



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

16th August 2023

Dear Conithent,

RE: ILLEGAL MIGRATION ACT

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the *Illegal Migration Act 2023*. I have read your comments with interest.

I can assure you that the UK has a proud history of supporting those in need of protection and since 2015 we have welcomed 480,000 people through safe and legal routes from all over the world, as well as via country-specific routes from Syria, Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukraine. Indeed, I am very proud of the role that I played in that important work during my time as a Home Office Minister.

But while our compassion may be infinite, our capacity to help is not. The numbers now crossing the English Channel illegally via small boats reached 45,000 last year and we are now spending over £6 million a day on housing them in hotels, because local authorities do not have the capacity to support them. This is not sustainable, and it is impacting on our ability to help those genuinely in danger who might come via our safe and legal routes.

The *Illegal Migration Act* will curb the levels of illegal migration into the UK. This will remove the incentive for people making dangerous small-boat crossings from safe countries like France, and will ultimately save lives by stopping people taking these risks. It will also free up capacity so that the UK can better support those in genuine need of asylum through safe and legal routes. The Act ensures that we continue to support the most vulnerable, but introduces an annual cap once illegal migration is under control. In conjunction with local authorities, this allows the Government to take into consideration local capacity for accommodation, public services and support.

Article 31 of the *UN Refugee Convention* is clear that individuals may be removed if they don't come directly from the territory where their freedom is threatened. Since the illegal migrants will still be provided with protection in safe third countries, and since they will have passed through multiple safe countries to get to the UK, the legislation is therefore entirely consistent with the letter and the spirit of the Convention. While the measures are novel, ambitious and untested, the Home Secretary is confident that the legislation is fully compliant with our obligations.

This Government is rightly proud of the world-leading modern slavery legislation we ourselves introduced, but we must be honest that the system is being abused by people with no right to be here, determined to frustrate their removal from the UK. When our *Modern Slavery Act* passed, the impact assessment envisaged 3,500 referrals a year. Last year, there were 17,000 referrals, which took on average 543 days to consider. The most referred nationality in 2022 were citizens of Albania, a safe European country, signatory of the *European Convention on Action against Trafficking*, and a NATO ally. In 2021, 73 percent of people who were detained for removal put forward a modern slavery claim, compared to just three percent of those not in detention. Finally, just six percent of detentions ending in 2019 involved a modern slavery referral, rising to 53 percent in 2020, and to 73 percent in 2021. This is not sustainable, and the generosity of the public is being undermined by the abuse. If someone is found to be a genuine victim of modern slavery – meaning they have been trafficked to the UK against their will – we will ensure they are safely returned to their home country, or another safe country like Rwanda.



I can assure you that this new legislation is compassionate by ending the cruel practice whereby people place their lives in the hands of evil criminal gangs who threaten and abuse them and go on to use their profits for other criminal endeavours, such as the drugs and weapons trades. It also combats a system which has become unfair on the most vulnerable in the world, who are pushed further back in the queue by people who can afford to pay a gang, and brings fairness to the British taxpayer who must foot the bills for the hotels, but quite reasonably expect their laws and their borders to be respected.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**