



[Charlotte Khan](#)

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Why we must fight for Safe Passage for refugees

Charlotte Khan from Care4Calais writes about the miserable reality of trying to find safety and freedom as a refugee in the UK and the importance of PCS standing on the side of refugees.

I started writing this post over a week ago. It should have been easy.

I should have been able to simply talk about our belief in the [Safe Passage policy](#), how much we valued [working with PCS in challenging the Rwanda plan](#), and what our hopes for the future are.

But in the space of just one week I've had to rewrite it four times.

The death of a man on the Bibby Stockholm barge, men at a former RAF base in rural Essex attempting to set themselves on fire, the death of a woman in the Channel, the death of a man in the Channel - tragedy after tragedy.

Each one devastating for family and friends. Each one heart breaking. And each one infuriatingly preventable.

This week we [marked International Migrants Day](#), which is usually a day to celebrate the contributions that migrants make to our communities. And there are so many beautiful examples of this around us, all across the country.

But in a week where darkness has surrounded us, it feels only right to be honest about the miserable reality of trying to find safety and freedom as a refugee in the UK today.

To start, there are no safe routes here. The government spouts nonsense about them, but unless you are Ukrainian, they really don't exist.

If there are no safe routes, you have to make your way here by other means, and invariably this involves risking your own life, and even the life of your kids, by crossing the Channel in a small boat.

And no, you don't do this unless you feel there is no other choice. This is a huge decision, the likes of which I pray none of us reading this will ever have to face.

There's one thing we can agree with Rishi about: we also want to stop the boats. We want to destroy the business model of smugglers, and stop people dying.

But unlike Rishi, we don't look to do this with cruel, ineffective and unlawful plans such as Rwanda. We look with common sense and compassion - and choose safe passage.

The deaths this week speak to why safe routes are so essential. Humans - mothers, daughters, sons, fathers, friends - shouldn't be drowning and freezing in our Channel.

And people who are survivors of torture, trafficking and war should be treated with humanity and dignity, not segregated from society, warehoused in barracks and barges.

In our [joint Safe Passage policy paper](#), Care4Calais and PCS have laid out a humane alternative available to the government.

The policy of cross-Channel visas - issued so people are given safe passage to cross the Channel and have their asylum claims heard in the UK - would remove any need for life-threatening crossings.

Through our joint legal fight against the Rwanda plan and our work on the Safe Passage policy, we have cemented a special relationship between PCS and Care4Calais, one built on solidarity.

It is moving, and incredibly powerful, to have a union which represents Home Office staff speak on the side of refugees.

So even in this dark time, there is cause for hope. As a movement we have great strength and can go forward boldly, together, to challenge injustice and stand alongside the oppressed.