



Home Office

Home Secretary

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BY EMAIL

10 December 2021

Dear Commissioner Mijatović

Thank you for your letter dated 1 December regarding the situation of migrants attempting to cross the English Channel in small boats.

The recent loss of life is a tragedy, and the UK Government has continually pushed to work closely with all our international partners, both bilaterally through our dialogues with European neighbours, the EU, Council of Europe, and multilaterally through our leadership over the past year of the G6 and G7, to ensure we can collectively address the wide range of factors associated with migrant movements across Europe and the channel. The UK and France are committed to working together to address illegal migration; to prevent risk to life and stop ruthless organised criminals exploiting migrants. However, we know we must go further together and with other European partners.

As you will know, the UK has a proud history of being open to the world and we take pride in fulfilling our moral responsibility to support refugees fleeing peril around the world.

Since 2015, we have resettled almost 25,000 men, women and children seeking refuge from cruel circumstances across the world - more than any other European country. This year we have extended support to British National (Overseas) status holders and their family members threatened by draconian security laws in Hong Kong, creating a new pathway to citizenship for over 5 million people. In response to the situation in Afghanistan, the UK has recently expanded safe and legal routes with a further commitment to resettle up to 20,000 people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme – one of the most generous schemes in our history. This is on top of the 7,000 Locally Employed Staff and their family members relocated to the UK since April 2021.

Furthermore, the UK Government also provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its family reunion policy. Under this policy, we have granted to over 39,000 partners and children of those granted protection in the UK since 2015 – that is over 5,000 a year. In addition, our new Points Based Immigration System has a wide range of legal migration routes for people looking to come to the UK to work or study, and we are working with partners to help more talented and skilled people who have had to flee their homes, to safely and legally come to the UK and contribute to our country.

Our focus will remain on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability. Those in need of protection should claim asylum in the first safe country – that is the fastest route to safety. They should not undertake further dangerous journeys to reach a destination of their choosing.

The Nationality and Borders Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, will strengthen our approach to illegal migration and combat misconceptions about the UK and its migration policies: tackling the enablers of illegal migration - such as organised criminal groups that smuggle vulnerable migrants into the UK via extremely dangerous means; and addressing many of the long-standing pull factors encouraging migrants to make the perilous journey from France to the United Kingdom.

We are also working with the French Government to maintain the security of our shared border. I maintain regular contact with my French counterpart, Interior Minister Darmanin, on the issue of illegal migration and small boats crossings. The UK and France maintain a longstanding relationship on tackling illegal migration at the shared border; the UK has committed several funding packages to supporting this work.

We are seeing an unacceptable rise in dangerous Channel crossings, and we are doing everything we can to support the French response so they can do more to stop people making these unnecessary journeys. We are committed to working with the French to stop these dangerous and unnecessary journeys and we remain committed to continuing to address the issues of illegal migration and small boat crossings.

I agree with you on the importance of safeguarding access to asylum as a solution for this crisis. The UK has provided over €90 million funding (€31.4 million in November 2020 and €62.7 million in July 2021) to France over the last two years alone to help deal with this crisis. A significant portion of this funding has been specifically for supporting migrants in Northern France into the French asylum system. The UK also works closely with France to prevent these dangerous and unnecessary crossings, coordinating rescue efforts and working tirelessly to reduce risk to life at sea. I disagree that the UK and French focus on preventing these hazardous crossings redirects them to even more dangerous routes.


You mention this crisis has been politicised. Whilst there may be differences of opinion on the relative merits of potential solutions, I have been clear with colleagues across Europe that the global migration crisis requires a global response.

I am in full agreement that France and the UK must work together to stop these dangerous and unnecessary crossings. This will include making every effort to prevent the launches of migrant vessels, to go after the vile criminal gangs who profit from the crossings, and to effect the immediate return of migrants who have no right to remain in the UK in order to provide a powerful disincentive to further attempts, thus making this route unviable.

The UK is keen to work with European partners on the issue of illegal migration and to tackle the criminal gangs that facilitate these dangerous journeys. The small boats phenomenon is something we can only solve together, and we have a shared moral responsibility to act. Collaboration is key to addressing this challenge, between the UK and France but also other European partners too, including Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands.

That is why I have been consistently engaging with my European counterparts on this issue and will continue to do so. This includes my most recent productive meeting with

Luciana Lamorgese in Rome on 2 December. My offer of engagement continues, and I look forward to advancing our joint work on this critical issue.

w. 7k are your wishes


Rt Hon Priti Patel MP