

Speak out against racism

Defend asylum seekers



You, like us, will have been deeply concerned by the atmosphere of racism and xenophobia whipped up against asylum seekers over recent months, particularly during the local elections last May. We believe this is set to continue through to the General Election.

The response we need is a high profile campaign that expresses the broad public support for asylum rights and believes asylum seekers should be made welcome and opposes racism.

Speak Out Against Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers has been launched by the National Assembly Against Racism, British Refugee Council, Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture and a number of national trade unions to help achieve this. The campaign already has the support of people like the actors Kevin Whately, Juliet

Stevenson and Corin Redgrave, writers Nick Hornby, Julian Barnes and Harold Pinter, journalists Yasmin Alibhai Brown, Claire Rayner, Gary Younge and John Pilger and many others.

As a first phase of the campaign we are seeking the widest possible endorsements of this statement. The first 100 major endorsements will be published as 'One Hundred Speak Out for Asylum Seekers' which will publicly launch the campaign. We need you to sign up. Help us end the spiral of racism and hostility to asylum seekers. The racists can only triumph if people of goodwill remain silent.

Campaign statement

We wholeheartedly condemn the atmosphere of xenophobia, discrimination and racism against refugees and asylum seekers.

We join the Churches, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees representative in Britain and Bill Morris the General Secretary of the Transport and General Union in condemning the way in which both Government and Opposition have tried to out-bid each other in the intolerance of their statements about asylum seekers.

We reject as unacceptable the way in which the Conservative Party sought to exploit the fate of asylum seekers for electoral advantage.

We believe the government's decisions to withdraw benefits from asylum seekers, detain more and more of them and disperse others to 'designated accommodation' all over the UK, have contributed to the atmosphere of racism against asylum seekers.

In this context of growing racism, the threat of racist violence has increased for all non-white communities in Britain — with the number of race hate crimes in London, for example, doubling in the 12 months to April 2000.

Therefore we support the Speak Out Against Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers campaign and pledge to:

- Defend the right of refugees to seek asylum in Britain under the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees;
- Demand an end to attempts by political parties and leaders to exploit racism for electoral gain;
- Call for legal action against newspapers, which publish material inciting racial hatred;
- Call upon the Government to restore asylum rights by ending the voucher, designated accommodation and compulsory dispersal systems and restoring benefits.

Sponsors include

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| Individuals: | Janet Ryder AM |
| Julian Barnes (<i>writer</i>) | Adrian Sanders MP |
| Edward Bond (<i>playwright</i>) | Brian Sedgemore MP |
| Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (<i>journalist and broadcaster</i>) | Debra Shipley MP |
| Phil Collins (<i>musician</i>) | Alan Simpson MP |
| Jeremy Hardy (<i>comedian and writer</i>) | Dennis Skinner MP |
| David Hare (<i>writer</i>) | Simon Thomas MP |
| Nick Hornby (<i>writer</i>) | Dr Jenny Tonge MP |
| Prof Sajal Lahiri | David Wigley MP/AM |
| Kika Markham (<i>actor</i>) | Rt Rev AC Dumper |
| John McCarthy (<i>actor</i>) | Rt Rev Keith Sutton |
| Roger Lloyd Pack (<i>actor</i>) | Denis Fernando (<i>NUS Black Students Officer</i>) |
| John Pilger (<i>writer and journalist</i>) | Owain James (<i>President NUS</i>) |
| Harold Pinter (<i>playwright, director, actor</i>) | Linda McGowan (<i>NUS Students with Disabilities Officer</i>) |
| Claire Rayner (<i>broadcaster and writer</i>) | Organisations: |
| Corin Redgrave (<i>actor</i>) | Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture |
| Ajab Samrai Singh (<i>creative director, Saatchi & Saatchi</i>) | Refugee Council |
| Juliet Stevenson (<i>actor</i>) | National Assembly Against Racism |
| Leslee Udwin (<i>actor</i>) | Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants |
| Lakshbir Virk (<i>director</i>) | United Nations Association |
| Gary Younge (<i>journalist</i>) | INQUEST |
| Kevin Whately (<i>actor</i>) | Lesbian and Gay Coalition |
| Ken Livingstone (<i>Mayor of London</i>) | Against Racism |
| Diane Abbott MP | Liberty |
| Jackie Ballard MP | Poale Zion |
| Mick Bates AM | National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns |
| Tony Benn MP | Algerian Refugee Council |
| Peter Black AM | Europe Roma |
| Ann Clwyd MP | Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities |
| Harry Cohen MP | ASLEF |
| Ron Davies MP/AM | BECTU |
| Cynog Davis AM | Connect |
| Bill Etherington MP | FBU |
| Val Feld AM | MSF |
| Neil Gerrard MP | Musicians Union |
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM | NAPO |
| John Griffiths AM | NATFHE |
| Dr Evan Harris MP | UNISON |
| Nick Harvey MP | South and East Region of the TUC |
| Cathy Jamieson MSP | South and West Region of the TUC |
| Carwyn Jones AM | Board of Deputies of British Jews |
| Elin Jones AM | Churches Commission for Racial Justice |
| Gareth Jones AM | Diocese of Llandaff BSR |
| Ann Keen MP | Archdiocese of Cardiff Racial Justice Group |
| Richard Livesey MP | National Union of Students |
| John McAllion MP/MSP | NUS Black Students Committee |
| John McDonnell MP | Student Assembly Against Racism |
| Alice Mahon MP | University of London Union |
| Andrew Miller MP | Oxford University SU |
| Julie Morgan MP | Jubilee 2000 |
| Mary Mulligan MSP | Operation Black Vote |
| Jenny Randerson AM | |
| Bob Russell MP | |

Signed.....

Print name

On behalf of (organisation)(if applicable)

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Address.....

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Tel/Fax

e-mail.....

This campaign is in urgent need of financial support.

I enclose a donation of £_____ for this campaign.

Return to: NAAR, 28 Commercial St, London E1 6LS (cheques payable to NAAR).