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The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for the Home Office
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: MP01719

27 February 2025

Dear Rt. Hon. Yvette Cooper MP,

Re: New Immigration Guidance, 10th February 2025

I am deeply concerned about the changes to the Home Office guidance as to how it will assess whether someone is of 'good character' to be granted naturalisation as a British citizen. As you know, for anyone applying for naturalisation from 10th February 2025, if they entered or arrived in the UK illegally, 'normally' their application will be refused.

Many of those who arrive illegally are those refugees that the UK swore to protect when we became a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention. Those who are seeking asylum escape war or persecution may now be refused long-term safety. Instead, their safety and protection must be enshrined in UK law. The guidance states there is a 'presumption' that those arriving illegally will be refused unless 'there are compelling, mitigating circumstances'. This is not clear, and thus does not serve as adequate protection for asylum seekers.

The fact that the updated guidance makes no reference to Article 31 or Article 34 of the Refugee Convention indicates that the Home Office does not plan to keep its promise that asylum seekers will not be penalised for illegal entry.

I share the opinion that the UK needs a fair and effective immigration system, but this new guidance makes no provision to protect those most vulnerable refugees who reach our shores to find safety.

Britain must lead the way in being a fair and generous beacon of hope and safety for those who need it most, rather than punishing those who flee to us with no other option. This new guidance is heartless, harmful, and unlikely to solve any immigration issues we currently face.

I urge you to retract this guidance at the earliest opportunity.

In your response, please may you tell me how this guidance adheres to the UN Refugee Convention, to which the UK is a signatory. In particular, please may you address how this guidance adheres to Article 31, which states that refugees should not be penalised for breaching immigration laws where they have come directly from a place where they fear persecution, and Article 34, which states that states shall so far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees. Please inform me as to how these protections for refugees are clearly enshrined in law.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Manuela Perteghella'.

Dr Manuela Perteghella
Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon