

## Funding the Future

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Labour's Shabana Mahmood MP, who is our Home Secretary, ramped up her hate-fuelled campaign against migrants yesterday.

Refugees will no longer get an automatic permanent status after five years. Instead, they will get temporary protection, which will be reviewed every 30 months, with a 20-year wait now being required before most can apply for permanent settlement. If their home country is deemed "safe", protection can be withdrawn and they can be removed.

In addition, the statutory duty to provide housing and basic financial support to certain asylum seekers will be removed and replaced with discretionary support. Refugees' access to Universal Credit will also be tightened.

There will also be faster returns of failed asylum seekers, including families with children, and those who refuse a supposedly voluntary return will then lose support and be subject to enforced deportation, nonetheless.

There was also talk of seizing assets (such as valuables) from asylum seekers to help fund accommodation and removals.

And, in a significant change, Labour has said that the UK will remain in the European Convention on Human Rights, but will change how key provisions. In particular, Article 8 on the right to family life will be narrowed so that the term "family" is likely to mean immediate family only, making it harder to resist deportation on the basis of wider family ties in the UK.

What does this mean? Politically, this is a far-right approach that is hard to distinguish from what Reform and the Tories propose.

The two traditional leading parties in the UK, plus Reform, can all now be fairly described as profoundly xenophobic. Without exception, they are openly fuelling racism in this country.

That the Labour plan to seize assets has extraordinary echoes of Nazi policy within it is something that those proposing it were apparently either unaware of or were happy

with.

And that all of this gave rise to hours of news coverage, far too much of which was itself xenophobic, is not, apparently, Labour's concern.

I am shocked, dismayed and profoundly ashamed of what is happening in this country.

The hatred of "the other" that the Tories, Reform and Labour all now actively promote is far removed from any reasonable ethical basis for a sustainable society.

And throughout all this, there appears to be almost no recognition that those we are talking about are people, with hopes, fears and straightforward terror that they can feel, just like us. They are - and no one seems to be saying this - people, after all. And no one flees their home, takes enormous risks, leaves everything behind with little or no hope of return, and risks getting in a small boat in the hope of crossing the English Channel unless they are desperate.

I am not saying there are no migrants who are seeking to exploit opportunity; to do so would be absurd. But the vast majority, I am sure, are not, which is why so many have been granted refugee status. In almost all these announcements, that is ignored.

And now, even those in the UK who have built lives, had children who only know this country as home, and who have become members of communities, will be forced to live in fear of deportation. They will remain "othered" for much of their lives, with their lives blighted by the officially sanctioned threat of exportation. This is callousness that is almost incomprehensible. And what it most definitely is not is refuge, because that provides hope, and this new policy is designed to remove that, which is why it is so callous, discriminatory and vile.

No MP who votes for this ever deserves to be voted for ever again.

No person who supports this can ever describe themselves as Christian, because what is happening is the exact opposite of all Christian ethics.

No person supporting this can even call themselves a decent human being, because when you demonise others, you cannot be.

And have no doubt that a government that can sink to this depth is capable of going further. As Tony Benn once said:

*The way a government treats refugees is very instructive because it shows how they would treat the rest of us if they could get away with it.*

Those excited by this proposal should then worry: what will those in power with an inclination to abuse it for personal advantage, which is what Labour is doing, do next? Worry.