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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 17 March to the Home Secretary on behalf of your constituent about illegal migration. I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration.

The volume of illegal small boat arrivals has simply overwhelmed our asylum system. The backlog of asylum claims has ballooned to over 160,000 with the asylum system now costing the British taxpayer £3 billion a year. Since 2018, some 85,000 people have illegally entered the UK by small boat – 45,000 of them in 2022 alone. All travelled through safe countries in which they could and should have claimed asylum. We have a duty to house them and the bill for hotel rooms has now reached £6 million a day. That is unsustainable. The small boats problem is part of a larger global migration crisis, but one that this Government is committed to tackling, including with international partners.

Aside from the huge cost to the British taxpayer, the risk remains that these individuals just disappear. When we try to remove those whose claims are dismissed, they turn our generous modern slavery laws against us to prevent removal. The need for reform has been obvious and urgent.

The new legislation introduced by the Home Secretary and Prime Minister on 7 March will ensure that if you enter the UK illegally:

- the Home Secretary will be under a new duty to remove you;
- you may be detained, with no recourse to immigration bail or judicial review, within the first 28 days. We can maintain detention thereafter so long as we have a reasonable prospect of removal;
- the number of appeals and challenges available to suspend removal will be radically narrowed. Only those medically unfit to fly, at real risk of serious and irreversible harm in the country we are removing them to or who claim that the Home Secretary has made a factual error in determining that they are an illegal entrant subject to the duty to remove, will be able to delay their removal. Under 18s will only be removed in limited circumstances ahead of them reaching adulthood, such as for the purposes of family reunion or where removal is to a safe country of origin;

- other human rights claims, including the right to private or family life, or other forms of Judicial Review cannot suspend your removal. They will be heard remotely, after removal;
- you will be disqualified from using modern slavery rules to prevent removal. If someone is identified as a potential victim of modern slavery, we will ensure they are safely returned home from where they were removed against their will, or to another safe country. Removal from the UK may only be deferred where a person is cooperating with law enforcement agencies in an investigation into the circumstances of their trafficking. This will mean that genuine victims are protected, while preventing people from abusing our modern slavery laws to thwart their removal from the UK;
- you will face a permanent bar on lawful re-entry to the UK and a permanent bar from securing settlement in the UK or from securing British citizenship through naturalisation or registration, subject only to very narrow exceptions.

It is important that we do not incentivise people smuggling gangs to target particular groups or those with certain characteristics. Therefore families, and children who come to the UK illegally will not be exempt from detention and removal under this Bill. The welfare of those who are detained is of the utmost importance; we will only detain families and children when it is necessary and in appropriate accommodation with appropriate healthcare provisions.

The Bill does not prevent someone from claiming asylum. However, if individuals come to the UK illegally, and have not come from a country where their life and liberty were at risk, their asylum and human rights claims against their country of origin will be declared inadmissible. They may be detained, and will be removed either to their home country (if it is safe to do so), or relocated to a safe third country such as Rwanda, where they will receive support to rebuild their lives. They will not be able to make a life here in the UK.

As we reduce illegal migration, we will do more to help the most vulnerable who are at risk of war and persecution through safe and legal routes. Since 2015, the UK has offered safety to nearly half a million people from all over the world, using our global resettlement schemes as well as our country-specific routes for Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Ukraine. Our resettlement and relocation programmes, alongside a fair and firm asylum system, will ensure we continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for those in need of protection, including children and families.

The UK's refugee resettlement schemes include the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Mandate Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The UK works closely with the UNHCR to receive referrals under these schemes with referrals based on an assessment of protection needs and vulnerabilities, in line with their resettlement submission criteria which specifically includes children and adolescents at risk.

The vast majority of children resettled through the UKRS will arrive with their parents or other carers. However, UNHCR will always seek to find local solutions and reunify unaccompanied children with parents or family members within the region or wherever those family members may be. It is often in the child's best interest to remain in the region where they are more likely to be reunited with family. However, unaccompanied children are eligible under the scheme if UNHCR determines that resettlement is in their best interests. Our focus remains on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability.

The Bill will introduce an annual cap, to be determined by Parliament, on the number of refugees the UK will accept, once illegal migration is under control. This will allow us to plan for an orderly system, in conjunction with local authorities, that takes into consideration local capacity for accommodation, public services, and support. This will help avoid a repeat of the use of hotels to accommodate people. The only way to come to the UK for protection should be through safe and legal routes. This will take power out of the hands of the criminal gangs and protect vulnerable people, including children.

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). However, in the face of today's global migration crisis, our previous asylum laws are being systematically abused and are simply not fit for purpose. With 100 million people displaced around the world, our compassion to help may be infinite, but our capacity to do so is not. The British people are, above all else, fair. It is this sense of fairness that is so affronted by the queue jumping, the gaming of our system, and the flagrant law breaking in the small boats crisis. The British people are also patient. But their patience has run out. Enough is enough. We must stop the boats.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

**Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**  
**Minister of State for Immigration**