

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

16 April 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

cc: The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Home Secretary; The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer; The Rt Hon David Lammy MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs; Baroness Chapman, Minister of State (International Development, Latin America and Caribbean)

As 107 leaders of the UK's international NGO sector and organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, we're writing to express our concerns about the continued use of UK aid to pay for supporting people seeking asylum in the UK and to highlight the long-term benefit of using UK aid to help make the world a safer and more secure place. We strongly encourage efforts to support refugees in the UK, but the current system is not fit for purpose.

The last government left the asylum system in a state of meltdown, with people left for years in limbo while waiting for a decision. This, and the associated reliance on extremely expensive and unsuitable hotel accommodation, resulted in the asylum system costing more and more money. In their reviews, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has highlighted serious concerns around poor value for money and shortcomings in the Home Office's management of large-value asylum accommodation and support contracts (AASC), raising concerns about the department's insufficient oversight of safeguarding.

Since entering office, the government has taken a number of welcome steps to turn around the asylum system. The ramping up of decision-making so people can leave Home Office accommodation once they have had a final decision is the best way to avoid using hotels and cut costs.

However, the latest provisional Statistics for International Development for 2024 reveal that 20% (£2.8bn) of the UK's aid budget continues to be spent supporting refugees and asylum seekers domestically, rather than being used to support communities in lower-income countries who face the impact of conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss, and poverty. This undermines the UK efforts to create a more stable and peaceful world. While we acknowledge that UK aid spending on refugees and asylum seekers has slightly decreased in the past year, the government's recent announcement to reduce the UK aid budget from 0.5% of GNI to 0.3% by 2027 will only exacerbate the issue, making it crucial to find more cost-effective solutions.

As well as continuing to address blockages at all stages of the asylum process, we urge the government to end the use of hotels for housing asylum seekers as soon as possible. Instead, we recommend scaling up the use of more cost-effective and appropriate community housing for asylum seekers by giving local authorities responsibility and resources to accommodate people seeking asylum, rather than private companies. Community housing not only provides better value for money but also ensures higher quality living conditions and better integration into society. The 2026 break clauses in the accommodation contracts must be utilised to achieve this.

While asylum accommodation costs can and must be reduced, designating them as UK aid spending cannot be justified. In recent weeks, [the Treasury](#) and [the Office for Budget Responsibility](#) have each warned of the risks of global instability to the UK's asylum system. A more unsafe world risks more victims of conflict, tyranny and oppression.

We believe that supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK through a well-resourced and functioning asylum system is essential. The public agrees. [Polling shows that 80% of the British public want an approach to the asylum system that is well managed, fair and compassionate.](#) However, this cannot justifiably be counted as UK aid spending. Given that poverty, conflict, and climate change are key drivers of displacement, spending increasingly finite UK aid resources domestically rather than on these core areas undermines the UK's efforts to prevent displacement.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your prompt action to ensure that UK aid is utilised effectively and efficiently to support both domestic and international humanitarian efforts.

Yours sincerely,

1. Aderonke Apata, Founder and CEO, African Rainbow Family
2. Adrian Lovett, UK Executive Director, ONE Against Poverty UK
3. Alex Kent, Co-CEO, Restless Development
4. Alex Ritchie, CEO, Global Giving UK
5. Alison Marshall, CEO, Age International
6. Alison Wallace, CEO, SOS Children's Villages UK
7. Amber Shotton, Chair of Trustees, Small International Development Charities Network
8. Andrea Vukovic, Co-Director, Women for Refugee Women
9. Andrew Betts, Director, Advantage Africa
10. Anil Patil, Executive Director, Carers Worldwide
11. Anna Pincus, Director, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
12. Beatrice De Carli, General Manager, Architecture Sans Frontieres UK
13. Ben Sadler, Managing Director, World Bicycle Relief UK
14. Ben Simms, Chief Executive Officer, Global Health Partnerships (formerly THET)
15. Bethan Copley, CEO, MSI Reproductive Choices
16. Camilla Knox-Peebles, Chief Executive, Amref Health Africa UK
17. Caroline Barber, Chief Executive, Transaid
18. Caroline Harper, CEO, Sightsavers
19. Catherine Pettengell, Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK)
20. Charlie Gamble, CEO, TackleAfrica
21. Charlie Hay, CEO, AfriKids
22. Christine Allen, Executive Director, CAFOD
23. Claire O'Shea, Head of Hub Cymru Africa, Hub Cymru Africa
24. Colin Rogers, CEO, MapAction
25. Dan Paskins, Executive Director of Policy, Advocacy & Campaign, Save the Children UK
26. Daniel Zeidan, Executive Director, Samaritan's Purse
27. David Mason, Executive Director, HIAS + JCORE
28. David Westwood, Director of Policy, Programmes & Impact, World Vision UK
29. Dhivya O'Connor, CEO, Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

30. Donné Cameron, Co-CEO, Voluntary Service Overseas
31. Elizabeth Joy, Director, Dalit Solidarity Network UK
32. Emily Crowley, Chief Executive, Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
33. Emma Stevenson, Deputy CEO, Choose Love
34. Enver Solomon, CEO, Refugee Council
35. Evelyn Brealey, Director, Cambridge Global Health Partnerships
36. Fiona McSheehy, Interim CEO, Elrha
37. Fola Komolafe, CEO, World Vision UK
38. Frances Guy, Executive Director, Scotland's International Development Alliance
39. Fuad Mahamed, CEO, ACH
40. George Graham, Chief Executive, Humanity & Inclusion UK
41. Gillian McMahon, Executive Director, Right To Play UK
42. Gunes Kalkan, Head of Campaigns and Communications, Safe Passage International
43. Hannah Doornbos, Executive Director, South West International Development Network (SWIDN)
44. Helen McEachern, Chief Executive Officer, CARE International UK
45. Helen Pattinson, CEO, War Child UK
46. Henrietta Blackmore, National Director/CEO, Habitat for Humanity Great Britain
47. James Harcourt, Managing Director, Options for International Health
48. Jamie Eyre, CEO, Embrace the Middle East
49. Jane Salmonson, Director, Firefly International
50. Jasmina Haynes, CEO, Integrity Action
51. Jean-Michel Grand, CEO, Action Against Hunger
52. Jenny Willmott, Co-CEO, STiR Education
53. Jessica Woodroffe, Director, Gender and Development Network
54. Joanne MacInnes, Director, West London Welcome
55. John Reynolds, CEO, International Nepal Fellowship
56. Jonathan Cohen, Executive Director, Conciliation Resources
57. Jonathan Hall, Managing Director, Conservation International
58. Jonny Oates, CEO, United Against Malnutrition and Hunger
59. Julian Watson, CEO, Mbedza Projects Support
60. Kang-San Tan, General Director, BMS World Mission
61. Kathryn Ashworth, CEO, Solace Surviving Exile and Persecution
62. Katie Hesselby, Network Director, Action for Global Health
63. Kavita Prasad, Chief Executive, Sense International
64. Khalid Javid, CEO, Muslim Aid
65. Khusbu Patel, Acting Executive Director, International Rescue Committee UK
66. Lauren Watters, Co-CEO, Able Child
67. Leila Zadeh, Executive Director, Rainbow Migration
68. Lorna Pearcey, Co director, Caplor Horizons
69. Lorraine Currie, CEO, SCIAF
70. Lt Col Nick Coke, Territorial Co-ordinator for Justice and Reconciliation',The Salvation Army
71. Lucy Nabijou, Coordinator, Haringey Welcome
72. Marcos Concepcion Raba, Executive Director, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction
73. Mark Barrell, Director of Advocacy and Influencing, CBM UK
74. Mark Galloway, Executive Director, International Broadcasting Trust

75. Mark Smith, Director, Enable-Ed CIC
76. Mark Waddington, CEO, Hope and Homes for Children
77. Martin Drewry, CEO, Health Poverty Action
78. Martin Hartberg, Director, Norwegian Refugee Council
79. Mel Steel, Director, Voices in Exile
80. Michael Collyer, Chair, Sanctuary on Sea
81. Michael Deriaz, Chairman, Friends of Kipkelion
82. Mike Podmore, CEO, STOPAIDS
83. Nick Hinton, Chairman, Britain and Nepal NGOs
84. Nick Sankey, Executive Director, Pratham UK
85. Nigel Harris, Chief Executive Officer, Tearfund
86. Othman Moqbel, CEO, Action For Humanity - International
87. Paul Stuart, CEO, Ripple Effect
88. Peter Taylor, Director, Institute of Development Studies
89. Peter Waddup, CEO, The Leprosy Mission Great Britain
90. Rob Capener, Group CEO, Railway Children
91. Romilly Greenhill, CEO, Bond
92. Rose Caldwell, CEO, Plan International UK
93. Sandra Golding, CEO, ADRA-UK
94. Sarah Roberts, CEO, Practical Action
95. Sayyeda Salam, Executive Director, Concern Worldwide UK
96. Sheniz Tan, Director, Asfar
97. Shuaib Yusaf, CEO, Al-Khair Foundation
98. Simon Tyler, Executive Director, Doctors of the World UK
99. Tim Naor Hilton, Chief Executive, Refugee Action
100. Tim Wainwright, Chief Executive, WaterAid
101. Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Corps
102. Tricia Barnett, Director, Equality in Tourism
103. Tufail Hussain, UK Director, Islamic Relief Worldwide
104. Victoria Lupton, Founder & CEO, Seenaryo
105. William Gomes, Director, The William Gomes Podcast
106. Zeeshan Nisar, Chairman, Being Humanitarian
107. Zoe Bantleman, Legal Director, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)