

# Illegal Migration Bill

*Hansard House of Commons*

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12:35:00

## **The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman)**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the Government's Illegal Migration Bill.

Two months ago, the Prime Minister made a promise to the British people that anyone entering this country illegally will be detained and swiftly removed—no half measures. The Illegal Migration Bill will fulfil that promise. It will allow us to stop the boats that are bringing tens of thousands to our shores in flagrant breach of both our laws and the will of the British people.

The United Kingdom must always support the world's most vulnerable. Since 2015 we have given sanctuary to nearly half a million people, including 150,000 people from Hong Kong, 160,000 people from Ukraine and 25,000 Afghans fleeing the Taliban. Indeed, decades ago, my parents found security and opportunity in this country, for which my family are eternally grateful.

Crucially, these decisions are supported by the British people precisely because they are decisions made by the British people and their elected representatives, not by the people smugglers and other criminals who break into Britain on a daily basis. For a Government not to respond to the waves of illegal migrants breaching our borders would be to betray the will of the people we were elected to serve.

The small boats problem is part of a larger global migration crisis. In the coming years, developed countries will face unprecedented pressure from ever greater numbers of people leaving the developing world for places such as the United Kingdom. Unless we act today, the problem will be worse tomorrow, and the problem is already unsustainable.

People are dying in the Channel. The volume of illegal arrivals has overwhelmed our asylum system. The backlog has ballooned to over 160,000. The asylum system now costs the British taxpayer £3 billion a year. Since 2018, some 85,000 people have illegally entered the United Kingdom by small boat—45,000 of them in 2022 alone. All travelled through multiple safe countries in which they could

and should have claimed asylum. Many came from safe countries, such as Albania, and almost all passed through France. The vast majority—74% in 2021—were adult males under the age of 40, rich enough to pay criminal gangs thousands of pounds for passage.

Upon arrival, most are accommodated in hotels across the country, costing the British taxpayer around £6 million a day. The risk remains that these individuals just disappear. And when we try to remove them, they turn our generous asylum laws against us to prevent removal. The need for reform is obvious and urgent.

This Government have not sat on their hands. Since this Prime Minister took office, recognising the necessity of joint solutions with France, we have signed a new deal that provides more technology and embeds British officers with French patrols. I hope Friday's Anglo-French summit will further deepen that co-operation.

We have created a new small boats operational command, with more than 700 new staff; doubled National Crime Agency funding to tackle smuggling gangs; increased enforcement raids by 50%; signed a deal with Albania, which has already enabled the return of hundreds of illegal arrivals; and are procuring accommodation, including on military land, to end the farce of accommodating migrants in hotels.

But let us be honest: it is still not enough. In the face of today's global migration crisis, yesterday's laws are simply not fit for purpose. So, to anyone proposing de facto open borders through unlimited safe and legal routes as the alternative, let us be honest: there are 100 million people around the world who could qualify for protection under our current laws. Let us be clear: they are coming here. We have seen a 500% increase in small boat crossings in two years. This is the crucial point of this Bill. They will not stop coming here until the world knows that if you enter Britain illegally, you will be detained and swiftly removed—back to your country if it is safe, or to a safe third country, such as Rwanda.

That is precisely what this Bill will do. That is how we will stop the boats. This Bill enables the detention of illegal arrivals, without bail or judicial review within the first 28 days of detention, until they can be removed. It puts a duty on the Home Secretary to remove illegal entrants and will radically narrow the number of challenges and appeals that can suspend removal. Only those under 18, medically unfit to fly or at real risk of serious and irreversible harm in the country we are

removing them to—that is an exceedingly high bar—will be able to delay their removal. Any other claims will be heard remotely, after removal.

When our Modern Slavery Act 2015 passed, the impact assessment envisaged 3,500 referrals a year. Last year, 17,000 referrals took on average 543 days to consider. Modern slavery laws are being abused to block removals. That is why we granted more than 50% of asylum requests from citizens of a safe European country and NATO ally, Albania. That is why this Bill disqualifies illegal entrants from using modern slavery rules to prevent removal.

I will not address the Bill's full legal complexities today. [Interruption.] Some of the nation's finest legal minds have been and continue to be involved in its development. But I must say this: rule 39 and the process that enabled the Strasbourg Court to block, at the last minute, flights to Rwanda, after our courts had refused injunctions, was deeply flawed. Our ability to control our borders cannot be held back by an opaque process, conducted late at night, with no chance to make our case or even appeal decisions. That is why we have initiated discussions in Strasbourg to ensure that its blocking orders meet a basic natural justice standard, one that prevents abuse of rule 39 to thwart removal; and it is why the Bill will set out the conditions for the UK's future compliance with such orders.

Other countries share our dilemma and will understand the justice of our position. Our approach is robust and novel, which is why we cannot make a definitive statement of compatibility under section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998. Of course, the UK will always seek to uphold international law, and I am confident that this Bill is compatible with international law. When we have stopped the boats, the Bill will introduce an annual cap, to be determined by Parliament, on the number of refugees the UK will resettle via safe and legal routes. This will ensure an orderly system, considering local authority capacity for housing, public services and support.

The British people are famously a fair and patient people. But their sense of fair play has been tested beyond its limits as they have seen the country taken for a ride. Their patience has run out. The law-abiding patriotic majority have said, "Enough is enough." This cannot and will not continue. Their Government—this Government—must act decisively, must act with determination, must act with compassion, and must act with proportion. Make no mistake: this Conservative Government—this Conservative Prime Minister—will act now to stop the boats. I commend the statement to the House.

12:45:00

**Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)**

A record 45,000 people crossed the Channel on dangerous small boats last year, up from just 280 four years ago. In that short time, the Government have allowed criminal gangs to take hold along the Channel and along our border. At the same time, convictions of people smugglers have halved; Home Office asylum decisions have collapsed, down 40%; the backlog and costly, inappropriate hotel use have soared; removals of unsuccessful asylum seekers are down 80% on the last Labour Government; and legal family reunion visas for refugees are down 40%. That is deeply damaging chaos, and there is no point in Ministers trying to blame anyone else for it. They have been in power for 13 years. The asylum system is broken, and they broke it.

We need serious action to stop dangerous boat crossings, which are putting lives at risk and undermining border security. That is why Labour has put forward plans for a cross-border police unit, for fast-track decisions and returns to clear the backlog and end hotel use, and for a new agreement with France and other countries. Instead, today's statement is Groundhog Day. The Home Secretary has said:

“Anyone who arrives illegally will be deemed inadmissible and either returned to the country they arrived from or a safe third country.”

[Hon. Members: “Hear, hear.”] Only that was not this Home Secretary: it was the last one. And that was not about this Bill: it was about the last one, passed only a year ago and which did not work. As part of last year's Bill, the Home Office considered 18,000 people as inadmissible for the asylum system because they had travelled through safe third countries, but because it had no return agreements in place, just 21 of them were returned. That is 0.1%. The other 99.9% just carried on, often in hotels, at an extra cost of £500 million, and it did not deter anyone. Even more boats arrived.

What is different this time? The Government still do not have any return agreements in place. The Home Secretary has admitted that Rwanda is “failing”, and even if it gets going it will take only a few hundred people. What will happen to the other 99% under the Bill? She says that she will detain them all, perhaps for 28 days. Can she tell us how many detention centres the Government will need in total and how much they will cost? Even if she does that, what will happen when

people leave 28-day detention? Will she make people destitute, so that they just wander the streets in total chaos? They will include torture victims, Afghan interpreters and families with children. Or will she put them into indefinite taxpayer-funded accommodation? Never returned anywhere because the Government do not have agreements with Europe in place, never given sanctuary, never having their case resolved—just forever in asylum accommodation and hotels. She may not call it the asylum system, but thousands of people are still going to be in it.

What will the Bill mean for the promises we made to the Afghan interpreters who served our country but who were too late to make the last flight out of Kabul as the tyranny was closing in upon them? The Government told them to flee and find another way here, and they told us to tell people that as well. But the resettlement scheme is not helping them and, if they finally arrive in this country this afternoon, perhaps by travelling through Ireland to get here, they will only ever be illegal in the eyes of a Government who relied on the sacrifices they made for us.

If the Government were serious, they would be working internationally to get a proper new agreement in place with France and Europe, including return agreements, properly controlled and managed legal routes such as family reunion, and reform of resettlement. Instead, this Bill makes that harder, unilaterally choosing to decide no asylum cases at all, but expecting every other country to carry on.

If the Government were serious, they would be working with Labour on our plan for a major new cross-border policing unit to go after the criminal gangs. Instead, the deputy chairman of the Conservative party, the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) said yesterday that we should not go after the gangs because they have existed for “thousands of years”. That is the disgraceful Tory attitude that has let the gangs off of the hook and let them take hold. One smuggler told Sky News yesterday that three quarters of the smugglers live in Britain, but barely any of them are being prosecuted and the Government still have not found the hundreds of children missing from asylum hotels who have been picked up by criminal gangs.

The Government could be setting out a serious plan today. We would work with them on it, and so would everyone across the country. Instead, it is just more chaos. The Government say “no ifs, no buts”, but we all know that they will spend the next year if-ing and but-ing and looking for someone else to blame when it all goes wrong. Enough is enough. We cannot afford any more of this—slogans and

not solutions, government by gimmick, ramping up the rhetoric on refugees and picking fights simply to have someone else to blame when things go wrong. This Bill is not a solution. It is a con that risks making the chaos worse. Britain deserves better than this chaos. Britain is better than this.

### **Suella Braverman**

I thank the right hon. Lady for her remarks, but—forgive me—after five minutes of hysteria, histrionics and criticism, I am still not clear: I have no idea what Labour’s plan is. I will assume that the shadow Home Secretary is still committed to scrapping our Rwanda partnership, as she said last year, and I will assume that the Leader of the Opposition still wants to close immigration removal centres, as he promised during his leadership campaign. The shadow Home Secretary talks about safe and legal routes; I wonder what number Labour would cap that at. Would it be 500,000? A million? Five million? She should be honest with the House and with the British people: what she really means is unlimited safe and legal routes—open borders by the back door.

The right hon. Lady says get serious, so let us look at the facts. The British people want to stop the boats. It is one of the five promises the Prime Minister made to the British people, but stopping the boats did not even feature in the Leader of the Opposition’s five big missions. Is it because he does not care or because he does not know what to do? We all know why, and I think the British people know why: it is because, deep down, the Leader of the Opposition does not want to stop the boats and he thinks it is bigoted to say we have got too much illegal migration abusing our system. It is because Labour MPs would prefer to write letters stopping the removal of foreign national offenders. It is because the Labour party would prefer to vote against our measures to penalise foreign national offenders and to streamline our asylum system.

Those are the facts. Labour is against deterring people who would come here illegally, against detaining people who come here illegally and against deporting people who are here illegally. That means that Labour is for this situation getting worse and worse. Perhaps that is fine for the Leader of the Opposition and most of those on the Labour Front Bench, but it is not their schools, their GPs or their public services, housing and hotels filling up with illegal migrants.

Perhaps that is why, even before seeing the Bill and engaging on the substance, Labour has already said it will not support its passage through Parliament. Is the Leader of the Opposition committing that the Labour Lords will block it? The British people want to stop the boats. The Conservative Government have a plan

to stop the boats. This Prime Minister will stop the boats. If the people want closed minds and open borders, they can rely on Labour.

**Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)**

Never have I heard such fabricated rage against genuine attempts to come up with practical solutions for this problem, from a Labour party that has consistently been a policy vacuum on any practical solutions at all. I support this Bill, particularly the provisions for sustainable safe and legal routes for genuine asylum seekers.

My specific question for the Home Secretary is this. When the Home Affairs Committee visited Calais recently we were told that, when the Rwanda scheme was announced, there was a big upsurge in migrants in France approaching authorities asking about staying in France, because there was a deterrent factor. That has not happened because the Rwanda scheme has not got off the ground. When she sees her counterparts in France on Friday, can we suggest that the French might like to join us in a joint Rwanda-type scheme, since they face the same problems? Can they do more? We have safe and legal routes to stop people getting in the boats: to arrest them and stop this illegal trade at source on their side of the Channel.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Deterrence is the key theme running through these measures. We want to send the message loudly and clearly to people smugglers and people thinking about crossing the Channel: do not do it. Do not hand over your life savings, do not get in to that flimsy dinghy and do not risk your life, because you will not be entitled to a life in the UK.

**Mr Speaker**

I call the SNP spokesperson.

**Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)**

The SNP stands proudly behind the refugee convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. We believe that all who seek asylum and refugee status deserve a fair hearing and we are 100% behind the clear statement from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that there is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker.

Despite the dreary dog-whistle rhetoric, the Home Secretary's Bill will not lay a solitary finger on people smugglers or people traffickers, but it will cause serious and devastating harm to those who have already endured incredible suffering.

Afghans let down by the Government's utterly failed relocation schemes will be locked up and offshored. People who have fled persecution in Syria, Eritrea or Iran will remain blocked from the asylum system. The policies that have seen hundreds of children go missing from hotels will be enshrined in her Bill. The world-leading modern slavery legislation piloted through by one of her predecessors is about to be ripped to pieces without a single shred of justification. That is what this appalling Bill looks set to deliver, and that is why we will oppose it every step of the way.

If every country followed the Home Secretary's example, the whole system of refugee protection around the world would fall to pieces. It is not just that system that will be trashed by this Bill, however, but the UK's reputation as a place of sanctuary. She spoke about an overwhelmed asylum system, but the only thing that has overwhelmed the asylum system is the Conservative party's incompetence and mismanagement. One of her own ministerial colleagues described the Rwanda plan as

“ugly, likely to be counterproductive and of dubious legality”,

and that beautifully encapsulates what is in this Bill.

I have two questions for the Home Secretary. First, what happens if an Afghan arrival cannot be removed to Afghanistan, France, Rwanda or anywhere else? Will he or she eventually be admitted to the asylum system? If so, after how long? Secondly, when the Prime Minister meets President Macron, will he be telling him that the UK is prepared to leave the European Convention on Human Rights?

### **Suella Braverman**

A lot of passion and fury and fire—I only wish the Scottish Government would bring so much passion to their approach to accommodating asylum seekers, when Scotland currently takes one of the lowest numbers of asylum seekers in our United Kingdom. Our measures set out a comprehensive and coherent plan, combining fairness and compassion.

### **Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con)**

Now then. When asked by a reporter if foreign rapists and murderers should be deported to the country they came from, the lawyer of the Opposition replied that it depends. Well, I say get rid. Can the Home Secretary confirm that the Bill will indeed get rid of foreign rapists and murderers?



**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is right to point out the shameless position that the Labour party has adopted. We have passed measures to make it easier to remove foreign national rapists, drug dealers and murderers. What does the Labour party do? It writes letters to stop us.

**Mr Speaker**

I call the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee.

**Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)**

In the Home Affairs Committee report on Channel crossings, which was published last summer, we found that small boats have not overwhelmed the asylum system as the Home Secretary is claiming. The backlog has been allowed to grow since 2013, and is now at over 160,000. We said in that report:

“Poor resourcing, by successive governments, of staff and technology in the Asylum Operations function in the Home Office, has been a significant factor in this collapse.”

Our report also found that the Government should deal with the backlog, expand safe and legal routes and negotiate a returns policy with the EU. Can the Home Secretary tell the House what progress has been made on expanding safe and legal routes and on a returns policy with the EU?

**Suella Braverman**

I think it is clear for everyone to see that our asylum system has been overwhelmed by unprecedented numbers of people arriving here and by the very high numbers being processed currently. We have made good progress, both with the EU and with our counterparts in France, and that is why I am very much looking forward to the Anglo-French summit this Friday, which our Prime Minister will be leading with the French President, to discuss this issue in more detail.

**Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con)**

The balance of creating a strong enough deterrent to cripple the gangs and render the routes unviable, and being fair, is absolutely key, so I appreciate the needle that the Home Secretary is trying to thread and the effort that she has put into this solution. Could she confirm that, under this plan, as the deterrent measures kick in and the asylum backlog is worn down, safe and legal routes will reopen from countries outside Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Ukraine, and could she give an estimate of when they will reopen?

**Suella Braverman**

We have several schemes open to people from all nationalities to come here via safe and legal routes. We will, thanks to the Bill, have a more comprehensive discussion and a decision endorsed by Parliament—one that has more legitimacy in how we go forward on allowing safe and legal routes into this country.

**Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)**

As a child of migrants, can I tell the Home Secretary how much I deplore her seeking to smear migrants as a whole as criminals and rapists? Can I also assure the House that I will never vote for legislation that would have led to my parents being detained and dumped in Rwanda?

The Home Secretary talks about detention and deportation. Where is she going to detain these people? There is not the capacity to detain these numbers of people. In terms of deportation, the only arrangement we have is with Rwanda, which has told us that it can take only 200 people. Her tone, her legislation and her proposed actions are deplorable and unworkable. Even at this late stage, will she reconsider?

**Suella Braverman**

With respect to the right hon. Lady, it is wrong, naive and inflammatory to conflate people who come here legitimately, abide by our laws and come here on a legal basis with those who come here illegally, break our laws and put themselves and others at risk. I urge her to choose her words carefully.

**Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con)**

I welcome the Home Secretary's statement and the measures that she has set out. What would be her key message to my constituents, who are angry about the use of hotels to house asylum seekers in and around Cannock Chase?

**Suella Braverman**

The message I would send to my right hon. Friend's constituents is that we need to stop the boats coming here in the first place. Once we succeed with that objective, through the measures in the Bill, we will be able to stop them being accommodated in hotels.

**Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)**

The Rwandan Government have said that they are able to take only 200 people. Can the Home Secretary tell the House what will happen to the 44,800 others who

are waiting in the system? Does she believe that the £120 million that has gone to Rwanda is value for money? Will she confirm that an additional £12,000 per refugee will be added to the Rwanda bill for processing costs?

**Suella Braverman**

I am incredibly proud of what the Conservative Government achieved in securing the agreement—the ground-breaking, world-beating agreement—with our friends and allies in Rwanda. I put on record my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel) for leading that work. Our scheme with Rwanda was upheld by the High Court at the end of last year. That is a big step forward in our litigation, and we look forward to working with our friends in Rwanda to deliver the agreement.

**Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con)**

Although it has been all over the press this morning, West Lindsey District Council has still not been officially informed that the Home Office is planning to place migrants at former Royal Air Force Scampton. We announced just yesterday, after two years of work, a £300 million scheme to have the best-ever handover of a Ministry of Defence base—the Home of the Dambusters: business, tourism and heritage. Will the Home Secretary assure me that if she overrides our objections and places migrants there, she will work closely with me and the council to ensure that that is strictly temporary and in no way upsets the best deal that has ever come to north Lincolnshire?

**Suella Braverman**

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration is working intensively to secure bespoke, appropriate and—importantly—sustainable asylum accommodation around a range of locations within the United Kingdom. We are working with local authorities and Members of Parliament. We want to make the right decision for communities, and that is why all dialogue is welcome.

**Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD)**

Torpiki Amrakhil, an Afghan journalist and former announcer on Radio Afghanistan and on the radio station of the United Nations assistance mission in Afghanistan, drowned in Italian waters on the way to Europe. Given the brutality of the Taliban regime and precarious security situation in neighbouring third countries, it is shocking that there is no specific safe route for at-risk Afghan women and girls. We have failed the people of Afghanistan at every stage, and the UK is an outlier in that regard. What steps is the Home Secretary taking to create a specific safe route or to at least ensure that existing promises are kept?

**Suella Braverman**

Unspeakable tragedy is occurring in the Channel and through all maritime routes around the world because of the global migration crisis. That is why it is absolutely essential that the UK takes a robust but compassionate approach. That is at core a humanitarian package of measures that sends the message to people: “Do not come here illegally.”

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)**

I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend’s statement. Once we strip away the rhetoric, of course, the key to all this is how we save the lives of the people who are dying while trying to get across the Channel and are abused by the traffickers. I listened very carefully to her statement, and I understand all the other features—although we may have a debate about the numbers that she quotes on modern-day slavery problems—but could she expand a little on the issue that stopped the migrants being taken to Rwanda last time, which was the intervention of the European Court of Human Rights? I did not really hear anything in the statement to suggest that anything has changed on that matter.

**Suella Braverman**

My right hon. Friend is right to identify the difficulties that we had in effecting flights to Rwanda in the summer of last year. As I mentioned, the Strasbourg court issued a rule 39 order pursuant to an opaque process at the last minute without UK representation or right of challenge. We will introduce some detail in the Bill to address that scenario and inject some conditions upon which we will deliver the measures in rule 39.

**Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)**

Empty slogans, chaos and broken promises are all we have heard from the Home Secretary today. Return of failed asylum seekers has collapsed by 80% since Labour left office in 2010. Is that not an extraordinary level of incompetence by this Government?

**Suella Braverman**

What I find to be irresponsible and, frankly, incompetent is the Labour party voting against our measures to remove foreign national offenders, to streamline our asylum system and to take a firm line on illegal migration.

**Darren Henry (Broxtowe) (Con)**

I broadly welcome the announcement today and measures being put in place to prevent dangerous crossings of the Channel, but how precisely will they affect the migrants who are living in hotels near my inland Midlands constituency and move them to more appropriate accommodation, perhaps on military land, as the Home Secretary mentioned?

**Suella Braverman**

Our 10-point plan announced in December deals with the issue of asylum accommodation. It is unacceptable that over 40,000 people are being accommodated in hotels all over the country, at a cost of £6 million a day. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration is therefore working intensively with other Departments and local authorities throughout the country to identify and procure sustainable and appropriate asylum accommodation.

**Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)**

The Home Secretary has often said that she would be quite happy if the United Kingdom left the European Convention on Human Rights, and when the Justice Secretary gave evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights last year, he said that the Government were not ruling out leaving the convention. The Home Secretary said in her statement that she cannot make a definitive statement of compatibility with the ECHR under section 19 of the Human Rights Act 1998, which comes as no surprise to most of us. Is the plan behind the Bill simply this: the legislation will go through in the certain knowledge that the domestic courts of the United Kingdom will find that it is incompatible with international law and the ECHR; and then the Tories will fight the next general election on a promise to take the United Kingdom out of the European Convention on Human Rights? That is the whole point of this, is it not?

**Suella Braverman**

I refer the hon. and learned Lady to her comments on the Rwanda partnership about a year ago. Many people here denounced it as unlawful, cruel and illegitimate, yet not very long ago we had an exhaustive and authoritative judgment from the High Court saying the exact opposite—that it is compliant with human rights, compliant with the refugee convention, and lawful.

**Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con)**

The House will remember that in October 2019, 39 illegal migrants were found to have perished in the back of a lorry in my constituency. Following that incident, Essex police and their counterparts in Belgium tracked down and prosecuted a

number of people in connection with those crimes. Will the Home Secretary confirm that in the dialogue with France this week, lessons will be learned from that case, and that tracking down the traffickers is very much a part of how we tackle this problem?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to alight on the issue of the criminal gangs and people smugglers, and the importance of the pan-European criminal work that is ongoing to break their business model. We have had about 500 arrests and closed down 50 or so gangs, and work continues intensively with our French counterparts to stop this criminal and evil activity.

**Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)**

The Home Secretary told the House earlier that she is confident that these proposals are compatible with the UK's international obligations. Does that extend to articles 31, 32 and 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention?

**Suella Braverman**

The Bill introduces measures that we consider to be compliant with all our international obligations—in fact, we are certain.

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con)**

The Bill is very much in the right direction. As my right hon. and learned Friend has just indicated, she needs to consider disapplication of parts of the Human Rights Act that would otherwise enable judges to water down the legislation and the Government's proper objectives. If we do not deal with Strasbourg judgments and orders, these new proposals cannot work. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will expect amendments to be tabled in Committee. Will she discuss these with us, including aspects of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Refugee Convention?

**Suella Braverman**

As we embark on the process of parliamentary scrutiny, my right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister and I will engage fully with all Members of Parliament to hear their concerns and ideas about the Bill. I refer my hon. Friend to clause 1 and the specific disapplication of section 3 of the Human Rights Act, which is an interpretive clause; that will help in this regard.

**John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)**

I have nearly 2,000 people, I think, who have exercised their legal right to claim asylum living in hotels in my constituency—probably more than any other Member of Parliament. I welcome them into my constituency. I have toured the hotels, met many of them and held advice sessions. They come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Kurdistan-Iraq, Iran and Eritrea, and many come from Syria. Some of have shown me their wounds from torture; many are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. They have been in the hotels for 12 to 18 months.

I am amazed by the range of skills and qualifications these people have. They just want employment. They want to be able to contribute. They want a job and to contribute to our society and our economy, but they are trapped in this system because of the lack of processing. I take up their cases and get sheets of the same three or four-sentence responses, and the cases move no further. Could the Home Secretary at least provide the House with a monthly report on how the processing of their cases is proceeding?

May I say one final thing, Mr Speaker? Will the Home Secretary please tone down her inflammatory language? It is putting these people and those who represent them at risk.

**Suella Braverman**

We are making good progress in bearing down on the legacy backlog in our asylum system. We have increased the number of decision makers and streamlined the decision-making process, and we are increasing productivity. We will continue to bear down on that because it is a big factor in the hotel accommodation issue.

**Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con)**

This is always one of the toughest issues in government, but we are not the only country facing it. Look at the transformation Greece has effected of the situation in the Aegean over the past six or seven years. Although the Bill will change many of the legal aspects, ultimately it is about how we make the system work in practice. What reassurance does my right hon. and learned Friend have that we will be able to create the relevant amount of detention capacity and the necessary amount of removal capacity without affecting other vital immigration and removal work, such as the removal of foreign national offenders?

**Suella Braverman**

May I put on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend? As an excellent Home Office Minister, he shepherded through many of the measures in the Nationality and

Borders Act 2022 that are now being implemented to combat this challenge. We are building on the achievements of that legislation.

We will roll out a programme of increasing immigration detention capacity, and we are working intensively on that now.

**Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC)**

Safaa, a Syrian refugee, escaped from Daesh to save her life. She thinks the Government's plans will make others in her situation feel suicidal. She told me:

“With the UK Government policy, when you arrive, the dream is broken, it is gone. Still, my family have settled in Wales and contribute to society.”

I want to say to Safaa that she is welcome and that we want to her to stay as long as is necessary. What does the Home Secretary have to say to Safaa?

**Suella Braverman**

I am proud of our track record of welcoming people through humanitarian routes who are fleeing war, persecution and other conflict, whether from Afghanistan, Syria or Hong Kong. That is a record of which I am proud.

**Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)**

I very much welcome the Government's renewed commitment to dealing with illegal migration. I am a Kent Member of Parliament, and we are at the frontline of illegal immigration. We are repeatedly told by Government that tough measures will be taken, yet the numbers have gone up. My constituents want tough, decisive action. The Home Secretary says we will be having discussions with our French counterparts. In 2010, we signed the Lancaster House agreement with France on defence and security. How will these new measures address the challenges to ensure that we have tough, decisive action to deal with illegal migration?

**Suella Braverman**

We struck a new deal with France at the end of last year. That saw an increase in the number of French personnel patrolling the French beaches. It saw a new development, with British Border Force officers being located in France, working side-by-side with French police officers. It has led to greater collaboration and intelligence-sharing, so that we can clamp down on the people-smuggling gangs.



**Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)**

My grandfather, his brothers and his cousins came to this country in boats, but they came through the British merchant navy and were proud British mariners. They came in, set up in Newcastle and helped the war effort. I am a descendant of them, and this Home Secretary is bringing forward legislation that she knows is not workable. She will not be able to achieve any of this. If we look at the record, she does not have any return agreements. If we look at the policies for what she is going to do with people who are here, she cannot do anything. Is it not the truth that the Bill is purely to do with her political agenda to get votes in red wall seats, but that the expense of doing so is xenophobia and racism, which is not conducive to the interests of our constituents or the country?

**Suella Braverman**

It is irresponsible to suggest that someone who wants to control our borders and who says that the numbers are out of control and that we need a firm but compassionate line on migration is racist. That is irresponsible, it is wrong, and it should not be put forward.

**Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)**

I warmly welcome the principle of the Bill, not least because the whole House knows that the people traffickers are immoral and utterly heartless, but the elephant in the room, as has already been alluded to, is the ECHR. Unless we can somehow face it down, we will remain tied up in legal knots in our own domestic courts and ultimately in Strasbourg. Can the Home Secretary assure the House that when we see the Bill, it will contain specific measures to do that, so that the Bill will achieve its purpose?

**Suella Braverman**

My right hon. Friend is right to highlight the legal complexity of this issue. There will be measures relating to rule 39 orders, and I refer him to the disapplication of section 3 of the Human Rights Act. That sends a message to the judiciary about how Parliament intends the Bill, when it becomes an Act of Parliament, to be interpreted in the courts.

**Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op)**

My constituent risked his life working for the British forces in Afghanistan. He and his family were invited to the Baron hotel, but because of an explosion, they could not make it, and his family now live in fear in the region. We have been told that because he is a British citizen, his children are not eligible for the Afghan relocations and assistance policy scheme. When it comes to splitting up families in that

way, Russian war protesters, Iranian democracy protesters or the Afghan judges we have heard about, this Government are failing to provide any safe or legal routes. Is that not what is pushing people into boats and into the arms of the smugglers?

**Suella Braverman**

The hon. Lady is wrong. We have welcomed almost 500,000 people to the UK who are fleeing persecution, fleeing conflict and fleeing war, from Afghanistan, Syria, Hong Kong and Ukraine. She should acknowledge that great achievement that this country has secured.

**Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con)**

I concur with my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), who proved that deterrence works—of course deterrence works. I commend the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister for tackling this difficult issue. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, particularly when it comes to economic migrants, there is plenty of room for the wealthy west to do more in their countries to prevent them from coming here in the first place?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is right, as usual. This is where those on the left just go wrong. They naively believe that everyone on a boat is always fleeing persecution, war and conflict. The reality is that many of these people are young, fit and healthy men. Many have paid thousands of pounds to come here and many of them are economic migrants, abusing our asylum laws and our generosity.

**Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)**

This is a most foul and shameful policy, which depends on dehumanising and criminalising some of the most vulnerable people on this earth, and it is most certainly going to be in contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights is overseen by the Council of Europe, and if this Government are determined to break the European Convention on Human Rights, I am certain it will lead to a challenge of the credentials of the delegation from this Parliament to the Council of Europe. Will the Government confirm that their policy is to face suspension or exclusion from the Council of Europe in pursuit of this plan?

**Suella Braverman**

The package of measures I have brought forward represents a humanitarian set of measures that will, above all, deter people from making a dangerous and

sometimes fatal journey in the wild hope that it will lead to a better life in the UK. People must not take the journey; they must not risk their lives and they must not come here illegally.

**Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)**

I welcome the Home Secretary's strong statement today, which many of my constituents will fully support. It is a perverse system that while the small boat crossings continue, someone's ability to claim asylum is reliant on their physical fitness or ability to pay. I thank her for being absolutely clear that many tens of millions more people would want to and are entitled to claim asylum than we could ever hope to welcome. In contrast to the calls for open borders from those on the Opposition Benches, we have to be pragmatic and fair. Does she also agree, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) said, that the western world has to unite and deal with poverty in developing nations? Until developing nations are assisted to develop with education, business and trade links, we will see an acceleration of this problem.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend talks about pragmatism and fairness, and ultimately we are seeing a global migration crisis in which more than 100 million people will be displaced throughout the world. Many of them will want to come to the United Kingdom. The simple truth is that we will not be able to take in everyone who wants to come here, and we therefore need to develop a system that is fair, compassionate and pragmatic.

**Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)**

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), I have hundreds of asylum seekers living in hotels in my constituency, and I have met many of them. They have fled war and terror. They want to work and their children are in school. They are living in shocking conditions, while murky layers of contractors and subcontractors are skimming off significant profits. Why is there nothing in the Bill to address the collapse of immigration decision-making that leaves these people in limbo?

**Suella Braverman**

Our 10-point plan has many elements. We need to introduce legislation to stop the boats coming in the first place. We then need to bear down on our asylum backlog, so that the number of people accommodated in hotels and in limbo is dramatically reduced. That is the fair thing to do. It is the compassionate thing to do.

**Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)**

People coming across in small boats are smuggled. They spend thousands of pounds to get here. People who are trafficked come here without paying any money or are duped and forced into exploitation. However, many coming across in small boats claim exemption under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Has the Home Secretary taken that into account? I am emphatic that this abuse is damaging the genuine victims of human trafficking.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It used to take 100 days to consider a modern slavery claim. It now takes more than 500 days, because there has been a massive influx of people claiming to be victims of modern slavery, which impedes our ability to help genuine victims of modern slavery, which is not good for anyone.

**Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)**

Does the Home Secretary recognise that it is positively Orwellian, as well as morally repugnant, to seek to ban people from seeking asylum unless they use safe and legal routes, as those routes barely exist and, where they do exist, they do not function? One of the very few legal routes is the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme pathway 3, which is a total shambles. As of January this year, according to the House of Commons Library, not one person has arrived in the UK via that pathway. Instead of this shameful, divisive, dog-whistle legislation, will she urgently open and make work safe and legal routes as the only way to stop the small boats?

**Suella Braverman**

The hon. Lady's faux outrage is commendable, but the reality is that that is not borne out by the facts. We have accepted nearly 500,000 people through safe and legal routes for humanitarian reasons. That is a track record of which I am proud—I wish she would be, too.

**Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)**

We have heard a great deal from Opposition Members setting out precisely what they think of my constituents, who believe that we need to control illegal immigration and that the issue of small boats in the Channel is a top priority that needs to be brought under control, precisely because it demonstrates that the Government are listening to their priorities and are making sure that this country can control its borders. That being the case, we all hope that the legislation will succeed. Will my right hon. and learned Friend promise that, if it is frustrated by

the European Convention on Human Rights, we will commit to leave the convention because, in the end, leave it we must if the legislation is stalled?

**Suella Braverman**

As we saw last year, the fact that the Strasbourg Court issued a rule 39 order pursuant to an opaque process in which the UK was not represented was deeply regrettable. We are addressing that issue in the Bill to avoid that scenario playing out again. In our view, the Bill complies with our international obligations and we must take these measures promptly.

**Dame Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)**

The Home Secretary has just said that, when she stops the boats, the Bill will introduce an annual cap on the number of refugees the UK will resettle via safe and legal routes. That is really putting the cart before the horse. She knows perfectly well that the legal routes are barely there and are failing, so will she consider immediately piloting more and better safe and legal routes from countries such as Afghanistan, where people's lives are in constant danger?

**Suella Braverman**

Forgive me, but that question displays the Labour party's naivety and lack of realism. It is not right to say that everyone coming here is doing so for genuine asylum or humanitarian reasons, which is why we need to take a measured, compassionate and pragmatic approach.

**Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)**

My constituents are concerned about the number of boats coming across the Channel, and they and I welcome the Government's measures to resolve the problem. The Rwanda scheme remains unenacted and is mired in court action. Some of my constituents are wondering why the democratic will of the Parliament that they have elected is taking so long to be realised. How will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Bill that she has announced today will not face the same fate?

**Suella Braverman**

The Rwanda partnership has been tested rigorously in the High Court, which is why I welcome the judgment of senior judges, who upheld the partnership as being lawful and compliant with human rights laws and the refugee convention. It is a big step forward in vindicating the decision on the partnership that we struck with our friends in Rwanda, and we will wait for the outcome of further litigation.

**Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab)**

Between October and December last year, one in three people making the journey came from Afghanistan. The Government say that Afghans should use safe and legal routes to get here, but by their own figures only one Afghan was relocated in the month of December through the Afghan relocations and assistance policy scheme. Those left behind include people who sacrificed everything in support of the UK's mission in Afghanistan. Many of them have been brutally murdered by the Taliban and many more will undoubtedly be killed. Can the Home Secretary say that she will honour the commitments made to those who served alongside us in Afghanistan and, if she will honour those commitments, how will she ensure that they receive safe passage?

**Suella Braverman**

As I have mentioned quite a few times, but it bears repetition, we have been proud to welcome 20,000 people from Afghanistan who have fled the troubles and the Taliban. We have a family reunification scheme to enable family members to join their family here. That is a record of which we should be proud and I encourage the hon. Gentleman to support it.

**Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Ind)**

Can the Home Secretary reconfirm that the Bill will stop illegal entry being a route to our asylum system, and what effect does she think that it will have on the number of people willing to pay evil people traffickers to cross the Channel?

**Suella Braverman**

Deterrence is a core aim of these measures. We need to send the message that, if someone comes here illegally on a boat, paying a people smuggler, they will not have an entitlement to life in the UK. That is why I urge everyone here to get behind the Bill.

**Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP)**

Like many who are genuinely interested in supporting those who want to solve these problems, I have concerns about this approach, both in principle and in practice. The issues in communities that the Government uses as a straw man are, in fact, the result of a decade of systematic underfunding and neglect in health, housing and education. Instead of scapegoating the vulnerable, encouraging conspiracy and aggression, when will the Home Secretary get a grip on the chaos in her Department, whose processing rates have collapsed, along with conviction rates for people smugglers? When will she stop scapegoating and start solving?

**Suella Braverman**

Far from scapegoating the vulnerable, this is about protecting the vulnerable. This is about empowering our authorities properly to support genuine victims of modern slavery. This is about enabling a swifter resolution of genuine asylum claims. This is about enabling greater, safer and legal routes. This is not scapegoating—this is about protection.

**Sir Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con)**

If moving people to Hereford is the solution, may I welcome everything that my right hon. and learned Friend has said? We British people have rights as well, so can she put her shoulder to the wheel for my constituents, too?

**Suella Braverman**

This is about our humanitarian approach, but it is also about fairness. My hon. Friend is right—the British people’s famous sense of fair play and generosity has been tested beyond limit, which is why it is necessary to go further than we have gone before and make sure that we have a robust scheme in place that actually stops the boats.

**Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)**

The Home Secretary must have been shocked to discover that she and her party have been in charge of the Home Office for the past 13 years, during which time the backlog of asylum claims has done nothing but mushroom. The number of children who have been waiting more than a year for their asylum application to be considered has risen twelvefold. Rapid decision making is part of the effective deterrence which she claims to want. Why was this allowed to happen, when will she get a grip and why does passing the same piece of legislation yet again make a difference?

**Suella Braverman**

If we go down the path of comparing backlogs, the Labour party will be found wanting. The backlog with which we are dealing bears no comparison whatsoever with what the Labour party left us with in 2010.

**James Daly (Bury North) (Con)**

I warmly welcome the legislation. Will the Home Secretary confirm that running through it is the central theme that the only route to asylum in the UK is a safe and legal route, with an annual cap on the number of refugees? The annual cap is the crucial point. This is democratic accountability. Migration must be based on the country’s capacity and capability to house and support people. We cannot

have open borders, whatever the other side pontificates. May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend when we will vote on the migration cap? I welcome her statement, as it is exactly what my voters want—well done to the Home Secretary.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend speaks a lot of sense. The British people did not vote for 40,000 people to arrive here on small boats. They did not vote for our immigration laws to be broken. They voted for representatives to serve in this place to speak up for them. That is why I urge every Member of this House to get behind this Bill and stop the boats.

**Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)**

According to the statistics quoted by the Home Secretary last year, 17,000 referrals took on average 543 days to consider. Among those were the asylum seekers staying in a hotel in my constituency. I have engaged with them, along with my MSP colleague Stuart McMillan, on an ongoing basis since they arrived. The Home Office has not. It has not talked to those guys; it has not stopped the process. Would the Home Secretary consider expanding the shortage occupation list to allow them to work? Those young men want to contribute to the society in which they have been welcomed.

**Suella Braverman**

Aside from humanitarian routes into this country, we also have an extensive points-based system, which we developed post Brexit. Thanks to our freedom on migration, we have issued a record number of work and study visas in the last year alone. People who want to come here for legitimate reasons should go through our points-based system.

**Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)**

My constituents on the south Kent coast have seen with their own eyes the rapid increase in small boat crossings in the past few years. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that our priority must be to stop these dangerous journeys, and that the most effective way to do that is to demonstrate that they cannot be a shortcut into the asylum system and will not lead to permanent residency in the UK?

**Suella Braverman**

Getting into a flimsy dinghy wearing a thin polystyrene excuse for a life jacket, paying thousands of pounds, breaking our laws and putting one's life at risk is not the way to come to the United Kingdom. That is what this Bill is all about.



**Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab)**

The Home Secretary will be aware that the bulk of the 500,000 people she says have come through safe and legal routes are from Ukraine and Hong Kong. Regarding Afghanistan, she will also know that, in the whole of the last year, since the new safe route was put in place, only 22 individuals from Afghanistan have been accepted through that route. Is it any surprise to the Home Secretary, then, that 8,500 Afghans made a small boat crossing to the UK last year? Having rendered meaningless any safe and legal route from Afghanistan, where does the Home Secretary believe she derives the moral authority to criminalise those 8,500 people simply because of their mode of travel?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton)**

Order. It is really important, if we are going to get everybody in, that the questions are very short, as the answers have been. It is really important for colleagues to remember that.

**Suella Braverman**

Regarding Operation Pitting, we have received 20,000 people from Afghanistan—fleeing the Taliban, fleeing conflict and fleeing persecution. I am very proud of Britain’s track record. That is one among many safe routes through which people have come to the UK.

**Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)**

The people of Doncaster and Don Valley have welcomed people from all around the world, including recently through the Ukraine scheme, but they also now realise that we are full. Will the Home Secretary confirm to the House and to the people of Doncaster whether an illegal immigrant who arrives on our shores would ever be granted leave to remain?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is right. We are at unsustainable levels of people coming here illegally. It is putting unsustainable pressure on our accommodation, our public services and our resources. That cannot continue. That is why we need to adopt a different approach when it comes to dealing with asylum cases.

**Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)**

The Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box last week and committed that the Government

“will remain a member of the ECHR”—[Official Report, 27 February 2023; Vol. 728, c. 594.]

because leaving it would break the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. Does the Home Secretary agree?

**Suella Braverman**

We are clear that the measures in the Bill comply with our international law obligations. We are pleased to be proceeding with it and I encourage the hon. Lady to back it.

**Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)**

I hope the whole House will welcome and support my right hon. and learned Friend’s proposals, because my constituents have rightly been frustrated by our inability thus far to tackle illegal migration and control our borders. This is not about demonising genuine refugees or turning our back on those in need, but about stopping illegal activity and ensuring that our long tradition of offering safe haven to those who are truly persecuted is not undermined by those who abuse our hospitality and break our laws.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Making progress on stopping illegal migration will enable us to better support genuine victims of modern slavery or human trafficking with asylum. That is what this country is about, and I am very proud of that.

**Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)**

The Government will shortly be announcing their sixth immigration Bill since I arrived in the House in 2015, which tells us everything we need to know about their failures on immigration policy. However, I want to ask about the content of the Bill. Will the Home Secretary tell the House that she will not seek to revisit ouster clauses to prevent judicial review and that she will be mindful of the 2019 Supreme Court ruling that the presence of such clauses does not prevent a judicial review challenge based on an error of law?

**Suella Braverman**

I hope that the hon. Gentleman, on closer inspection of the Bill, will see what we have put forward. We will dramatically reduce the avenues and options for legal challenge, which are often used to thwart removal. It is important that we do that—within the law—to ensure that our operations can be delivered effectively.

**Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)**

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the introduction of this legislation. She has made it clear that she intends to secure that the only route to asylum in the UK is a safe and legal route with an annual cap on the number of refugees. That is the correct and humane approach. Does she agree that those who advocate another approach are doing no favours to the migrants or indeed to their own constituents?

**Suella Braverman**

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Having safe and legal routes, capped and legitimised through a decision by Parliament, is the right way to support people seeking refuge in this country—not perpetuating an evil trade in people smuggling.

**Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)**

Afghan refugee children who were about to take their GCSEs in schools in my constituency have been forced to move 200 miles from the hotel they have spent the last 18 months in to other hotels. No school places were arranged for them in the places where they were going, and the Home Office initially denied that they had been moved at all. Is that the level of competence the Home Secretary is happy with? Will she look at those cases and at her whole policy on immigration, which is just failing?

**Suella Braverman**

When we introduced measures to streamline our asylum process and hasten decision making, the Labour party voted against them. Seriously, the hon. Gentleman cannot now complain when there are challenges with accommodating people, because they are waiting for an asylum decision and they are being housed in hotels.

**Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con)**

My constituents are rightly proud of this country's historic record of providing sanctuary to those in need, but they are deeply unhappy about the numbers of small boats crossing and the economic migrants. They are also deeply distressed to see men, women and children losing their lives in the Channel at the hands of people traffickers. Will my right hon. and learned Friend do all she can to ensure that these plans strike the right balance, ending these illegal and dangerous crossings, but also ensuring that we can provide sanctuary to those who arrive here legally?

**Suella Braverman**

Yes, these measures make it clear that if someone is going to be exploited by people smugglers to embark on a treacherous and illegal journey so that they can come here to make a spurious asylum claim, they will not be able to settle here and will not have a life in the United Kingdom. Safe and legal routes will be available to them.

**Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab)**

It is the oldest trick in the book. When poverty is rising and the rich are getting richer, when wages are falling and people are struggling, the powerful say that the problem is not really bosses or Government cuts, but migrants and refugees. That is what is happening when the Home Secretary whips up fear about an invasion on the south coast and announces this pledge to cut up our commitment to the UN refugee convention. She is demonising people who come here by boat while refusing to create new safe and legal routes for refugees. How many refugees will she lock up before she accepts that we need a compassionate approach, not this callous and cruel policy?

**Suella Braverman**

I refuse to take lectures from a Member of Parliament who wrote a letter to the Home Office to ensure that a foreign national offender, who had been convicted of serious and heinous crimes, was not deported from this country. That person then went on to murder—a shameful stain on the Labour party.

**Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con)**

I am reassured by what I have heard from the Home Secretary: that the operation of this excellent Bill will not be frustrated by the European Convention on Human Rights. As we have heard, however, Opposition Members will be encouraging their friends in the activist lawyer community to do everything they can to use Labour's rights framework to obstruct the law. I hope that she will work with us to strengthen the Bill and defend it from that. On safe and legal routes, which we absolutely need, I encourage her to make more use of the community sponsorship scheme, which has been useful for Ukrainians.

**Suella Braverman**

The community sponsorship scheme is a good scheme that enables the settlement of people who are seeking refuge in this country. My hon. Friend talks about activist lawyers. I will tell hon. Members who the biggest activist lawyer is: he is leading the Labour party.

**Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP)**

This is not being done in our name. We did not vote to leave the ECHR, we did not vote for Brexit, and we did not vote for refugees fleeing unimaginable horrors to be detained and deported to Rwanda. Does the Home Secretary not have a shred of compassion for what people—children and families—are going through? Will she create more safe and legal routes so that people can actually access safety, rather than being stuck rotting in war zones?

**Suella Braverman**

The hon. Lady talks about what people did or did not vote for. The British people did not vote for 45,000 people to come here illegally or for £6 million to be spent every day on hotel accommodation. The British people did not vote for the abuse of our generosity. The compassionate thing that we need to do is pass this Bill.

**Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con)**

I warmly welcome the Home Secretary's statement and intent. We have had a policy of housing illegal migrants and asylum seekers in hotels up and down this country, which has caused massive community tensions and put strains on public services. Can she confirm when that will end and how much that will save the British taxpayer?

**Suella Braverman**

We are spending £3 billion a year on supporting the asylum backlog and £6 million a day on hotel accommodation, which is valuable taxpayers' money that should not be diverted to those purposes. We need to stop the boats, bear down on the backlog and save the British taxpayer valuable money.

**Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)**

My office deals with outstanding asylum cases week in, week out, as I am sure do those of many MPs up and down the country. Despite promises that the situation would improve, we are still waiting an unacceptably long time for updates from the Home Office. Why is there nothing in the Bill to address the fact that 160,000 people are currently awaiting a decision—a 60% increase on the previous year?

**Suella Braverman**

We are making good progress on bearing down on the asylum backlog. We have increased the number of decision makers, we have improved the levels of productivity, we have streamlined the guidance, and we are making sure that we are processing the claims individually, on a case-by-case basis, more swiftly. That is

how we will remove people from hotel accommodation and bear down on the costs.

**Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con)**

I strongly support the Illegal Migration Bill, which is a major step forward in stopping the small boats. Can my right hon. Friend provide more details on how it will radically narrow the number of challenges and appeals that can suspend removal?

**Suella Braverman**

We have made it clear that there will be a duty on the Home Secretary to make arrangements for a removal, and that removal will be suspended only in the event that the claimant can establish that they face a serious risk of irreversible harm should they be removed. In all other instances, that person will be removed and they can make their claim from the safe country or the country to which they have been removed.

**Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op)**

York is England's only human rights city and we have welcomed asylum seekers. It is a privilege to provide a safe haven for them, but this legislation is a real affront to those values. Can the Home Secretary publish the legal advice on how her legislation is compatible not only with international law but with the European Convention on Human Rights?

**Suella Braverman**

As a former Attorney General, I know that the Government abide by the Law Officers' convention, which means that neither the fact nor the content of legal advice is disclosed. That would be a decision for the Attorney General. We are very clear, however, that our Bill complies with international obligations, so we urge all hon. Members to support it.

**Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con)**

I thank the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister for listening to me and many people in Hinckley and Bosworth and across the country who want illegal immigration and the boat crossings to stop. Can she tell us practically how long she expects it to take to bring the legislation forward? More importantly, will Border Force have the resources to implement it?

**Suella Braverman**

We are introducing the Bill today and we hope that the parliamentary authorities will allow us to move swiftly on its progress. We want to start scrutinising and voting on the measures put forward as quickly as possible, because we want to get them on the statute book and operationalised as soon as possible. It is an urgent challenge and we need to move quickly.

**Mrs Paulette Hamilton (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)**

I am the daughter of immigrants. My parents' generation faced injustice through the mistakes made by the Windrush scheme, which are taking years to unravel. Last year set a record high for small boat crossings, with 46,000 arrivals. Why on earth should our constituents trust the Conservative Government, when under them, small boat crossings are going up rather than coming down?

**Suella Braverman**

I am glad that the hon. Lady mentioned Windrush, because I am proud of our achievements to date to right the wrongs that were committed. More than £60 million has been offered or paid out to the claimants and we are resolving many of the outstanding cases. I have engaged closely with members of the steering group and with Bishop Webley, and I am encouraged by the progress that we are making to resolve the issue.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con)**

Will the Home Secretary confirm that the Bill will prevent illegal migrants, especially the 80,000 from EU accession countries, from abusing our modern slavery laws to prevent their return home? On supporting the most vulnerable, will she confirm that she will create more legal migration routes, alongside an annual quota, and encourage the Department for Work and Pensions to do more to provide skills to refugees who have the right to work so that they can contribute to our country in the way that they want to?

**Suella Braverman**

One of the benefits of the measures in the Bill will be an enhanced ability to support genuine asylum seekers and genuine victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. Our ability is severely impeded at the moment, because of the overwhelming number of claims in our system, many of which are illegitimate and spurious. They are clogging up our system so that we are unable to properly support those who genuinely need it.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)**

When the people of Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven contact me, they wonder why the Conservative and Unionist party is creating a new Bill of dubious moral and legal standing when it could just continue the long-running strategy of driving public services into the ground, making Britain poorer than all of our northern European neighbours and therefore decreasing the pull factors of migration. Finally, they wonder about the Home Secretary's incredible—and I think absurd—claim that 100 million people are ready to come to the UK, and they want to say to the Home Secretary that it is going to take a lot more than a Bill copied and pasted from the Policy Exchange paper to make a difference.

**Suella Braverman**

The hon. Member's so-called absurd claim is actually backed up by the United Nations. More importantly, it is frankly naive to suggest that everybody coming here on a boat is a genuine asylum seeker fleeing for humanitarian reasons. The reality is that many of these people are economic migrants who are abusing our asylum system, and that is what this Bill aims to stop.

**Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con)**

The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said that we need solutions, not slogans, so could my right hon. and learned Friend please tell me of a single proposal the right hon. Lady has made that is anything more than an empty slogan? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with me that Labour Members do not have a plan, and they do not really want one either because they simply do not take this issue seriously?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Leader of the Opposition made a grand show of his five great missions to fix the country. Tellingly, he omitted stopping the boats. Either he does not care about illegal migration, or he does not know what to do about it.

**Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab)**

The people in my constituency were outraged by the fact that last year there were just four prosecutions for people smuggling a month, while 46,000 people crossed the Channel. Why is there nothing in this Government's widely trailed plans to tackle these criminal gangs?



**Suella Braverman**

Tackling the criminal gangs at the root of this problem is absolutely essential. That is why we have increased our funding to the NCA to ensure that there is better operationalising, better intelligence sharing and better co-operation with European partners, and that is why I am very pleased that many criminal gangs have been shut down and 500 convictions have been secured.

**Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)**

The Ukraine and Afghanistan schemes clearly show the enormous compassion of the British people, but the reality is that the abuse of the system, particularly the use of hotels for people seeking asylum, saps that compassion. Does the Home Secretary agree with me that we have to end the use of hotels and that this Bill will be a crucial part of that? Can she say when she hopes to be able to lay out a plan to put a timetable on ending the use of hotels?

**Suella Braverman**

I know from my hon. Friend's representations that in his community there are particular challenges with people in hotels. We are using hotels to accommodate asylum seekers because there are too many people coming here illegally. Once we stop the business model of people coming here illegally, we will be able to stop the use of hotels.

**Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)**

There has to be a strong deterrent when these criminal gangs are found people smuggling. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) has said, there were only four prosecutions per month against 46,000 crossings last year. How is the Home Secretary going to target the criminal gangs? When they are caught, they have to know that they are going to be punished for their evil trade.

**Suella Braverman**

I actually joined a dawn raid with the National Crime Agency a few months ago as it was going to arrest a people smuggler. There is a huge programme of work ongoing to ensure that there is proper intelligence sharing, proper resource and adequate funding to take a tough line against the criminal, evil people-smuggling gangs.

**Anna Firth (Southend West) (Con)**

Constituents in Southend West will warmly welcome the fact that this Government are taking a clear stand against illegal immigration, breaking the business

model that the vile people-smuggling gangs depend on and stopping the boats. However, one of the most common complaints I hear on the doorstep is about expensive hotels housing asylum seekers while homelessness, sometimes including our armed forces veterans, is on the rise. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with me that that is not just unfair on the British taxpayer, but deeply unfair on those genuinely in need who are waiting patiently and legally for a roof over their heads?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to speak for the good people of Southend West in the way she does. The reality is that we have far too many people coming here. They put pressure on our accommodation, and therefore we are now forced to accommodate them in the expensive hotel estate. That cannot continue. It is costly, it is inappropriate and, frankly, it is unfair on the asylum seeker, because it is no fit place to stay for an indefinite period of time.

**Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP)**

Imagine being a Tory Home Secretary whose party is supported by barely one in five people having the arrogance to stand up in this Chamber and talk about a patriotic majority being taken for a ride. Imagine having the absolute audacity to stand up in this Chamber and tell this House that there are 100 million people around the world and they are all coming here. No, they are not. The only way this Minister can prove that this is anything other than crass, dog-whistle politics is to answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) from the Front Bench: if she was serious, why would she be bringing forward legislation that barely lays a glove on the people smugglers?

**Suella Braverman**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you what is audacious. It is for SNP Members to naively claim that everybody coming here is a genuine refugee or asylum seeker, and then to fail to take their fair share of accommodation. They have wholly failed to properly accommodate asylum seekers, demonstrating a paltry number compared with the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)**

I always enjoy crossing swords with the Opposition. The people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke will warmly welcome what the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister have delivered today, although they would be even warmer if we at the very least said we would be derogating from the ECHR in this particular

case. However, while Labour Members use their confected outrage on the Opposition Benches here in Westminster, Stoke-on-Trent Labour members keep their heads buried in the sand, with councillors and candidates refusing to make any comments on immigration policy, because they know what the people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke think. They refused to sign a petition to empty the hotels in Stoke-on-Trent, which I started and brought to this House. Will the Home Secretary tell me when the people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke can expect to see their hotels cleared and emptied, and will it be as soon as possible?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out the failure by the Labour party to properly address this subject. The Leader of the Opposition does not mention it in his five big missions, because he does not care and he does not know. Labour Members vote against every measure we put forward to deport foreign national offenders and streamline our asylum system. They would scrap the Rwanda partnership. They write letters to stop our deportation of serious foreign criminals. That is what today's Labour party is like. Colleagues, the fight-back starts now.

**Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)**

Britain is and should remain a beacon for LGBT rights, so can I ask Home Secretary a particular question about LGBT asylum seekers who are coming to the UK, fleeing persecution because of their sexuality—who they love and who they are—and who do not come from a country where there is an existing safe route? Will they be deported back to that country where they are being abused, or will they be deported to Rwanda, where the FCO's travel advice says:

“LGBT individuals ... experience discrimination and abuse, including from local authorities”?

Can the Home Secretary reassure a gay MP here like myself that we are not turning our back on LGBT asylum seekers who are fleeing appalling abuse simply for being themselves?

**Suella Braverman**

What I would gently say to the hon. Gentleman is that the fundamental objective in this legislation is to stop people leaving safe countries to come to the United Kingdom and claim asylum. That is the fundamental principle running through our international obligations, whether it is the refugee convention or other con-

ventions. If people are coming here from a safe country, they really should not be claiming asylum in the first place.

**Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)**

I was horrified to hear that those on the Opposition Benches feel that this is about xenophobia and racism, scapegoating and dog-whistle politics. This is a simple matter of fairness—fairness for my constituents, who work hard and do the right thing, who see other people who arrive here illegally able to access the taxpayer-funded housing and support that they themselves struggle to access. They have been frustrated by delays and problems in implementing these measures to prevent that from happening, so can my right hon. and learned Friend give her absolute assurance that she is willing to do whatever is necessary to get the outcomes that my constituents deserve?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is right. His constituents deserve fairness, pragmatism and compassion in controlling our borders. It is not racist to say there is too much illegal migration. It is not racist to say we cannot go on spending £6 million on hotel accommodation. It is not bigoted to say people should not be breaking the law to come here. It is fair, it is pragmatic and it is compassionate.

**Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)**

I represent an airport seat and have a number of hotels currently in use in my constituency, but for 19 months one hotel in particular has since the fall of Kabul been used by Afghans. Is it a competency issue that we cannot process their claims, or is it a confidence issue? I think it is a confidence issue, because the civil service has lost confidence in this Administration carrying out any effective policies whatsoever.

**Suella Braverman**

I encourage the hon. Gentleman to keep in mind the global and indeed European dimension to this problem. Other EU nations are grappling with unprecedented levels of illegal migration. Some countries are saying they are going to stop accommodating people and instead let them abscond willingly. Some countries are accommodating migrants in sports halls and inappropriate accommodation. This is a global challenge and we have to take measures to deal with it.

**Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con)**

This Parliament and this nation must be sovereign when it comes to controlling our borders. It is completely unacceptable that a foreign court can seek to inhibit

the wishes of the elected Government of the day. Although I strongly welcome the measures outlined by the Home Secretary, what assurances can she give to the House that these new measures, and indeed our Rwandan policy, can be implemented without interference from foreign judges?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend is right to highlight concerns about the process to which we have been subject from Strasbourg. That is why there is a clause in the Bill relating to rule 39, and we will be closely specifying the details of what we are going to propose. In the meantime, I greatly welcome the vindication by the High Court of our Rwandan partnership in December. We now proceed to the Appeal Court and we wait to see what the courts and their justices decide.

**Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab)**

Wandsworth is proud to have welcomed refugees for hundreds of years and to be a borough of sanctuary. This Bill sounds like a charter for lawyers. This retreat of failed policies relies on returns to third countries; that was in last year's Nationality and Borders Act 2022, but 99% of people were not returned because the Government do not have return agreements. Will the Home Secretary give us a list now of the return agreements currently being negotiated and the deadline for reaching those new agreements, because we will need to know before we vote on this Bill?

**Suella Braverman**

We have been in negotiations with several countries, which is why I welcomed the agreement the Prime Minister struck with Albania at the end of last year. Let me be clear: we welcome the contributions of Albanians who come here lawfully, but we need to work together with the Albanian Government to properly relocate back to Albania those who do not have a legal right to be here.

**Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)**

People in Stoke-on-Trent are fed up with being ignored and having their generosity taken for granted, and I fully support the measures being introduced today. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that these actions will be taken swiftly and we will see deportations of those here illegally as soon as possible?

**Suella Braverman**

The matter is now urgent and we need to move quickly. That is why we have brought the Bill forward today. We hope to proceed with a swift timetable in Parliament. I urge all Members of Parliament to support this Bill; we must scrutinise it

effectively, but we want to get on and get the powers on to the statute book and deliver them in material terms as soon as possible.

**Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab)**

Every week I have more asylum seekers asking for my help to progress their claims. Some have waited for up to a year; most have waited several. They are left languishing at home, awaiting an appointment or a decision and are desperate to get on with their lives; many are now blighted with mental and other illnesses. Is this latest stunt by the Home Secretary not yet another attempt to direct attention away from her failure to deal with the escalating backlog, which has grown constantly for years on end?

**Suella Braverman**

The challenges the hon. Gentleman describes that are faced by asylum seekers are exactly why he should support the Bill. We want to reduce the number of people coming here illegally. We want to reduce the number of people waiting for a decision in the asylum backlog. Only by supporting this Bill will we be able to support the genuine asylum seekers in this country.

**John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)**

I welcome the proposed legislation, but the reality is that we need the confidence of the British people in our immigration system. To give additional confidence to local residents in Carlisle and other provincial towns and cities, will the Minister agree to an immediate moratorium on the use of hotels?

**Suella Braverman**

When someone is waiting for an asylum decision, there is a duty on the Home Office to accommodate them and provide them with appropriate support. Therefore, we have been forced to use hotel accommodation in many towns and cities across the United Kingdom. It is important that appropriate support is provided to asylum seekers to avoid destitution and homelessness.

**Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP)**

I have the situation in my constituency where businesses are unable to recruit staff yet living upstairs are asylum seekers who are unable to work. The Home Secretary has talked about the cost to the UK of housing asylum seekers; when is she going to get realistic about this and allow people waiting for their asylum claims to be decided to access the world of work?

**Suella Braverman**

Many people, such as those who have come here under the Afghan relocations and assistance policy, the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme or the Ukrainian scheme, are able to work in this country, and many of them do. I encourage all Members to support people in those communities to find work through their local jobcentres.

**Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con)**

Does the Home Secretary agree that, despite the noise and howls from Opposition Members, we are forgetting that these measures will save lives—that people would otherwise be drowning in the Channel or suffocating in the backs of lorries? Stopping the boats is the compassionate thing to do, and the only thing Labour’s open border policies would do is enrich people smugglers and risk death in the Channel.

**Suella Braverman**

Fundamentally, these are humanitarian measures that we are bringing forward with precisely the goal my hon. Friend sets out. We need to stop people dying in the Channel. We need to stop people being exploited by criminal gangs. We need to stop the criminality. That is why I encourage everybody to get behind the Bill.

**Richard Foord (Tiverton and Honiton) (LD)**

As of September last year, the backlog of asylum applications stood at 115,000 and might include some economic migrants. The average waiting time for an initial decision is 20 months. Does the Home Secretary recognise the moral hazard here: economic migrants coming here in small boats have no incentive to guard against the risk of entering those boats, because others have been protected by her Government against the consequences of being returned when they get here, which damages the protections for genuine asylum seekers?

**Suella Braverman**

The vast majority of people arriving via small boats have chosen to make that journey of their own free will. They have paid money, and they are largely young, healthy men. There is no good reason in many instances for them to claim asylum, and they should not be abusing our asylum rules to do so.

**Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con)**

On behalf of all the residents of Gedling who have raised the issue of small boats with me, may I warmly welcome the Home Secretary’s statement? Will she confirm that the forthcoming legislation will end the morally reprehensible practice

whereby smugglers are a de facto part of the asylum process, and does she agree that, given the dangers of cross-Channel smuggling, a robust approach is right, fair and humane?

**Suella Braverman**

One of the root causes of this problem is the proliferation of sophisticated, well co-ordinated and well-resourced criminal gangs operating across transnational boundaries on the continent. That is why we have increased resources for the National Crime Agency and increased co-operation and intelligence sharing with the French. Only by working together with our European partners will we be able to smash the business model of the people smugglers.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP)**

For myself, for the Secretary of State and for many there is a need to help and protect the vulnerable. Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that with the better weather there will undoubtedly be a rise in the numbers making illegal crossings? Does she believe that we should engage further with the French authorities to facilitate legal migration in a more structured way? Will the Bill enable those who seek asylum legally to be processed efficiently, while sending the clear message that if they come here illegally, asylum will automatically be denied?

**Suella Braverman**

We institute in the Bill some procedural requirements and limitations on legal claims, and time limits for bringing those claims. The aim is to reduce attempts to thwart removal and detention, and it strikes the right balance between fairness and compassion.

**Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con)**

On behalf of the people of Bassetlaw, I warmly welcome the Bill introduced by the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, which we have been crying out for. The Opposition often speak of safe and legal routes, which of course we already have, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that what they actually mean is that they support open borders, blanket approvals and amnesties for those who want to want to cheat our system, cheat our constituents and cheat genuine refugees?

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend puts it very well. Labour's policy on this issue is indeed open borders. A former Labour Home Secretary did grant an amnesty to asylum seekers. It is about ensuring that illegal migration continues through the back door. That is



not what the British people voted for; that is not what this Parliament will vote for.

**Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP)**

It will not have escaped the Home Secretary's notice that despite what I have no doubt have been the best efforts of her Government Whips, they have not found a single Member of Parliament from a Scottish constituency to have a single good word to say about the Bill. The fact is that Scotland's MPs, Scotland's Government, Scotland's local authorities and Scotland's people speak as one in saying that our biggest complaint about the UK asylum system is that her Government will not allow us to welcome as many refugees and asylum seekers as we want to. May I make a suggestion to the Home Secretary? Will she agree, even on a temporary pilot basis, to allow the Scottish Government to take control of our asylum system? We will see whether the best way to deal with asylum seekers is to treat them like human beings or to treat them in the way she wants to treat them.

**Suella Braverman**

All the Scottish National party can point to is a track record of failure when it comes to discharging its humanitarian duties to asylum seekers. It totally failed to support Ukrainians and had to hand over responsibility to the UK Government. It totally failed to take its fair share of refugees in comparison to other parts of the UK. It is failure, failure, failure from the SNP.

**Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con)**

Does my right hon. and learned Friend think it is fair to deduce from today's debate that the Labour party thinks it is totally fine to turn up here illegally and stay here for as long as you want? Does she think it is fair to assume that it opposes any kind of cap on refugee numbers? Does she agree that that is hardly surprising, bearing in mind that the leader of the Labour party, in a different guise, said that there is a

“racist undercurrent which permeates all immigration law”?

That was the Leader of the Opposition when he was a human rights lawyer. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with me that the Labour party should just be honest about what it is: pro open borders, anti any control on immigration and completely out of step with the majority of people of this country? It will be exposed.

**Suella Braverman**

My hon. Friend puts it very powerfully. That is what Labour's policy is: uncontrolled immigration, open borders, an amnesty for asylum seekers and a total disregard for what the British people want.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP)**

How can we know if someone is a genuine asylum seeker or not, unless they are allowed to make a claim and that claim is fairly and independently assessed? When was the last time the Home Secretary actually met another human being who had come here on a small boat? Has she ever listened to their stories of what they have gone through and what their hopes for the future are? Or does she just look them in the eye and tell them they are not welcome here?

**Suella Braverman**

The reality is that we need to all work together now to find a pragmatic, compassionate and fair solution to this problem. That is why I have introduced these measures today and why I encourage all Members to support them.

**Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind)**

Last week, we saw with the revised Northern Ireland protocol deal what progress can be made when we work collaboratively with our European partners. Rather than the sabre-rattling content of this statement, is not the reality that the most effective way to deal with the issue of small boats crossing the Channel is to work in full collaboration with our European partners? Is it not the case that the number of small boat crossings has increased substantially since Brexit?

**Suella Braverman**

The reality is that we have developed much closer co-operation with our French partners on this very issue. That is why I am pleased that we struck a good deal with them at the end of last year. The Prime Minister is heading to Paris—I will be accompanying him—later this week to talk further with our French partners on how to tackle this issue, among many others.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans)**

I thank the Home Secretary for her statement and for responding to questions for an hour and 50 minutes.