farage is saying. What we've got to do is get back to a sense of order… We need to make greater use of detention so that people who have got no basis for a claim are not actually admitted into the country… and there's a speedier return."

Having replaced Starmer, Burnham retained Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood at the Home Office and voted for her filthy Immigration and Asylum Bill. On August 2, at Dover, he pledged to be "relentless" in blocking Channel crossings.

Every party of the ruling class is seeking to pin the blame on immigrants for the lack of housing, the collapse of wages and the destruction of public services, in order to divert attention from the plundering of society by the financial oligarchy and squandering of hundreds of billions on rearmament for war with Russia and other major power conflicts.

Workers and young people must come to the defence of immigrants and asylum seekers—the most vulnerable section of the working class. The SEP fights to unify the entire working class internationally on a socialist programme: for the expropriation of the banks and property speculators, and the construction of high-quality housing as a social right for all who need it, regardless of nationality or immigration status.

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