

50 organisations from across the UK call on Home Office to end harmful new refugee policy.

Campaigners claim new measures would “put an end to hope of stability”.

In an open letter to UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd, over 50 organisations working with refugees have today called on the Home Office to reverse a new policy aimed at preventing refugees from integrating.

Last month, the Home Office quietly issued new guidance on the process by which refugees already living in the UK apply to stay here permanently. Previously, people recognised as refugees were granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. After this, they were able to apply for permanent settlement ("indefinite leave to remain") in the UK. However, under the new policy, all those who apply for settlement will be subject to a so called "safe return review" to see if the Home Office can return refugees to that country.

Makhosi Sigabade, a refugee living in the UK, worried what the change would mean for him: “After being given a false sense of hope and stability I am being made to relive the nightmares of my past. I am now confronted with a possibility of going back to face the same persecution from which I fled. The system meant to protect people seeking sanctuary threatens to expose them to the dangers they flee.”

The Unity Centre, a Glasgow drop in centre that offers practical support to migrants regardless of status, said of the changes “For the minority of people that are lucky enough to be granted asylum, refugee status should be for life. How can someone rebuild their life without stability?”.

The new policy has attracted concern at the national and international level. The UNHRC condemned the changes, saying they were unnecessary and would have "a serious impact on the wellbeing of refugees and their ability to settle". A cross-party report published yesterday on the experiences of refugees in the UK highlighted concerns about the change and called for it to be scrapped. The report by the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees stated that the uncertainty will have negative effects on refugee's mental health, their ability to find work, and would “exert specific harm to children in terms of their education and stability”.

In their letter today, campaigners have echoed these concerns, and called for granting refugees permanent residency when their claim is recognised. Lisa Matthews is a coordinator at Right to Remain, a group supporting the open letter. She said:

"Having already survived so much, it's imperative that refugees are given the safety and security to rebuild their lives - and be part of our communities. This new policy harms all of us and we urge all parties to prioritise strong and inclusive communities this election, and pledge to reverse this cruel and unworkable policy”.

For more info contact luke@pprproject.org - 07746353402 / lisa@righttoremain.org.uk -
07817359746

To view the open letter and list of signatures in full, please go to
<http://www.righttoremain.org.uk/blog/unsettling-refugees-over-fifty-organisations-call-on-home-office-to-allow-refugees-to-rebuild-their-lives-in-the-uk/> or follow #RebuildingLives on Twitter