# HOSTILE OFFICE

# THE HOME OFFICE IS RACIST BY DESIGN

Migrants' Rights Network

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# FOREWORD

## FIZZA QURESHI, CEO OF THE MIGRANTS' RIGHTS NETWORK

The UK immigration system and Home Office (Hostile Office) causes misery for migrants, including refugees. It always has, and it seems that has become one of its sole purposes. From its inception, it has been designed to be intentionally hostile towards the 'Other', and almost always the 'others' are People of Colour, usually from the Global Majority.

Each government comes into power and rewrites the rulebook on migrants' rights- wanting to outdo its predecessor by creating harsher rules that make migrants increasingly vulnerable. From the 1905 Aliens Act to the inhumane Migration Act 2023 (Illegal Migration Act), the Windrush victims, and the ability to deprive citizenship, it should be evident to all of us that immigration laws are underpinned by a desire to limit the presence and freedom of racialised people in the UK.

We receive a huge number of calls from migrants who are immensely distressed by the treatment they've experienced at the hands of the Hostile Office. So many of the sponsored migrant workers I have spoken to cannot believe they would be treated in such a dehumanising and disrespectful manner to the point of destitution. They thought the UK was a place that upheld justice and humanity, only to realise these cruel systems will always fail them.

We must be under no illusion that the immigration system was ever designed to operate 'fairly'. The very idea of 'fairness' is subjective and we often see this term used by the Government to justify its increasingly hostile immigration policies. For the many migrants that call us everyday at the Migrants' Rights Network asking for help, none of this seems 'fair'.

That is why, as a campaigning charity, we are no longer content to simply ask for reforms or tweaks that will make this racist, colonial-era infrastructure 'acceptable'. For People of Colour and other marginalised groups, this system simply wasn't designed for us. That is why we are calling for the Hostile Office and immigration system to be dismantled. With a new Government in power, we hope it works with us to dismantle these cruel structures that have made the lives of migrants, and migratised people, a misery, and joins us in taking a bold, transformative stance with migrant justice at the heart of policy.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

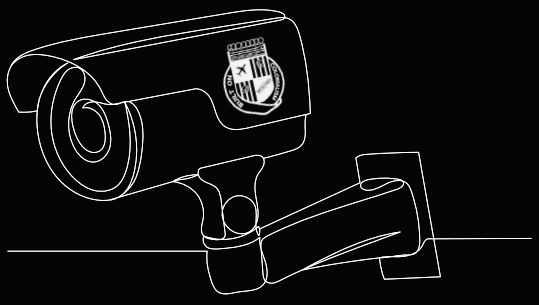
***'EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF IMMIGRATION OR CITIZENSHIP LEGISLATION WAS DESIGNED AT LEAST IN PART TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH BLACK OR BROWN SKIN IN THE UK' - LEAKED GOVERNMENT REPORT***

**The UK immigration system is racist by design.** Not only does it disproportionately impact racialised people, but is built on a White supremacist colonial legacy. It is explicitly designed to both prevent them from coming or remaining in the UK, or extract their labour for economic gain. The Hostile Office research seeks to expose how these systems disproportionately impact racialised migrants in the UK. This goes back to the very first immigration laws in the UK, which have consistently targeted (post-)colonial citizens. To demonstrate this, this report explores policies around deprivation of citizenship and visa schemes.

The innate racism in UK immigration legislation continues to shape numerous policies. While the racist aims of much of this legislation are not explicitly mentioned in UK law, these immigration policies often rely on racist assumptions and White supremacist ideas. This is either through:

- The use of language and concepts that have historically had, and continue to have, racist connotations, or through deliberately vague language, which makes space for arbitrary and racist application
- Other policies, including visa schemes, are overtly more accessible to certain groups (likely to be White, wealthier and/or from the West) and more restrictive to others. Again, while they do not feature the explicit language of racism, they clearly utilise a racist understanding of who is welcome, who is 'like us', or who is 'deserving' of being here
- Deprivation powers being used to disproportionately dispossess racialised citizens of their British citizenship

The Home Office, or rather the **Hostile Office**, at its foundation is racist and anti-migrant. Remedial action or reform cannot address these foundations, therefore it is for these reasons our recommendation is for it to be abolished.



# KEY FINDINGS

- Since being created to manage areas including colonial and plantation business in 1792, the Hostile Office has existed to manage, regulate or prevent so-called 'aliens' or 'undesirables' from arriving and living in the UK
- Over the last century, dehumanising, racist, anti-migrant language in the UK has remained consistent, dating from the arrival of Jewish refugees in the late 19th and early 20th century, with migrants being labelled as an **“alien invasion”**, **“swarm”** and **“locusts”**
- The UK’s immigration system and visa schemes are embedded in racism and grounded in the concept of **‘racial commodification’.** They are explicitly designed to ‘manage’ racialised people as assets to extract resources or labour from, or dehumanise them through preventative, restrictive and racist immigration policies
- Deprivation of citizenship is racially targeted. Of those who have had their citizenship revoked since 2002, **85% had or were deemed to have nationalities of countries in Africa, South Asia or West Asia (the Middle East) and 83% were from former British colonies**
- **People of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage are most affected by deprivation of citizenship (41%)**. All of them (out of the people whose nationalities we know) were born British citizens

***Trigger warning:*** *Please note this report analyses historical sources relating to People of Colour and migrants. Therefore, it contains language that may be triggering to some.*

# INTRODUCTION

The UK's colonial history and racist past form the foundation of the UK's immigration system. From criminalising migrants through closing migration routes, to expanding the detention estate and restricting access to British citizenship, the Government is set on making life harder and more insecure for migrants. Racism forms the foundations of this anti-migrant project, where racial and nationality background shape who is seen as British and 'deserving' to be in this country.

The Hostile Office's increasingly hostile policies are explicitly designed to make migrants' lives unbearable or restrict their movements. In 2022, a leaked Government report concluded that 30 years of racist immigration legislation between 1950 and 1981 was created to reduce the country's non-White population. This 52-page analysis set out how the racist legacy of the British Empire, which needed racism in order to function, laid the foundations for the UK's immigration and citizenship legislation. Moreover, as our Hostile Office report was being compiled, the news broke that a former senior civil servant accused officials behind the 'Illegal' Migration Act of "harbouring racist views" towards migrants. The claimant stated that, from her perspective, the head of the 'illegal migration' taskforce and deputy directors saw "the ultra-hostile environment towards unwanted foreigners as both being practical, necessary and gratifying".

In 2023, we launched our Hostile Office campaign to explore the foundations and historical roots of the UK borders and immigration system with one single goal in mind: to explore how racism and colonialism continuously shape these structures, and how neocolonialism, imperialism and geopolitics are key factors at play too.

In order to tackle hostile immigration policy, we need to look at the history of colonialism and the concept of who is seen to be welcome in the UK. Through a combination of research methods, including surveys, FOIs, interviews, and data-analysis, this report demonstrates how racism and colonialism has shaped, and continues to shape, current immigration policies, specifically legislation around deprivation of citizenship and visa schemes.

## THE RACIST FOUNDATIONS OF THE HOSTILE OFFICE

Colonial and racist foundations are all too often overlooked by the migrant justice sector. Neglecting to look at the root cause of immigration legislation means that harmful anti-migrant laws will continue to replicate themselves. Without considering the role of racism and colonialism in shaping the Hostile Environment, the sector also obscures who is being impacted by it, namely racialised migrants. This also prevents us from understanding the purpose of these policies: to further dispossess and exclude racialised and migratised people.

***'"EUROPEANS WITH BLUE EYES, BLONDE HAIR BEING KILLED': MEDIA COVERAGE OF UKRAINE CRITICISED FOR RACISM" - NEWS LAUNDRY, NL TEAM, 28TH FEBRUARY 2022***

While many people are, to varying degrees, forced to migrate to leave the ongoing effects of neocolonialism and Western intervention, the Government has consistently made it more difficult for these same communities to settle here. There is a clear disparity between implementing the inhumane Migration Act 2023 and the (now scrapped) Rwanda Plan, which leave migrants from the Global South with no routes through which to come safely to the UK, versus offering a scheme for (White) Ukrainians.

Therefore, it is important to understand how these laws and policies have developed over time to specifically exclude racialised communities from the former British Empire from access to the UK, so that we can effectively and collectively challenge them and the structures that uphold them.

Immigration legislation stems from a series of laws that are grounded in fear of 'difference' of the 'Other'. Through this research we found that this was by design: the foundations of the UK's immigration system are in racism and colonialism, and keeping out populations considered "undesirable". This has continued to shape immigration policies in this country today, where racialised people from Britain's former colonies are the most affected by raids, detention, deportation and deprivation and denial of citizenship. This is implemented through a multi-tiered system of 'Britishness', where it is harder for racialised people to get to the UK. Once here their status is more precarious, which their entitlement to rights is dependent on. These mechanisms position racialised migrants as disposable through making their existence in the UK increasingly insecure. It is essential that advocates for migrants' rights understand this in order to effectively challenge increasingly hostile anti-migrant policies.

# DEFINITIONS

***The Hostile Environment*** refers to a set of policies aimed at making the lives of migrants as difficult as possible in the UK and reducing migrant numbers. The Home Office announced the policy in 2012 and it subsequently led to the implementation of borders in everyday life. Employers, landlords, healthcare workers and other public servants are required to check immigration status before providing a service or offering someone a job. The term is often attributed to Theresa May, however it was first used by Labour immigration minister Liam Byrne in 2007.

We use the term ***migrants, including refugees*** in our work. The term migrant is a general umbrella term, which encompasses refugees, people seeking asylum, international students, migrant workers, undocumented migrants and many other migrant groups. Refugees are migrants: they are a subgroup of migrants with protection needs and rights. Placing an "and" in between "migrants" and "refugees" incorrectly implies that refugees are not a subgroup of migrants, and also begins to reinforce divisive narratives.

# ORIGINS OF THE HOSTILE OFFICE

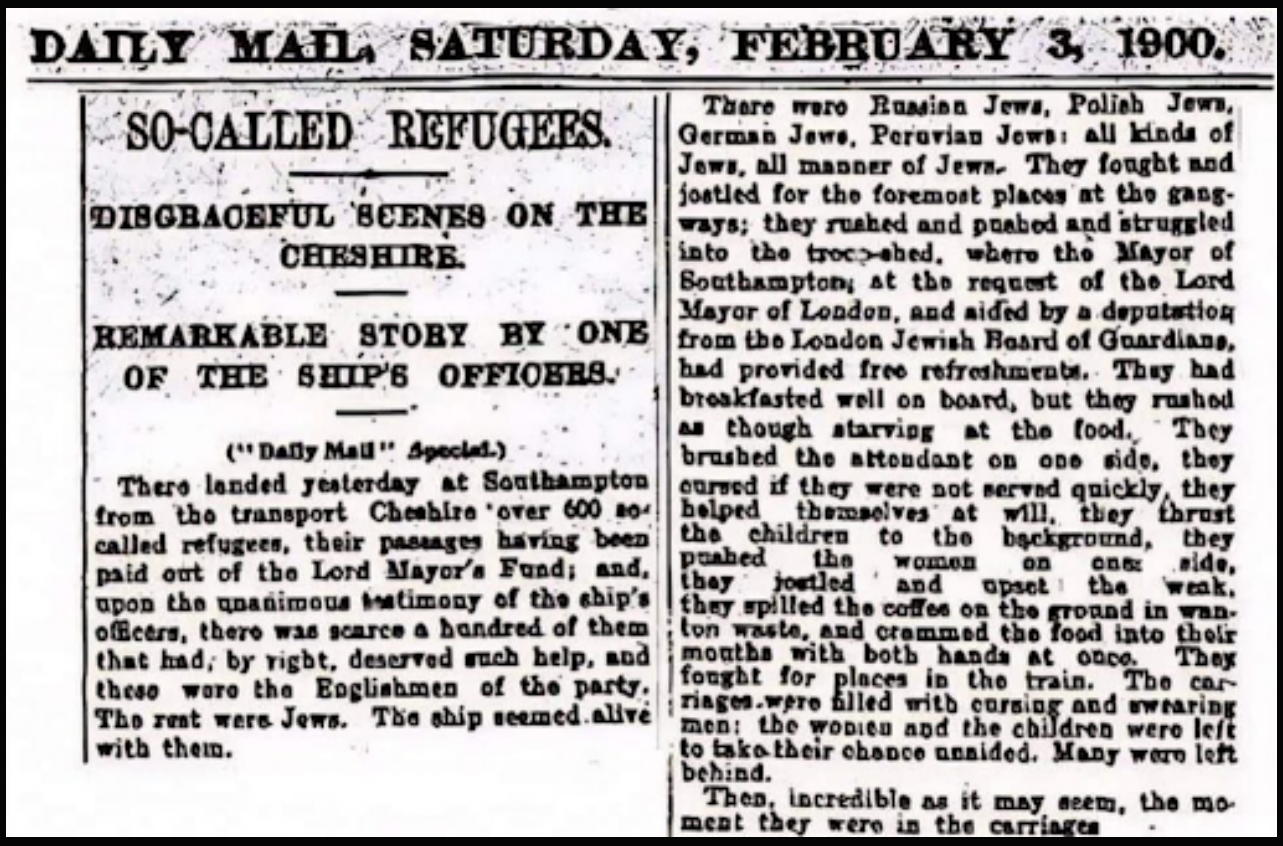
In 1782, the Northern and Southern Departments, which were responsible for different areas of domestic and foreign policy, were restructured into departments resembling the Home and Foreign Offices. The Hostile Office was composed of the Southern Department, officials from the abolished Colonial Office and responsibilities from the Commission of Trade, which included colonial or plantation business. In 1783, a sub-department called the Plantation Department was formed and the Home Secretary held responsibility for colonial matters until 1801. Colonial matters were then transferred to the War Department.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, responsibilities were added, which still form part of the Hostile Office's key functions. In 1793, the function for the 'regulation of aliens' was brought into the Department's remit following the Aliens Act 1793, and naturalisation was added to its responsibilities in 1844. In 1836 the Aliens Office was absorbed into the Home Office and in 1904, a specialised administrative department was introduced called the Aliens Division.

## HISTORY OF THE UK IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Borders and immigration systems are seen as an integral and unchangeable part of the world. Yet, they are a recent invention in human history, with their legacies in nation state-building and the British Empire. To understand how we got to the point of such securitised borders today, we must look to their development, particularly through the dynamics of racism, colonialism and other systems of prejudice and control. In understanding how we got here, we come to see how temporary the global system of borders is and how, rather than being a natural part of our world, it is in fact a manufactured tool of oppression.

In 1793, the Aliens Act was introduced in response to Huguenot refugees arriving in Britain. The Government and monarchy were concerned about the prospect of refugees stirring up revolutionary sentiment amongst British people. This legislation prevented some ships from France carrying refugees from docking, and legalised forced removals of those who were suspected of being 'subversives.' However, it is the infamous 1905 Aliens Act that firmly set the foundation for the Hostile Office evident in 2024.



DAILY MAIL, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1900.

## SO-CALLED REFUGEES.

### DISGRACEFUL SCENES ON THE CHESHIRE.

### REMARKABLE STORY BY ONE OF THE SHIP'S OFFICERS.

("Daily Mail" Special.)

There landed yesterday at Southampton from the transport Cheshire over 600 so-called refugees, their passages having been paid out of the Lord Mayor's Fund; and, upon the unanimous testimony of the ship's officers, there was scarce a hundred of them that had, by right, deserved such help, and these were the Englishmen of the party. The rest were Jews. The ship seemed alive with them.

There were Russian Jews, Polish Jews, German Jews, Peruvian Jews: all kinds of Jews, all manner of Jews. They fought and jostled for the foremost places at the gangways; they rushed and pushed and struggled into the troop-shed, where the Mayor of Southampton, at the request of the Lord Mayor of London, and aided by a deputation from the London Jewish Board of Guardians, had provided free refreshments. They had breakfasted well on board, but they rushed as though starving at the food. They brushed the attendant on one side, they cursed if they were not served quickly, they helped themselves at will, they thrust the children to the background, they pushed the women on one side, they jostled and upset the weak, they spilled the coffee on the ground in wanton waste, and crammed the food into their mouths with both hands at once. They fought for places in the train. The carriages were filled with cursing and swearing men: the women and the children were left to take their chance unaided. Many were left behind.

Then, incredible as it may seem, the moment they were in the carriages

The New European, 'Daily Hate: The Mail's century-long quest to demonise migrants, Liz Gerard, 13th April 2023

The 1905 Aliens Act aimed to "prevent the landing of undesirable immigrants" except at a port where an immigration officer was present. The arrival of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms fuelled anti-migrant and Antisemitic rhetoric that paved the way for the Aliens Act. The Daily Mail labelled it as an 'Alien Invasion'; a narrative that took hold in the early 20th century, alongside the racist language of 'swarm' and 'locusts' to describe migrants, including refugees .

This Act was the first appearance of the 'character' test in UK immigration law and the burden of proof placed on migrants, including refugees. The Act stated that an immigrant must prove they are seeking admission to the country "solely to avoid prosecution or punishment on religious or political grounds or for an offence of a political character". The early development of framing migrants as a threat, as something to be feared and controlled, is incredibly visible in this Act and has set the tone for future legislation to be brought in through similar tactics .

This mistrust of migrants shaped early refugee policy in the early twentieth century, where politicians questioned how 'genuine' the claims for protection were. MPs criticised the policy at the time because the burden was on the Immigration Officer to prove that a refugee was lying and noted the perceived difficulty in gaining that information. In contrast, the asylum system today means that the burden of proving that someone is at risk of persecution is now on people seeking asylum.

***"... THOSE POLITICAL REFUGEES HAVE NOW ONLY TO STATE THAT THEY ARE POLITICAL REFUGEES, AND THE ONUS OF PROVING THAT THEIR STATEMENT IS INACCURATE FALLS UPON THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER. BY BLIND DEVOTION TO THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM WE CAN EASILY CREATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HERE WHICH MAY BECOME A SOURCE OF GREAT DANGER". - MR GOULDING, 1911, ORDER FOR SECOND READING OF THE ALIENS BILL***

This suspicion of migrants, including refugees, helped pave the way for successive discriminatory legislation including the 1914 Aliens Registration Act and 1919 Aliens Restrictions Act. Notably, "aliens" were required to register with the State. The 1914 Act embedded war-time 'Germanophobia' (anti-German sentiment) in law and granted officers the power to arrest or detain "aliens" amongst other provisions. The 1919 Act extended the 1914 Act into peacetime with specific provisions around conviction on the grounds of 'sedition' amongst the armed forces, or for the promotion (or attempted promotion) of industrial action. The new requirement of migrants needing to register with the police therefore pointed to an inherent suspicion of racialised people.

The 1919 ‘race riots’ took place in the same year the Aliens Restrictions Act was passed. Violence by White people was directed towards racialised communities in Glasgow, South Shields, Salford, London, Hull, Newport, Barry, Liverpool and Cardiff. Five people were killed, and there were numerous street fights, and vandalised properties. The Hostile Office responded to this by launching a “repatriation scheme” to return Black and Arab colonial workers to their countries of origin. The racism that erupted during this period continued between the First and Second World Wars.

The turmoil caused by the First World War and political shifts happening at the time such as the Russian Revolution and rise of the Nazi party contributed to displacement across Europe. Refugees from the Basque, Russia, Belgium and Jewish people from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were accepted into the UK, but in very small numbers in comparison to those needing protection. This period of history is arguably the chapter in which is often cited in arguments around the UK’s ‘proud history’ of offering protection, particularly relating to Jewish people fleeing persecution and the Holocaust. The Kindertransport, which refers to the Jewish children sent to the UK between 1938 and 1939, saw 10,000 children brought here. However, this figure is a small proportion of the people that were seeking safety during this period and there is very little discussion of how many Jewish people were not granted protection by the British Government. In fact, Government policy at the time was arguably designed to keep out European Jews, and protection that was granted was largely on a temporary basis.

***“I HAVE A SHEAF OF LETTERS WRITTEN BY MY GRANDPARENTS, HEDWIG AND ARTHUR SIGLER, FROM WARTIME NAZI GERMANY TO MY FATHER WHO HAD ESCAPED TO ENGLAND ON THE KINDERTRANSPORT. AS I READ THOSE LETTERS THE WORDS THAT KEEP COMING TO MIND ARE ‘ILLEGAL’ AND ‘SAFE PASSAGE’. TO THE NAZIS MY GRANDPARENTS – TOGETHER WITH THEIR SIBLINGS, RELATIVES AND FRIENDS – WERE ‘ILLEGAL’ – JEWS WITH NO RIGHTS. FOR THEM THERE WAS NO ‘SAFE PASSAGE’. THEY APPLIED FOR VISAS TO THE UNITED STATES, COLOMBIA, CUBA, URUGUAY, ARGENTINA AND BRITAIN. BUT EVERY DOOR WAS CLOSED. AND HAD THEY TRIED TO ESCAPE ACROSS BORDERS, REFUGEES FLEEING THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE HOLOCAUST, THEN THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN DEEMED ILLEGAL IN THE COUNTRIES THEY REACHED. THE DESIGNATION OF ‘ILLEGAL’ AND THE LACK OF SAFE PASSAGE WERE MY GRANDPARENTS’ DEATH WARRANTS, TRANSPORTED TO AUSCHWITZ IN JULY 1942. AND MURDERED”. – NICK SIGLER, MIGRANTS’ RIGHTS NETWORK BOARD MEMBER***

After the 1919 Act, it was the British Nationality Act 1948 (BNA 1948), which shaped the notion of the "good immigrant". This was the same year that HMS Windrush arrived in the UK. The BNA 1948 stated that "aliens" could become naturalised as long as they were of "good character" and had "sufficient knowledge of the English Language." This kind of dog whistle language has been part and parcel of migration legislation in the UK. "Good character" and English language ability have contributed to the image of the "good immigrant", shaped by racist ideas of worth and deservingness. This is especially the case with the vague and arbitrary judgement on whether someone is of "good character". These requirements formed the foundation of efforts in coming decades to deprive current and former colonial citizens of their citizenship.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 (which was amended by the following 1968 legislation) was the first legislation to curtail the right of entry to the UK for people from the Commonwealth and Colonies. The legislation was specifically aimed at limiting "coloured migration" and a ministerial committee was set up to investigate 'colonial migration' and whether it should be limited.

Mr HARTLEY, however, does not distinguish clearly enough between these important matters of detail and more general criticisms, many of which are in fact levelled against the whole object of effectively controlling coloured immigration into Britain. This, let it be plainly understood, is and ought to be the chief purpose of the exercise. Only by attaining it, can we hope to avoid severe and prolonged racial strife and to promote positive racial harmony in this country. The Bill's second object is to preserve, as far as possible in the changed conditions of today, the rights of Commonwealth citizens and, in particular, to safeguard the legitimate expectations of those with special links with Britain whose assimilation by this community presents no difficulties. To suggest that all this can be done without giving different rights of entry and of abode to different categories of people is manifestly silly.

Mr MAUDLING'S famous patrial clause was aimed, honourably and sensibly, at easing the path to immigration by people from those Commonwealth countries whose cultures are closest to our own. Even in its amended form, it remains clumsy. The substitute proposed by Mr HARTLEY—unrestricted entry from all territories owing direct allegiance to the Queen—would vitiate the Bill's intentions altogether by opening the floodgates wide, for example, to immigration from the West Indies. We still believe that the best way round the difficulty would be to allow the extent of permitted immigration from any Commonwealth country into Britain to be determined by the extent of British emigration to that country. This would effectively safeguard the rights of the old white Commonwealth.

A newspaper clipping detailing a debate while the 1971 Immigration Act was going through Parliament

This Act introduced a 'voucher' system under which a limited number of people from the Commonwealth were permitted to enter.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR Ref. No. 026374

VOUCHER

Issued for the purposes of Section 2 of the COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRANTS ACT, 1962

1 MAY 1963

Voucher No. 041114 Date of Expiry 14th July, 1963.

Full Name MOTA SINGH S/O SH.BHAGAT SINGH

Address V.P.O. KHUSROPUR, VIA KARTARPUR, DISTT. JULLUNDUR.

Date of Birth 23.2.39 Sex M/F Country of Birth INDIA

Occupation MOTOR MECHANIC

Passport No. A887279 Country of issue of passport INDIA

NOTES

1. This voucher must be produced together with a valid passport to the Immigration Officer at the port of arrival in the United Kingdom. Failure to produce it may result in refusal of admission.
2. This voucher may be presented only by the person described therein.
3. This voucher cannot be used for entry to the United Kingdom after the date of expiry shown above, unless an extension has been granted. It does not entitle the holder to take work in Northern Ireland.

Signed on behalf of the Minister of Labour

E.D. 413 Date 15th January, 1963.

Immigration voucher 1963. British Library

***"THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM SHOULD MAINTAIN AN OPEN DOOR FOR BRITISH SUBJECTS GREW UP TACITLY AT A TIME WHEN THE COLOURED RACES OF THE COMMONWEALTH WERE AT A MORE PRIMITIVE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT THAN NOW. THERE WAS NO DANGER THEN OF A COLOURED INVASION OF THIS COUNTRY..." - QUOTE FROM 1950S MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE INVESTIGATION***

The process of limiting citizenship rapidly accelerated from the 1960s to the 1980s. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 and the Immigration Act 1971 narrowly reclassified British citizenship, first limiting it at birth to those with a parent or grandparent born in Britain and then through the concept of patriality, meaning those born in or with a parent born in Britain. This was targeted at racialised colonial and Commonwealth citizens, because in 1971, 98% of people born in Britain were White. Patriality was defined in the 1971 Act in a way that included many citizens of the White dominion territories (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and excluded most Commonwealth citizens.

The context of these acts was Asian-heritage communities migrating from East Africa to the UK. In these cases, many East African Asians who held British passports chose to migrate to the UK, but did not experience a welcoming reception. Debates were marked by references to an "invasion" of the UK by these communities, with several MPs noting that, regardless of the language used, both Acts were racially discriminatory, with "Commonwealth" and "non-patrial" used as euphemisms for racialised populations. These culminated in the 1981 British Nationality Act, which removed birthright citizenship and finally ended the category of Citizen of the UK and Colonies - people deemed not to be "closely connected" nor "belong" to the UK. It opened the door to the creation of a variety of new categories, which inferred the colonised connections but with no rights to live or reside in the UK, including the categorisation of British Overseas citizenship.

The fallacy of citizens of the former British Empire not having valid connections to Britain (unless they are from the few majority White countries) was used simply to reduce the number of racialised people in Britain. It is why soon after the 1981 Act was passed, visa restrictions were brought in for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nigerian and Ghanaian nationals.

The ‘virginity testing’ scandal also occurred in this period, which used the false belief that many racialised migrants were engaged in ‘sham marriages’ in order to perform inaccurate and invasive medical examinations on (primarily South Asian) women migrating on fiancée visas. The scandal encapsulated the inherent suspicion of racialised migrants, as well as what multiple governments saw as a demographic threat of permanent settlement.

The 1981 British Nationality Act was a watershed moment. In dispossessing millions of future citizens of Britain’s former colonies, it also became the foundational legislation for deprivation of citizenship policies. The Act further embedded racism in the UK’s citizenship and immigration laws by altering the status of thousands of non-White people already residing in Britain and further reducing their current status of “second-class” citizens.” The 2002 amendment to the Act enabled British citizenship to be removed from people for national security reasons - almost all of those affected so far have been racialised and (with heritage) from former British colonies. This Act was criticised at the time as effectively legalising racism in Britain.

The ‘War on Terror’ and a racist, colonial border system have continued to converge since then to create a two-tier citizenship system: racialised and other migratised people can face a double standard of punishment, where alongside facing punishment for an alleged offence, they can also have their citizenship stripped from them. This has increasingly been the case as deprivation of citizenship laws have become more hostile - most notably through the 2004 Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act, the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act and the 2014 Immigration Act - the last of which has allowed the Home Secretary to effectively make someone stateless.

The 2014 Immigration Act is also a key piece of legislation, alongside the 2016 Immigration Act. The former Act removed protections for Commonwealth citizens in the UK and instated a ‘deport first, appeal later’ policy, expanding the harm done to people. The raft of hostile measures that has turned teachers, landlords, doctors, employers and more into immigration officers has had a massive detrimental impact on migrants and migratised people in the UK. The racialised narratives of ‘mass migration’, criminality and threat have reinforced anti-migrant policies as racist policies.

One of the most notable examples of the impact of the Hostile Environment on migrants and racialised people is the Windrush scandal whereby people who arrived in the UK between 1948 and 1971 were sent letters from the Hostile Office that they had no right to be in the country. In practice, this meant they started to lose jobs, homes, benefits and access to healthcare. Some were also placed in detention, deported or refused the right to return from abroad. This was a direct result of the Hostile Environment and a decision by the Government to destroy immigration records that were, in many cases, the only record of a person arriving. This disproportionately impacted people from the Caribbean.

The racism of the UK's immigration system did not start with the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act; it has been a fundamental part of the UK's borders and is inextricable from the process of dispossessing citizens of the (former) British Empire. **This is and always has been the nature of the Hostile Office.**

# DEPRIVATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is explicitly constructed as a privilege by the Hostile Office. Entitlement to that privilege is therefore something that an individual must prove, and that proof often must be demonstrated along the lines of 'integration' and performing the role of the 'good migrant'. In contrast, if a citizen or potential citizen is determined to be not of 'good character' or 'conducive to public good', then they can be at risk of deprivation of citizenship.


While deprivation of citizenship powers began with amendments to the British Nationality Act 1981, the ideology behind it can be traced back to the **British Nationality Act of 1948.**

The Act's introduction of "good character" requirements as a condition of citizenship is directly related to provisions set out in this late colonial-era legislation. As decolonisation spread and migration from colonies to the UK grew, the British Government reduced the scope of British citizenship in order to prevent racialised migrants from being able to move to the UK. The 1981 Act also laid out the circumstances in which someone could be deprived of their British citizenship: if the means through which they had become a naturalised citizen were fraudulent, and if they held the citizenship of another country. Since 2002, the law has shifted to enable the Government to remove British citizenship from these same populations and their descendants.

In 2003, an amendment to the British Nationality Act 1981 was passed, which widened the grounds for deprivation of citizenship to include doing 'anything seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the United Kingdom or a British overseas territory'. This amendment was nicknamed the 'Hamza amendment', as it was passed specifically to deport one man, Abu Hamza, a naturalised British citizen. At the time, journalist Philip Hensher wrote an article highlighting the racist undertone of this policy, stating:

***"IT IS A STARTLING RACIST MOVE: NO-ONE CAN SUPPOSE FOR A SECOND THAT THIS LAW WILL BE INVOKED AGAINST, SAY, A FORMER FRENCH NATIONAL WHO PROTESTS AGAINST THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR IN EVEN THE MOST VIRULENT TERMS. IT IS, QUITE CLEARLY, DIRECTED ONLY AT A CERTAIN CLASS OF PERSON WHO HOLDS A BRITISH PASSPORT; ONE WITH A BROWN SKIN AND A NON-EUROPEAN RELIGION, AND IF THEY COULD EXTEND THESE MEASURES TO APPLY TO SECOND AND THIRD-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD".***

Prior to 2003's 'Hamza amendment', the power to deprive someone of their British citizenship had not been used for 30 years. However, since the start of the War on Terror, laws have been introduced to target specific people. Section 66 of the 2014 Immigration Act was passed to deprive Hilal al Jedda of citizenship for a third time; and Clause 9 of the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act was passed in response to a case that was won on appeal as the Government failed to notify the recipient of her deprivation of citizenship. This has allowed the Government to bend and amend laws to banish specific (and racialised) people. It has been used at least 215 times on national security/'public good' grounds since.

Our findings analysing available information on those deprived of citizenship and their nationalities found that between 2002 and 2022 85% had or were deemed to have nationalities of countries in Africa, South Asia or West Asia (the Middle East) and 83% were from former British colonies. Of this, 41% were South Asian, all being Pakistani or Bangladeshi. All of these South Asians were also British citizens from birth, who the Government began depriving citizenship from in 2009, following the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, which lowered the requirement for deprivation to where it is 'conducive to the public good'. In total, 47% of the people who had their nationality deprived that we know of were sole British citizens from birth or a young age (several claimed asylum and gained British citizenship as children).

## CASE STUDY: BRITISH PAKISTANIS AND DEPRIVATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Many British Pakistani diaspora have a Pakistan Origin Card (POC), as do many British Indian diaspora with a Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) card. These entitle people to visa-free travel in Pakistan and India, respectively, but are not equivalent to citizenship of either country, nor do they inherently make people eligible for such citizenship. However, under British nationality guidance, they are treated as citizenship of another country and taken into consideration in deprivation decisions as a result.

In one case, a father and three of his children (known as S1, T1, U1 and V1) had their citizenship deprived from them on the basis that they could claim Pakistani citizenship. They were all British citizens from birth. This brings into question how nationality and belonging is perceived by the British state. It positions racialised and migratised British citizens as always somewhat "foreign", where no matter how many generations have grown up in the UK and regardless of whether they've held any other citizenship, they are always at considerable risk of losing it.

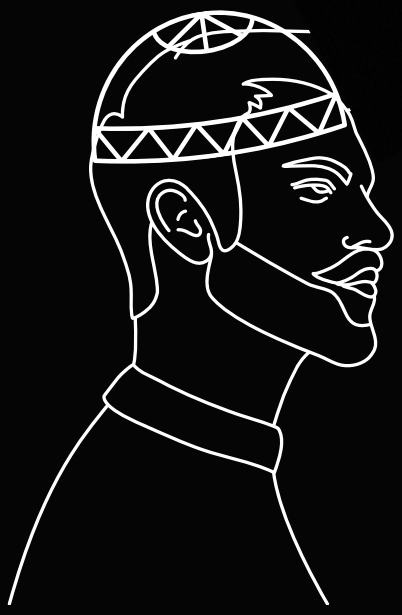
## STATELESSNESS

The Immigration Act 2014 made it so the Home Secretary could deprive someone of their British citizenship, if they had a well-founded belief that the individual would be able to claim the citizenship of another country, even if doing so would actually make them stateless. This essentially enables the Government to make someone stateless without declaring they have made someone stateless.

The Government has repeatedly applied this in bad faith, as with the examples above. In some cases, people's deprivation has been overturned as a result: Five Britons, known as C3, C4, C7, E3 and N3, were all people deprived of their British citizenship, which was the sole nationality they held, for 'public good' reasons. The Government argued that this didn't make them stateless, as they were able to claim Bangladeshi citizenship. However, their appeals to reinstate their citizenship were granted, as they were all over the age of 21 - the age limit at which individuals of Bangladeshi heritage are able to claim citizenship. In other cases, as with Shamima Begum, deprivation has not been overturned. It is interesting, then, that the Hostile Office claims that this power has not been used since its introduction in 2014.

## 'GOOD CHARACTER' AND CONDUCIVE TO PUBLIC GOOD

Closely related to deprivation of citizenship practices is the "good character" test involved in applications for British citizenship, as well as long-term settlement, like Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). The public good requirement - that an individual's presence in the UK is "conducive to the public good" - echoes the criteria for depriving individuals of settlement and British citizenship. In both cases it goes beyond the law, meaning people deemed "unsavoury" can be refused longer term settlement or citizenship.



An individual is considered to not be of 'good character' if there is information to suggest a variety of factors including:

- **Criminality:** if they have not respected or are not prepared to abide by the law for example, they have been convicted of a crime or there are reasonable grounds to suspect
- **Financial soundness**: if their financial affairs have not been in appropriate order - for example, they have failed to pay taxes for which they were liable or have accrued significant debt
- **Notoriety:** if there are activities associated with the individual that are 'notorious' and cast serious doubt on their standing in the local community
- **Deception and dishonesty:** if they have been deliberately dishonest or deceptive in their dealings with the UK Government, for example they have made false claims in order to obtain benefits
- **International crimes, terrorism and other non-conducive activity:** if they have been involved in or associated with war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, terrorism, or other actions that are considered not to be conducive to the public good
- **Immigration-related matters:** if they have breached immigration laws, for example by overstaying, working in breach of conditions or assisting in the evasion of immigration control

However, the Government guidance states that the list of reasons someone may be considered to be not of good character is "non-exhaustive" and someone can be refused citizenship if they do not clearly fall into one of these categories. In regard to terrorism and other non-conducive activity, this includes "supporting groups whose main purpose or mode of operation consists of the committing of [war] crimes, even if that support did not make any direct contribution to the groups'" crimes.

We know that the label of “terrorism” is often unequally applied, resulting in groups fighting for self-determination, often in the context of the oppressive legacies of colonial rule, being proscribed, with no action taken against the governments enacting the oppression.

For example, the proscription of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) has proved controversial in this context. As a result, such decisions often involve highly political judgements.

It is clear that judgements of ‘character’ present a significant racialised barrier of access to the UK, leaving racialised migrants in an extended state of insecurity, having to re-apply for shorter-term visas, if they are deemed “non-conducive” to settlement. The policy is vague, leaving it vulnerable to abuse by the Hostile Office due to negative interpretations informed by prejudice, particularly the “public good” requirement. A 2022 UN report specifically criticised the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and British Nationality Act 1981 for this reason, as the inadequate definition of being “conducive to the public good” enables it to be used arbitrarily, putting people’s human rights and fundamental freedoms at risk.

Furthermore, the terminology of ‘good’ invokes racist ideals of ‘civility’ and associations of racialised migrants with criminality and, for Muslim migrants, with extremism. The concept of public good and its application are inspired by colonial abuses of power justified by Orientalist understandings of what is “good for everyone.” Similarly, the ‘good character’ constructs the ‘good migrant’ along the lines of who can perform Britishness, and punishes those who are not deemed desirable.

Racism runs throughout deprivation of citizenship provisions: racialised diaspora have their status made precarious on the grounds that they could feasibly claim another country’s citizenship, that they are not ‘really’ British. Migrants’ citizenship decisions are reliant on similar criteria that draws on racist and Islamophobic prejudices, particularly the vagueness of someone’s presence in the UK being “conducive to the public good”. The legal structures for depriving and denying British citizenship is reliant on racism, where racialised people are disproportionately excluded from Britishness.

This works to increase the insecurity of all racialised people in the UK, regardless of citizenship status or nationality/ies held, both because of whom these policies target and because of the foundations of them in shutting out racialised colonial and Commonwealth citizens.

## CASE STUDY: HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRANTS GROUP

A key example of this is the treatment of the Highly Skilled Migrants Group (HSMG) by the Home Office. We supported 650 migrants who were denied indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK by the Home Office on the basis of historical self-employment 'tax discrepancies' clause 322(5). This was used to determine that it is 'undesirable' for them to settle in the UK, including on the basis of their 'character' and 'dishonesty' i.e. 'not conducive to the public good'. Nearly 90% of those with cases remaining were from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India or Sri Lanka. The remaining people with cases are Indo-Caribbean or from Nigeria or Zimbabwe. All countries of origin were former British colonies.

Despite the fact the 'discrepancies' were rectified by HMRC, many of them were still left with insecurity and have not had their cases positively resolved, effectively leaving them in limbo, and pushed into debt and destitution with some reporting debt of £60,000. In addition, the situation has had a detrimental effect on the mental and physical health of the migrants.  A significant number of the HSMG report stress-related illnesses. Furthermore, we have supported individuals who experienced devastating mental health consequences including suicidal thoughts and depression, while others reported the break down of spousal relationships.

# RACIAL COMMODIFICATION

## VISA SCHEMES


Visa schemes are an embodiment of the State's belief it has the right to decide who is welcome within its borders, and at what price. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, UK governments have been removing citizenship and free entry entitlements to citizens of Britain's former colonies. In its place, numerous restrictive visa systems have been introduced, including for specific nationalities. This has served to create an increasingly large and insecure class of migrant workers, where visa schemes treat people as capital- a form of **racial capitalism** or commodification whereby people are commodified or turned into objects when selling their labour.

## RACIAL COMMODIFICATION

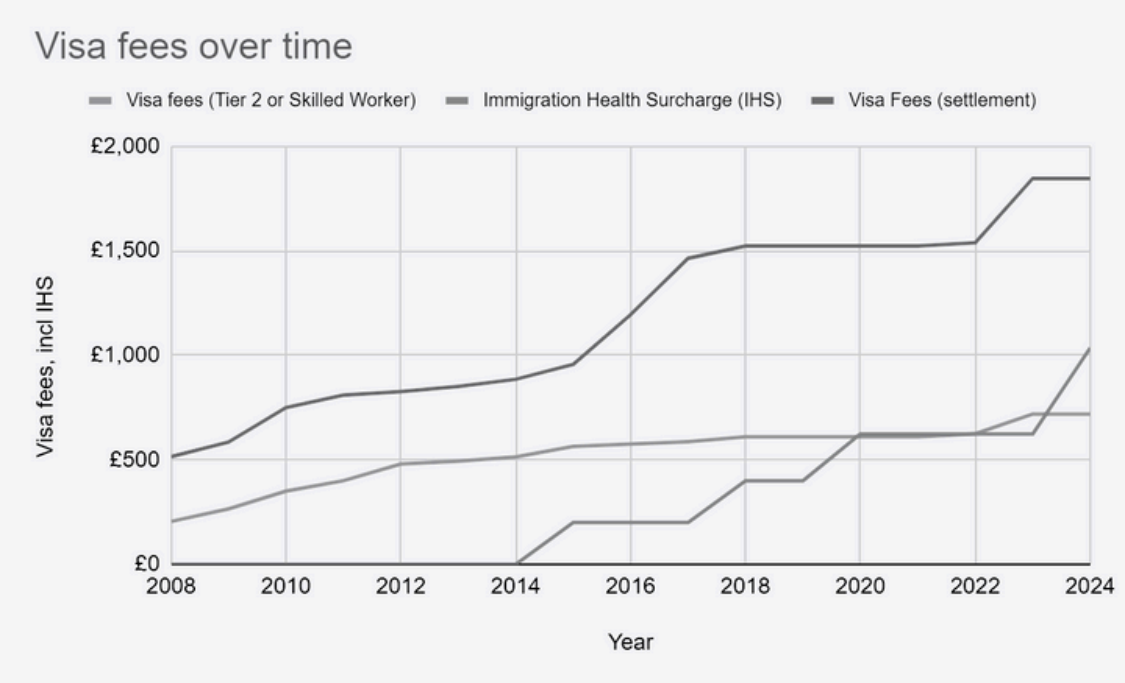
The commodification of racialised people and/or people from the Global South for the purposes of economic extraction and exploitation by the Global North. People are dehumanised into objects selling their labour by the globalised capitalist system and immigration schemes for migrant workers.

The reduction in scope of British nationality brought in through the Commonwealth Immigration Acts has been replaced by increasingly restrictive visas. Work vouchers were introduced in the 1960s, with three different categories of workers: Category A for Commonwealth citizens with a definite job offer, category B for people with specified professional qualifications and category C (only in practice for a few years) had a limited number of vouchers allocated through lottery.

Today, we have a points-based immigration system where people are sponsored.

Those in the sponsored route tend to be the most precarious, including seasonal workers, other temporary workers, and 'Skilled Migrants'. Most migrant workers have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) status, introduced in 1999, which has exacerbated insecurity and abuse by leaving workers without protection, should they report exploitation or extortion.

This system relies on viewing people solely as economic units, with their worth derived from their labour under capitalism. As a result, people become worthless in the eyes of the immigration system if they have to leave their employer because of abuse, or if they are unemployed. The narrowing of citizenship entitlements and restrictions on movement is also beneficial for the State from a financial perspective, as visa schemes make money - a lot of it. Fees for both visas and the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) have frequently increased significantly, outpacing inflation. If these costs had risen with inflation, people applying for settlement visas would be charged £675 less and the IHS would be £771 cheaper*. The IHS did not even exist until 2015, making this a significant route for the Government to make money from migrants over the last decade. Politicians also framed the increase this year of the IHS by 66% as a direct result of increasing pay for doctors.




*£514 for a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa in 2014 would cost £680 in February 2024, £39 less than the current fee. £885 for a settlement visa would be £1171, £675 less, and the £200 IHS charge that began in 2015 would be £264, £771 less than the current fee.

While narratives of “contribution” often dominate arguments for raising these fees, as they do for those wanting to reduce migration for low-income occupations, the economy actually relies upon a system of both high-earners and a hyper-exploited class in precarious occupations. This is because of racial capitalism, wherein multiple systems of labour are divided along racial lines. This reflects a hierarchy of disposability, where mobility is managed along the lines of race, which certain countries and regions come to signify.

It is also essential to note the exploitation of sponsored workers, which dominates the care and agricultural sectors but is not limited to these sectors. Sponsorship visa schemes tie people’s visa status in the UK to their sponsor i.e. employer - an arrangement that is rife with exploitation. Many employers have been charging extortionate and illegal recruitment fees leaving migrant workers in debt-bondage once they get to the UK. This means they have little to no money to support themselves if they leave their employer, especially as they have no access to public funds once unemployed, and only have a limited period in which to find themselves a new sponsoring employer. A majority racialised workforce is then left in a position of quasi-indentured labour, where the law is more focused on immigration enforcement than safeguarding people. By ‘quasi-indentured’, we mean when someone is forced to a degree, to work in a situation, as their ability to leave that work is highly limited due to the above reasons.

***“I CAME TO THE UK TO WORK, I HAVE PAID SO MUCH MONEY FOR MY VISA. IMMIGRATION SKILLS CHARGE, NHS SURCHARGE. I DID EVERYTHING BY THE BOOK, I HAVE EVEN PAID FEES I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO PAY, BECAUSE I WAS NOT AWARE. NOW I AM STUCK, I HAVE BEEN IN THE UK FOR 4 MONTHS. MY SPONSOR SAYS HE HAS NO WORK. I AM IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY, WITH NO FAMILY, NO FRIENDS, NO MONEY AND NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?” - CARE WORKER***

On the other hand, visa schemes and policies that act as internal borders, can generate huge profit for the Hostile Office.

- A premium sponsorship licence for Tiers 2 and 5 costs £25,000 (large sponsor) and a premium sponsor scheme - Tiers 2 & 5 (small sponsor) costs £8,000
- A Temporary Worker visa (if the application is made in the UK) costs £298 while a Skilled Worker visa costs £1,420

This snapshot of how the state monetises migrants' access to employment and demonstrates the interest the Government has in opposing a different system. Furthermore, despite the impact of Britain's colonial legacy and ongoing foreign interventions that either cause or contribute to the reasons many migrants, including refugees, come to the UK, the State subjects them to racist bureaucratic processes and then charges them high application costs.

## HEALTH AND CARE VISA

The Health and Care visa was introduced as separate from other Skilled Worker visa categories in December 2020. The visa category has rapidly expanded since then, forming the largest number of sponsored workers.

With this, exploitation has also increased, leaving many in harmful conditions that echo colonial migration patterns where racialised populations were treated not as people, but commodities. Today, the nationalities most represented on this visa are Indian nationals, followed by Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Ghanaian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals, respectively. While this differs from the women who came from the Caribbean and largely represented migrant healthcare workers following World War II and the 1948 Nationality Act, all are from former British colonies.

Their mobility is tightly managed: these workers have no access to public funds; they are sponsored workers, meaning their visa is tied to their employer continuing to sponsor them; and from 2024, people on this visa can no longer bring family members with them as dependents.

These conditions intend to enforce their status in the UK as temporary. Often they have to leave family behind in their country of origin, which means they are easier to deport, without being able to rely on familial and children's rights. In this way, the Government is able to treat people like capital, as 'stocks'. This is a deeply racialised association for the majority African and South Asian people on this visa, where they can be moved or rejected from the UK as and when it is deemed necessary to the economy.

The matter of mobility is important in understanding why migrants on Health and Care visas have become so prominent. Doctors and other medical and care staff have protested their underpayment in the UK, with successive waves of strikes in recent years. It has spurred British staff to leave the UK and move to work in countries like Australia, meaning migrant workers are recruited to fill these shortages. As a result, migrant workers are treated like a cheaper commodity to be traded, and extorted, as illustrated by the often precarious and exploitative nature of their employment in the UK.

The poor working conditions of migrant workers has also been documented: withheld pay and poor contracts meant that migrant workers often worked longer hours in more hazardous conditions and had less freedom to resign. In 2020, 38% of migrant workers we surveyed felt they would lose their job if they didn't go to work in these conditions. This is exacerbated by lacking access to public funds, as well as the fact that migrant workers were placed in higher-risk environments within these settings.

This is also reflected in the way that this sponsored visa route opened in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, where people working in care homes and healthcare settings were at exceptionally high risk of contracting the virus. With failure to provide them with adequate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), these workers were at greater risk of both severe cases of COVID-19 and death, and becoming disabled as a result of 'Long Covid'. As a result, 76% of migrant frontline workers felt they were putting their health on the line while working at the height of the pandemic.

The predominance of migrant workers in this field and the disposability with which they were treated is emblematic of Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as 'the state-sanctioned….production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.' In other words: racism devalues the lives of racialised people, often leaving them in situations where they are more likely to die, such as increased exposure to high-risk environments. Racism is a structure of manufactured vulnerability, which is reinforced by the UK's punitive visa system.

## SEASONAL WORKERS

Migrant workers on the Seasonal Worker visa scheme, specifically seasonal agricultural workers, are a prime example of the commodification of migrants from both the Global South and Eastern Europe who are commodified by both the scheme and the narrative it relies on to exploit them.

The Seasonal Worker visa is available for workers to come to the UK and work in horticulture for up to six months or poultry between October and December. A form of visa scheme for migrant agricultural workers has been in place between 1945 and 2014 in the UK. From 2008, the seasonal worker scheme at the time was restricted to Bulgarian and Romanian workers until 2014.

A combination of shortages caused by Brexit and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic meant that UK farms were struggling to recruit workers. As a result, the Pick for Britain scheme was brought in by the Government in April 2020 to recruit domestic workers into seasonal agricultural roles. However, the scheme was scrapped 12 months later after only **5 to 11% of the 70,000** target was filled by UK-born workers.

Since 2014, there has been a shift in demographics of those recruited to work on UK farms. In 2019, the UK Government launched the Seasonal Workers Pilot which allowed two licensed operators (Concordia and Pro-Force) to recruit up to 2,500 temporary workers from non-European countries to work in the UK horticultural sector for up to six months.

This was expanded to 10,000 temporary workers for 2020. The Johnson Government said that the Seasonal Worker scheme would be in place at least until the end of 2024, but that the quota would be gradually reduced. However, the Sunak Government has increased the quota and in 2023 and 2024, the Seasonal Worker quota for horticulture is 45,000 visas a year. Initially, workers on the scheme mostly came from Russia and Ukraine, but this has shifted to a wider range of nationalities including those from Nepal, Indonesia, and Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The extractive and exploitative nature of the Seasonal Worker scheme is ultimately colonial in nature. It carries on a strong tradition of capitalist and colonial-era labour extraction. Furthermore, the short-term nature of this visa scheme and migrants' temporary status means that worker organising against harsh labour conditions is incredibly difficult.

In 2023, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism carried out an investigation on 22 UK farms which revealed systemic bullying and abuse of workers. Workers on farms reported multiple forms of mistreatment including not going to the toilet for fear of not hitting targets, being forced to work in gale-force winds, being punished for having their phone in their pocket or talking to friends in fields, or being threatened by recruiters with being deported or blacklisted. Some workers also said they were referred to simply by their worker number, rather than their name.

Alongside well-documented abuse by employers, migrant workers on UK farms have been made vulnerable by the state-enabled exploitation on sponsorship schemes. State regulated immigration pathways, like the visa sponsorship system, are being used to effectively traffick workers into exploitative situations.

Migrants across multiple employment sectors face numerous issues including debt bondage, forced labour, unfair dismissal, threats, and the issue of arriving in the UK only to find the job they were promised does not exist.

## COMMODIFICATION OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Constructions of identities in relation to agricultural labourers can shed light on the foundation of the contemporary visa scheme. Since its inception in 2019, the scheme has seen a large number of Ukrainians (91% in 2019) alongside Moldovians, Russians and Belarusians. In 2023, recruitment from Central Asia was almost three times higher than in Europe, with Ukrainians now only making up just 7.75% of workers and Kyrgyzstan (24.32%) emerging as the leading nationality amongst seasonal workers.

Labourers from the Global South have provided cheap labour for the Global North for centuries, and the seasonal agricultural worker scheme is the latest iteration of this trend. The British Empire was underpinned by the work of indentured labour and enslaved people, relying on racialised people to be a ready source of cheap and mobile labourers on plantation or farm land. In the 21st century, migrant workers continue to be reduced to “human capital” or “stocks and flows", even by pro-migrants’ rights voices. This reduction links directly with the very essence of seasonal worker schemes: migrants are capital or temporary assets to be managed for economic gain.

Within Europe itself, Eastern Europeans have experienced deep xenophobia, migratisation and othering at the hands of Western European narratives and policies. Eastern Europeans, notably Polish, Ukrainian, Albanian and Romanian people, have not always benefited from proximity to Whiteness both in a historical and contemporary context. Moreover, the term ‘Eastern European’ is ambiguous and works similarly to other racialised categorisations in that it generalises across numerous ethnicities, cultures and nationalities. In the context of labour migration to the UK and other Western European countries, this differential framing of people from Eastern Europe is useful because it allows the production and management of racial difference within Whiteness and Europe for the purposes of economic exploitation.

# INNOVATOR FOUNDER VISA

The Innovator Founder Visa route highlights a different dimension of the extractive nature of immigration systems. In contrast to so-called 'low-skilled' labour, schemes like the Innovator Founder Visa extract migrant labour on the basis that their skills are desirable, or they are deserving and productive to capitalism.

In March 2019, this visa category was launched as a replacement for the Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa category. The scheme has a high threshold in order to be able to apply. The Hostile Office states a potential applicant must have an idea for an innovative business in the UK that is "different from anything else on the market" as well as "viable, with potential for growth" and scalable. The applicant must also receive an endorsement from an approved body to assess if the business idea meets the requirements.

The Innovator Founder visa emphasises the 'desirability' of migrants in relation to their perceived skill level and their 'rank' in labour markets. They are normally wealthy and fit into the idea of the 'good, ideal' migrant narrative. In the Global North, migrants are granted visas based on their perceived ability to perform economic needs in relation to markets. 'Highly skilled' migrants are seen as those with university degrees or entrepreneurial backgrounds in contrast to 'low skilled' manual labour. Furthermore, the Innovator Founder visa can offer a route to settlement after three years, in contrast to the Seasonal Workers scheme which does not allow a route to settlement, nor are migrants on this visa able to bring dependents to the UK.

Visa schemes are therefore granted and created depending on the State's economic needs and whose labour and skills it can extract for its own benefit. The contemporary system of visa schemes emulates the UK's history of colonialism, which equally dehumanised large portions of the global population due to how they defined their race. As a result, the decrease in mobility of colonised populations via citizenship and the rise in specific and limited visa schemes are a clear example of an ongoing racially-stratified system of bordering.

# CONCLUSION

Racism and exclusion are the basis of immigration policies in 2024. They stem from a long history of targeting 'unwelcome' groups of migrants based on colonial constructions of race, deservingness or who can be economically 'useful' to Britain.

This report has endeavoured to demonstrate how immigration legislation limits the ability of racialised people from coming to the UK and controls their freedom to live their lives. Moreover, through analysis informed by theories of racial capitalism, it is evident that the increasingly narrow means in which people can migrate to the UK is conditional and extractive- measured largely in economic terms. A system based on sponsorship and visa schemes, including student visas, reduces people from the Global South to mere economic units, which we define as racial commodification. Thus continuing the racist, imperialist history of defining racialised people as objects to extract labour from by the capitalist Global North: racial commodification in practice in the 21st Century.

Furthermore, belonging is a fragile and precarious construct which is constantly made more difficult by racist and Islamophobic citizenship laws. The expansion of deprivation of citizenship legislation is based upon a colonial-era narrative of 'good' and how to perform Britishness, disproportionately impacting Muslims and people with African, South Asian or West Asian heritage.

Tackling the racism and injustices of these legislations cannot be achieved through simple reform. Oppression is ingrained in immigration systems and borders, and, ultimately, they have never been designed to serve the interests of migrants or racialised people. Rather, these systems ensure the survival of harmful capitalist and imperialist mechanisms of exploitation and extraction. That is why, at the Migrants' Rights Network, we are no longer content to campaign for tweaks to harmful infrastructure.

**We call for a complete overhaul and abolition of these systems, and to work towards a future based in justice and freedom.**

# FURTHER READING

- ‘From Uganda to Rwanda: The British Political Class’ Ever-Present Hostility to ‘Aliens” – Byline Times
- The Windrush Scandal and the individualization of postcolonial immigration control in Britain
- Asylum After Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking; Lucy Mayblin (2017)
- Staying Power; Peter Fryer (1984)
- Asylum in the UK: A Frontline for Racial Justice - Refugee Action