

**PRESS RELEASE****Embargo: 10<sup>th</sup> May****#RefugeeBanBill – Over 100 Scottish organisations urge the House of Lords to reject this harmful legislation**

The inhumane and unworkable #RefugeeBanBill has today (10 May 2023) moved to Second Reading in the House of Lords, giving us another crucial opportunity to raise our voices in opposition to this harmful legislation, which seeks to effectively abolish asylum and trafficking rights and protections.

The Bill was passed in the House of Commons despite opposition from the SNP, Labour and others, as well as mass protests across UK and Scotland. Its Second Reading in the Lords gives peers the chance to debate the key principles and main purpose of this legislation, and to raise major concerns about changes.

We urge as many of them to use their position of power responsibly, with evidence and eloquence in the debate. Most of all, we urge them to follow up with practical action in the Bill's later stages in the House of Lords. Words are not enough, we need actions.

As part of a coalition of over 100 organisations across Scotland, we are calling on the House of Lords to reject this Bill in its entirety.

Rather than combating organised crime and traffickers, this legislation is a major threat to the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery.

Not only has the UK Government failed to consult organisations across the sector about the content of the Bill, it contains flawed amendments relating to Scottish devolved competencies, which challenge our local authorities' locus and ability to protect unaccompanied refugee and trafficked children; to give safety to exploitation survivors and to safeguard our Scottish Parliament's devolved competences.

In our campaign, we outline the harmful impact of this Bill in Scotland. The human consequences of the Bill will be devastating to people who need safety and will lead to greater discrimination, given how the language, tone and concept of 'illegal' has been racialised.

A recent report from the Helen Bamber Foundation [shows](#) that last year over 850 children were wrongly 'assessed' by the Home Office to be adults based on their appearance – this exposes the unequal treatment and outcomes for individuals in the migration system. This legislation will create even greater inequalities in our society and in our communities, by granting the Home Office the power to remove children from an existing care system in Scotland, taking them into a callous and neglectful Home Office regime instead.

The Home Secretary's record on caring for children has already resulted in the disappearance of over [200 children](#), with police and other experts warning that many may have fallen prey to serious organised crime networks.

Statistics show that one in five people arriving in small boats are children - we fear that this Bill will increase their vulnerability, particularly those who are alone, including to exploitation by organised crime.

This legislation perversely embeds inequalities even deeper into our own society and communities, in a racialised and segregating system that is rooted in the punishment of some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

We should protect not punish refugees and trafficking survivors.

Emma Hutton, CEO of JustRight Scotland, said:

"This #RefugeeBanBill will put survivors of human trafficking and unaccompanied children at risk of even greater harm, when we should be providing them with support and securing their access to justice. It is an attack on some of the most basic human rights such as the right to seek refugee protection and the right to liberty and security.

"We believe that safe, dignified and legal routes are possible – we have seen that with programmes for refugees from Ukraine and Hong Kong. There is a diverse movement of resistance against this legislation and we call on the Lords to reject this Bill today."

Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive of Scottish Refugee Council, said:

"We are profoundly concerned about the impact of the proposed Illegal Migration Bill. "We believe the Bill will not deter desperate people from seeking safety but will instead result in people who have experienced trauma being imprisoned in disused army barracks, barges and detention centres. While the UK Government uses hostile language to scapegoat refugees and people seeking asylum, the real issue is their failure to invest in a well- functioning, responsive asylum system.

"We welcome the Scottish Parliament's majority rejection of the bill's proposals and call on the parliament and the Scottish Government to use their full powers to protect the people most at risk of the harm.

"As the bill progresses through Westminster, we call on the UK Government to scrap the legislation and instead focus on delivering a fair and efficient asylum system, and providing safe and legal routes for those who need them.

"This isn't about politics, or 'small boats'; it's about saving lives."

Along with many of our coalition, we call for the Lords to vote against the [Illegal] Migration Bill.

View the full statement and list of signatories here: [JRS-SRC-Joint-statement-Scotland-against-the-Refugee-Ban-Bill-Final-last-update-08.05.23.docx \(live.com\)](#)

**For more info/ interviews contact**

[Gillian.furmage@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:Gillian.furmage@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

[Annamaria@justrightscotland.org.uk](mailto:Annamaria@justrightscotland.org.uk)

## **Notes**

### **About Scottish Refugee Council**

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to supporting people seeking refugee protection in Scotland. We provide advice, support and a listening ear to people fleeing violence, persecution and war. We campaign for a fairer and more humane asylum system in the UK. [www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

### **About JustRight Scotland**

JustRight Scotland works to defend and extend people's rights. We work in partnership with like-minded organisations who share our vision of a fairer and more equal Scotland, by helping people use equalities and human rights law as an effective tool for social change: <https://www.justrightscotland.org.uk>