

# Criminal justice

Since coming to power in May 1997, New Labour have deported over 93,000 people.

Enforcement figures for the first 9 months of 1999 are up 9.1% on the same period last year.

Deportations for the first 9 months of 1999: 4,615 — 625 less than the same period last year.

Refused and removed for the first 9 months of 1999: 22,650 — 2,900 more than the same period in 1998.

Total enforcements for the first 9 months of 1999: 27,365 — 2,275 more than the same period in 1998.

Total enforcements under New Labour, January to December 1998: 34,775.

Total enforcements under New Labour, May to December 1997: 21,743.

On the 29 & 30 September 1999:

47 Asylum seekers had been detained over 12 months, 171 Asylum seekers between 6 and 12 months.

*Statistics from: Home Office Research Development & Statistics Directorate. (All figures are provisional and subject to revision.)*

## Immigration Laws Criminalise People—

The effect of immigration laws are to criminalise people. It does not matter if they have committed any criminal offence or not. The Immigration Act authorises detention and imprisonment where there has been no offence, no charges no prosecution, no court intervention.

## Criminalisation takes place through language—

Under immigration law immigrants, migrants and refugees can be defined as being in the UK “illegally” or “unlawfully.” In this way people are defined as non-persons and as being outside of the law. Immigration Officers regularly describe Third World people as “illegals”—as having no identity other than as being devoid of status in the UK.

Those who lose their claim for asylum become “Bogus.” All these definitions are ways of criminalising people. Immigration laws are not static, but are constantly being redefined, made harsher and harder.

## Criminalisation takes place through Media Presentation—

On Saturday 26 February 2000 the *The Times* ran the following story on page two:

‘Refugees flock to Germany and Britain’,  
by Stewart Tendler, Crime Correspondent

BRITAIN attracts more asylum-seekers than any other

country in Europe bar Germany, according to Home Office figures issued yesterday.

The United Kingdom had 71,160 applications in 1999 compared with Germany’s 95,115, a survey of ten European nations showed. In all there were 365,745 applications for countries including Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Kosovo and other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accounted for more than 100,000 of the applications, including 11,535 in the United Kingdom. Britain was also the most popular country among asylum-seekers from Colombia, Croatia, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Somalia and Sri Lanka. The Home Office figures show that there were 6,110 applications in January against 7,180 in December. That is the lowest figure for eight months. In May the number of applicants was 5,370 and since then monthly figures have fluctuated between 6,130 and 7,355.

From November to January the average was 6,570—a 40 per cent increase on the monthly average for the same period in 1998-99. Processing applications rose steeply from 2,320 cases in December to 4,040 in January, although the backlog continued to grow and has now reached a record 104,890.

Kent County Council said yesterday that dealing with child asylum-seekers will cost households an extra £3 next year on council tax.

This article should be condemned in the strongest possible terms—not for its content but for the way 71,160 asylum applicants have been criminalised by the way the article has been presented. By giving the story ‘Refugees flock to Germany and Britain’ to a crime reporter *The Times* has labelled at one stroke 71,160 asylum applicants as criminals. This is a grave injustice to those 71,160 people seeking asylum. Surely this article should have and would normally come under Home Affairs.

## Criminalisation takes place through images—

On the same day the Electronic version of BBC World News ran a story on immigration with a picture of a Asylum Seeker at an airport. The picture was of a women very advanced in pregnancy (enough said).

## Criminalisation takes place through a rise in Council Tax—

On Friday 25th February 2000 Kent County Council announced they were increasing its rates by £3 per household to cover a £1.7m shortfall in funds caused by an influx of asylum claimants. And there are rumours that many other councils will follow suit unless the government pledges

more money.

Interviewers were able to find any number of people to condemn the rise “caused” by the asylum seekers but no one was able or wanted to point out that this was less than 1 penny per day.

## Refugees are not criminals—So why lock them up?

At any one time, up to 1,000 asylum-seekers are imprisoned in Britain.

On Monday 20th March 2000, a new detention centre opened in Oakington, at an old army barracks just north of Cambridge. This centre will initially hold up to 400 more people. These will be individuals who are not suspected of having committed any crimes, and will include women and young children.

The centre will operate like a prison.

Detainees will not be able to leave the site or move between buildings on the site unless escorted by security guards. There will be constant surveillance through CCTV cameras, a 24hour gatehouse, and regular patrols around the centre. The accommodation blocks will be surrounded by high fences. The Home Office has refused to allow refugee families to use the houses already on the site on the pretext that they are too “comfortable.” Large accommodation blocks will be used instead.

The Home Office claims that the purpose of this centre is to allow “Fast-tracking” of asylum claims in under ten days. Past experience has shown this is highly unrealistic: the average length of time for a claim to be processed has been 18 months, and there is a large backlog of undecided claims due to Home Office inefficiency. It is quite likely that innocent refugees will be imprisoned for long periods at Oakington, or else deported without proper consideration.

The centre will be run by a private company, *Group 4*, for profit. *Group 4* and the Home Office have already been sternly criticised in reports by the Chief Inspector of Prisons following visits to refugee detentions centres/prisons at Campsfield (Oxfordshire), Tinsley House (Gatwick) and Rochester detention/prison.

Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention (CARD) tel: 01223-462187

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC)  
email: [ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk](mailto:ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk)  
<http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/>