



[Your address]

Dear <MP's name>,

I am writing to you on behalf of the [Families Together](#) coalition, made up of over 90 organisations who support the expansion of the UK's refugee family reunion rules.

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed restrictions to refugee family reunion laid out in the Government's Nationality and Borders Bill, which is now in its final phases. The proposed legislation outlined in the bill creates a discriminatory two-tier asylum system, undermining how the UK fulfils its international obligations to those seeking asylum. The Bill will criminalise and punish refugees, depending on how they arrived in the UK, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of women, men and children who are able to access family reunion, one of the few existing safe and regular routes into the UK.

Any restriction on family reunion rights will result in family members being left with the heartbreaking choice to either stay permanently apart, or risk their lives on treacherous journeys in order to reunite. **All refugees should have full and equal access to family reunion rights, regardless of how they enter the UK.**

When the New Plan for Immigration was introduced, the Home Secretary stated "*We should ask ourselves, where are the vulnerable women and children that this system should exist to protect?*". Yet, these restrictions to family reunion rights will predominantly impact women and children. In the last five years, 29,000 people have arrived in the UK through existing family reunion routes, 90% of whom were women and children. Therefore, these vulnerable groups whom the Home Secretary vowed to protect will be left in an even more vulnerable, precarious and risky situation.

For the vast majority of those people, there is no viable alternative for them to be reunited with family members. Limiting this route therefore risks incentivising more dangerous journeys – made by people seeking to live with their family members – rather than reducing them.

Studies show that family reunion boosts integration outcomes and allows those who've come to the UK seeking safety to rebuild their lives here, together. Research has highlighted that mental health struggles including anxiety, depression, guilt and social isolation are reported amongst those who are separated from their families. Being reunited with family members leads to positive integration outcomes and provides a support system which is vital when integrating into a new community.

'Since my wife came to the UK my life has changed and I am able to plan and have focus in life. I am now working part-time at a hotel in Bradford and I have applied for another job at East Side. I am taking driving lessons to help with my employment. I also study at college to improve my English. When my wife first arrived, she felt very depressed. Being alone had been very

difficult for her. I started taking her to college with me and now she is much better. We are now expecting a baby and are looking to move to another house.'

- Justin, Voices Network Ambassador

Refugee Family Reunion is one of the key issues facing refugees in the UK. Many people who come to the UK seeking sanctuary want to be reunited with their family members. Refugee-led community organisations and organisations working directly with refugees have raised the issue of the UK's restrictive family reunion policies numerous times. The Nationality and Borders Bill sets out to restrict access to family reunion rights even further, which will make it incredibly difficult for families to reunite.

If the plans in the Nationality and Borders Bill are implemented, the number of family reunion visas issued would decrease substantially, and a vital safe and legal route to the UK would be weakened. More people are able to safely come to the UK via family reunion than resettlement routes. Over the last 5 years 29,834 family reunion applications were granted, compared with 23,665 resettlement applications.

I would be really grateful for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this in more detail. I am happy to do a meeting over zoom or in person, depending on what works for you.

I hope that you will stand with us and stand up for refugee families so that they can be together again and live a life in safety in the UK.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,
<Name>