

## Do Migrants have Right of Entry?

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It has been revealed that the British government is considering new methods to reduce the number of migrants claiming asylum in the UK. Since it is estimated that the number of asylum seekers topped 100,000 in 2002, the government has shown greater urgency to look at methods for reducing future numbers.

It is argued that a number of those applying for sanctuary in Britain have not been forced to leave their country of origin by traditional 'push' factors such as political persecution or torture. Many believe that many come to Britain as economic migrants with a small

minority involved in terrorism.

It is this fear of terrorism that has led the Government to consider housing asylum claimants in secure processing centres before being integrated into towns and cities on acceptance. Prime Minister Tony Blair has said there is "absolutely no doubt that we have to deal with this issue". Home Secretary David Blunkett believes that concentrations of migrants in some regions of the UK could be destabilise societies who have become "a coiled spring".

However, such schemes do not deal with the issues that cause people to migrate thousands of miles to come to Britain. This has prompted the Government to review its obligations under the United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) when looking for alternatives.

The latest plan involves deporting potential asylum seekers to UN designated "Regional Protection Areas" for a period of six months while the political situation stabilised in their country of origin. Such Regional Protection Areas may include Morocco for Algerian migrants or Turkey, Iran or Iraqi Kurdistan for Iraqi migrants.

Such a move would be against Britain's existing obligations as Article 3 of the Geneva Convention states the freedom of the asylum from being subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment. This would not be guaranteed if such migrants were deported from the UK.

It could be argued that the arrival of large numbers of migrants in so-called 'protection areas' may have a destabilising effect, causing in turn a greater number of migrants seeking asylum in the UK. However, if the migrants were unable to return to their country of origin due to the political situation there, they would be shared between European nations by a population-based quota system. If this fails, the Government may consider direct action in the countries producing the highest number of applicants. This may be through aid packages, sanctions or military action. Such a move may finally solve the social and political problems which forces many thousands of migrants to seek a new life in Britain.