

**AS CHRISTIANS,
WE STAND WITH
REFUGEES.
JOIN US.**



“I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME”

As Christians, we are called to love refugees and people seeking asylum as our neighbours, and to welcome, protect, promote and integrate them. Yet increasingly, refugees are under attack. Anti-refugee laws mean they face more and more difficulty getting the protection they badly need and are subjected to huge hostility and cut off from our communities. **As Christians, we are saying this needs to change, now.**

We have 3 simple asks inspired by our faith:

1) RESTORE THE RIGHT TO ASYLUM

All of us deserve to live in safety and dignity. And, if we were ever forced from our homes, we would want the opportunity to rebuild our lives safely elsewhere.

2) PUT DIGNITY AND PROTECTION AT THE HEART OF THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

Everyone wants to live safely in community and to access essential services without fear.

3) END IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Every year, tens of thousands of people are incarcerated without time limit in prison-like conditions for the purpose of administering immigration procedures. We don't want to be a society that treats people like this.



St Vincent
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RESTORE THE RIGHT TO ASYLUM

All of us deserve to live in safety and dignity. And, if we were ever forced from our homes, we would want the opportunity to rebuild our lives safely elsewhere. But recent laws and policies create huge barriers to asylum, punish refugees for how they travel, and force people given asylum to live in limbo fearing forced removal for decades.

“Any person in danger who appears at a frontier has a right to protection... Each country has the responsibility to respect the rights of refugees and assure that they are respected as much as the rights of its own citizens.”

*PONTIFICAL COUNCIL "COR UNUM"
Refugees: a challenge to solidarity*

For the vast majority of refugees, there are no safe ways to come to the UK. And many people who are forced to flee their homes in desperate circumstances simply have no choice but to cross borders informally to reach a safe haven. Despite this, legislation such as the Nationality and Borders Act and the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Act punishes and criminalises refugees for how they travel. Under ‘inadmissibility’ rules, the government often refuses even to look at refugees claims, and tries instead to remove them to some other country they are not from.

Now, a recent change to the rules forces people the government has granted refugee protection to prove their need for protection again every 2 and half years, with the possibility of being detained and forcibly removed. Refugees recognised by the government and living our communities will have to wait up to 20 years before they can get indefinite leave to remain. This means living in limbo, unable to rebuild their lives. This fundamentally undermines the very purpose of refugee laws, which are designed to protect.

And the government has ended refugee family reunion, cutting off one of the very few safe routes for refugees to come to the UK, and keeping families apart. Refugees should not have to choose between living in safety and living with their spouse or kids.

Everyone deserves the chance to seek safety. This should not be a crime. Let's repeal the anti-refugee laws, create safe routes for people seeking sanctuary, and build a system that examines all asylum claims fairly on their merits.

Sam* was forced to leave his home when still a child, and eventually came to the UK seeking sanctuary. Due to a government error and poor legal representation, he was initially refused asylum and declared appeal rights exhausted. Not allowed to work or access any kind of public support, he spent nearly a decade in destitution, facing a daily struggle to survive. Eventually, with the help of JRS UK, he made further submissions and was recognised as a refugee. He wants to rebuild his life and participate in the community:

“We’re desperate to be a part of society that works, has a family, has a decent normal life.”

Already, Sam feels it is harder for him to do these things because he was destitute and without status for so long.

“We are trapped in a cycle” he explains.

If he were granted refugee status under the new rules, Sam would be forced to reapply for protection every two and a half years, facing the threat of removal, and with his future once again determined by the outcomes of a hostile and complicated decision-making process.



PUT DIGNITY AND PROTECTION AT THE HEART OF THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

“the communities that welcome [migrants and refugees] can... be a living witness to hope, one that is understood as the promise of a present and a future where the dignity of all as children of God is recognised. In this way, migrants and refugees are recognised as brothers and sisters, part of a family in which they can express their talents and participate fully in community life.”

Pope Leo XIV, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025.

Everyone wants to live safely in community and to access essential services without fear.

Yet much of our asylum and immigration system marginalises and isolates people and forces them into poverty.

People seeking asylum are not allowed to work or access public funds, and levels of asylum support are so low that people face a daily struggle to meet their basic needs.

People waiting for decisions on their asylum claims are increasingly placed in out-of-town, detention like spaces like former military barracks. These settings cause extreme trauma, particularly for refugees who have been in camp-like places in situations they fled, and isolate people from society.

“Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbour. The concept of “neighbour” is... universalised”

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est



Government policy is to **create a hostile environment for people refused asylum and others without immigration status**. Cut off from all support and unable to work or access public funds, they are left completely destitute. A set of laws and policies **designed to make life unbearably difficult** for people without immigration status involve making doctors and landlords check and report people's immigration status, creating a culture of mistrust. They prevent people from getting medical treatment, renting a home or seeking refuge from abuse due to fear of immigration control. The term “Hostile Environment” was the formal title for this approach when it was originally developed, starting in 2012. As its original name suggests, the purpose of “The Hostile Environment” is to manufacture human suffering as a means of immigration control. The system continues to operate and is even being extended: The current government just announced plans to cut off support to families with children after refusal of asylum.

Refugees regularly face homelessness immediately after being granted protection by the government because they have so little time to find somewhere to live before they are evicted from asylum accommodation. They are given a 42 day ‘Move-on’ period which is not enough time to find work or access essential financial safety nets, let alone find a place to live. Under wider laws around homelessness, someone is considered at risk of homelessness if they might not have somewhere to live within 56 days. Additionally, the timeframe for the move-on period keeps shifting, generating further confusion.

No one should ever be made homeless on purpose, or denied healthcare and basic necessities because of their immigration status. People seeking asylum should be allowed to work and access the support they need, and able to live safely and with dignity in local communities. The refugee ‘move-on’ period should be longer – at least 56 days, in line with UK law’s wider timeframe for deciding if someone is at risk of homelessness.



END IMMIGRATION DETENTION

“We call upon the government to avoid the use of immigration detention, arbitrary expulsion and other practices which violate human dignity.”

Every year, tens of thousands of people are incarcerated without time limit in prison-like conditions for the purpose of administering immigration procedures. The decision to detain a person does not go before a judge.

Detention destroys lives and damages our communities. It is profoundly harmful to both physical and mental health, and impacts people for years after they have been released. People who have survived torture and then been detained say it's like being tortured again. Immigration detention violates human dignity and isolates people from their friends, families and communities. Abuse, neglect, and humiliation of detained people is prolific.

Despite the consensus that detention is deeply harmful, the government has committed to increasing the numbers of people detained.

We don't want to be a society that treats people like this. Incarcerating people in this way is not proportionate to the aim of migration management. Indeed, the widespread use of detention is relatively new, with the number of immigration detention centres growing dramatically over the last 20 years.

We should be supporting people through their asylum and immigration claims in the community.

Malik* was tortured in prison in his country of origin and came to the UK seeking safety. He was later detained for several months in the UK:

“You go somewhere where you think it’s safe, and they put you through the same process. The law fails victims of torture. They don’t have to put you in detention. They put you back in the same situation... Putting someone in detention is a kind of torture...[in detention] torture is worse, because it’s psychological... you take it with you all your life.”

Detained and Dehumanised (2024)



TAKE ACTION TO DEFEND ASYLUM



**“LOVE THE STRANGER THEN, FOR YOU WERE STRANGERS
IN THE LAND OF EGYPT”**

If you have five minutes...

Send a postcard to the Prime Minister asking him to Restore the Right to Asylum, end immigration detention, and put dignity and protection at the heart of the asylum system.

Put up a poster to show your support for refugees in your church, school, or workplace.

Request postcards or posters at www.jrsuk.net/defend-asylum

If you have fifteen minutes...

Write to your MP asking them to defend refugees in parliament.

If you have half an hour...

Hold a prayer vigil for refugees.
Find resources at
www.jrsuk.net/praying-with-refugees

If you have an hour...

Share this guide with your church and your friends and your family, and explain why it matters to help refugees and asylum seekers, and read the human stories behind the numbers.

If you have an evening...

Hold an event in your church or parish to raise awareness of the situation facing refugees. You can use these resources or ask JRS to host a workshop in your parish.

Learn more and order resources for your parish, community, or school at
www.jrsuk.net/defend-asylum

uk.outreach@jrs.net

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