

Subject: our taxpayer money must not continue to fund rights abuses on our borders.

Dear [Name of MP],

I am asking you to stand for the creation of a fair, effective and rights-respecting asylum system, or provide me with your detailed reasons for your opposition.

As a member of your constituency, I am writing to bring your attention to the abhorrent situation children and families seeking safety in the UK are forced to endure. The departure of Suella Braverman and the ruling of the Supreme Court against the 'Rwanda Plan' provides an opportunity for us to depart from our inhumane trajectory and create an asylum system that is fair, effective and in line with international law. These demands should not be radical.

Human rights are not respected on the UK-France Border.

Safe routes to the UK are few and far between, and inaccessible for the majority of those who need them.¹ Suella Braverman, then Home Secretary, herself acknowledged that, in order to seek asylum in the UK, people must be present on British soil.² For anyone who doesn't fit into the limited visa schemes currently on offer, there is no safe way to access our shores, leaving many to undertake the life-threatening journey across the channel. Last year, 7,177 children made this crossing - 16% of all those who made the journey.³ No parent should ever have to put their child in an unsafe boat to secure their safety.

Instead of investing in safe routes, the UK is sending millions of pounds of taxpayer money to France to 'securitise' the border.⁴ In reality, this forces families seeking safety in the UK to endure ongoing state violence and degrading living conditions that threaten their physical and mental health.⁵ Children and their families are forced to sleep on the street or in forested areas, in cheap tents that provide little shelter from either the winter cold or summer heat - last year, temperatures ranged from -5°C in December to almost 40°C in July. Currently, the Sous-Prefecture in Dunkirk is refusing to provide emergency accommodation, forcing families with young children to sleep outside in red weather warnings, at risk to their lives.

On top of this, sanitation and hygiene rights are regularly ignored. In living sites in Calais and Dunkirk, there is no running water, either for drinking or washing, nor are there toileting facilities. Project Play, a grassroots NGO who provides safe spaces for children living on the border, regularly documents instances of children complaining of thirst, having to wash outside and go to the toilet in full view of passing adults. These threats to their mental and physical health and safety are compounded by regular violent 'eviction' operations, sanctioned by the French state.⁶ In these operations, children are forced to watch as fully-armed police destroy the few belongings that they can call their own - including their tents, toys, sleeping bags and blankets. These operations are carried out randomly - sometimes daily, sometimes weekly - and nearly always first thing in the

morning, maximising their destabilising impacts. Imagine how a child would feel waking up to such violence and fear.

Whilst our taxpayer money is sent to France to create these conditions, the refusal of the UK Government to create safe routes for those seeking safety ensures that our borders remain deadly. Since the early 2000s, over 300 people have been killed on the border - including at least 36 children.⁷

These living conditions for children on the French-British border are contrary to myriad articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK and France have both ratified. To list but a few:

- **Article 19:** every child has a right to be protected from all forms of violence.
- Education
- **Article 24:** every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of health.
- **Article 27:** every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- **Article 28:** every child has the right to an education.
- **Article 31:** every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

France and the UK have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil these rights - with particular concern to the rights of refugee and displaced children (Article 22).

The UK can, and must, change this.

The violation of the rights of refugee children on the border could end tomorrow, if the political will existed. The welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees last year, although far from perfect, puts into perspective the unwillingness to show the same humanity to other refugees and asylum seekers. Border policies aimed at deterrence have been shown time and time again to be ineffective. The only way to 'stop the boats' is to offer them a safe alternative.⁸

Yet, the media and the government, including the Home Office, seeks to portray this issue as one of 'invasion'. This is far from the truth. Not only is the number of people making this dangerous crossing a tiny percentage of the number of refugees other European nations accept, but research shows that the vast majority of them would have asylum applications granted.⁹

The people who are attempting to legally claim asylum in the UK want only to live safely in the community, and to give good lives to their children. Instead, they meet with the full force of "Fortress Europe," and systems that dehumanise and humiliate them at every turn. History warns us of the dangers of rhetoric that seeks to evoke fear of 'other'. Joan Slater, a Holocaust survivor, warned of the risks of demonising and dehumanising language. With Suella Braverman's departure, and the Supreme Court's clear message that our current trajectory is in violation of our domestic and international laws, we must change course.

Our taxpayer money must not continue to fund rights abuses.

I am asking you to support the creation of a fair and effective asylum system that would immeasurably improve the lives of all. This must include:

1. **The creation of safe routes to the UK for all asylum seekers.** Everyone deserves a chance to have their case heard. This is our moral and legal obligation.
2. **An immediate ban on police eviction operations** and the provision of **safe, unconditional accommodation** for all living sites in northern France. No family should be forced to sleep outside and be subject to state violence as they seek safety. Our taxpayer money must not continue to fund these rights abuses.

The children in Calais and Dunkirk are bright, creative, funny and curious. They have as much potential as any other child, but they need the opportunity, support and protection to grow and develop. This is their right, under the UNCRC, and something which is in the UK's capacity to give. They have nowhere to play, nowhere to learn, and are told by the world that they are unwanted. No childhood should be treated like this - and it doesn't have to be this way.

As an MP, I believe that you have a unique and important role to play in addressing this issue and I would be grateful for your support.

It is time to take a stand and demand that the Government set up safe routes to the UK for all those who need them. We cannot allow more children to be subject to this. We cannot allow more deaths in the channel. We cannot allow dehumanising rhetoric to continue to spread unchecked.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my views on this important matter. I look forward to your response and to working with you to find a resolution that benefits our community, and the human rights of all.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[Your Phone Number]
[Your Email Address]

Sources:

1, 3, 9 - Report from the Refugee Council, produced using 2022 Home Office statistics, accessed <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/resources/the-truth-about-channel-crossings/>.

2 - Suella Braverman (video taken from the Guardian). Accessed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpZAS0yqkJM>

4 - Policy Paper from the UK Government, accessed <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-phase-in-partnership-to-tackle-illegal-migration-and-small-boat-arrivals/uk-france-joint-statement-enhancing-co-operation-against-illegal-migration>

5 - See UNHCR Briefing Notes, accessed

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-concerned-about-conditions-refugees-and-migrants-calais-and-dunkerque>

6 - Report from Project Play, accessed

https://www.project-play.org/_files/ugd/6fd156_4865186c5f264ad6b5c139962958df6c.pdf

7 - *IRR report*

8 - Report from Free Movement, accessed

<https://freemovement.org.uk/does-the-policy-of-deterring-asylum-seekers-actually-work/>