

For the attention of the Home Secretary

Rt Hon Priti Patel
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

1st October 2020

Open Letter to call for urgent changes to protect homeless migrants in the context of Covid-19

Dear Priti Patel,

We stand together in the belief that enforced destitution and homelessness is never acceptable and has no place in society. To secure a truly just recovery from Coronavirus, nobody can be left behind.

Government directives in response to Covid-19 have enabled people from all backgrounds to find life-saving shelter and support, but long-term plans to protect people from the pandemic's continued threat can and must include everyone. It cannot be right that anyone should face a return to homelessness in the middle of a devastating pandemic, simply due to their immigration status.

In light of this, we are extremely concerned about the decision taken by the Home Office to restart evictions for people who have had a negative asylum decision, from the 15th September. We are also very concerned that other people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) will be at significant risk of homelessness and hardship over the winter because of a lack of guaranteed funding or legislated duty for councils to offer support to people with this condition on their visa.

Data from Citizens Advice shows an increase of 110% in approaches for advice regarding NRPF and that 82% of the people who needed this advice were from Black and Ethnic Minority communities. Earlier this year we also saw data from Public Health England showing that people from these same communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Unless there is swift policy change, thousands of people with No Recourse to Public Funds including those who have sought asylum could face homelessness and destitution.

The Home Office has a duty to ensure this does not happen, firstly by reversing the decision to restart evictions from asylum accommodation so that no-one is forced onto the streets during this crisis, and secondly, by ending the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' conditions that stop people getting the housing and support they need when they have nowhere else to turn.

Coronavirus has highlighted the devastating consequences of an unjust immigration system that directly results in enforced destitution and homelessness. We must seize this opportunity to put discriminatory policies firmly behind us and work together to create a just society for all.

Signed,

Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Interim Director of Liberal Judaism
Martin Charlesworth, Jubilee+ CEO
Rajnish Kashyap, General Secretary/Director, Hindu Council UK
Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain
Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Catholic Bishop for Migrants and Refugees
Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Chair, Virtue Ethics Foundation
Farooq Murad, CEO of the Islamic Foundation
The Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, Bishop of Bradwell, Church of England
Alexandra Wright, Senior Rabbi, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

Please direct any response to this letter to campaigns@naccom.org.uk