

19 December 2023

Refugees are welcome here

PCS joined over 100 activists, campaigners and trade unionists in a demonstration against the government's anti-refugee agenda on Monday (18) outside the Home Office in London.

Taking place symbolically on the UN's International Day of Migrants, PCS supported other trade unions, charities and campaign groups at a demonstration outside the Home Office against the government's poisonous anti-refugee agenda.

As the government ramps up its attacks on refugees and migrants, it is important that we call on the government to adopt [our proposed policy of Safe Passage](#).

This would create a humane alternative to the Rwanda policy, protect our members in the Home Office from being forced to work in an ever more hostile environment, and help prevent the government using the demonisation of refugees in order to try to deflect from their catastrophic failures on people's living standards in the UK.

Opening up the demonstration, Weyman Bennett, the Stand Up to Racism co-convenor, said:

"While our hearts broke watching the news of more lives lost as a result of racist borders policy - on the Bibby Stockholm prison barge, in the Channel, and the Mediterranean sea - Sunak forced through legislation seeking to override the court's ruling that the Rwanda plan was illegal, he met with fascists in Italy, and then spouted the racist lie about immigration threatening to 'overwhelm European states'.

Connor, speaking on behalf of the TSSA union, expressed solidarity with PCS members, emphasising that it is the Home Office and the government that should be blamed, not Home Office staff.

Labour MP Richard Burgon called for a "policy and an approach in our movement which unites the working class majority in all its diversity and shows the diversity and togetherness that we need, that says quite clearly that it doesn't matter to us

where you were born, we are all human beings, all seeking safety, all seeking a better life.”

Compassion and dignity

The former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn spoke about meeting refugees in Calais, telling the rally that “every single place they came from, they were either victims of environmental disaster, human rights abuse, or war. Every single one of those that had come from a war-torn country, Britain had been involved in the bombing and the war.”

“Why on earth can’t we start recognising that those refugees,” he later added, “are poor, distressed, abused, and in some cases, confused. But they’re still human beings that want to contribute to life on this planet, like we all do.”

Earlier, Charlotte Khan from Care4Calais had said that “we will not stop shouting from the top of our lungs that people seeking safety should be welcomed with compassion and dignity”.

She brought on stage Aziz, who came as a refugee from Sudan in 2021. He said that he came to the UK for safety, only receiving formal refugee status this year. He is now working and studying to better his life:

“Many people like myself had horrible experiences...I’m just here to say thank you to those people who support us, all those people who attend tonight to support all refugees here.”

In November, after over a year of [campaigning against the Rwanda policy](#), PCS [welcomed a Supreme Court decision](#) which upheld the Court of Appeal’s ruling that the UK government’s plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is unlawful.

PCS is also [showing its support for a new Together with Refugees campaign](#). Last week, we joined high-profile figures from across British society in signing [an open letter to political leaders](#) to call for a fairer system for refugees.

Reps and members can [read more details about the Rwanda campaign on PCS Knowledge](#) (login required).