

# Home Secretary Priti Patel speech on immigration

For too long – for several decades in fact – immigration was a democratic outlier.

And when politicians and commentators discussed immigration, we inevitably heard a discussion based on economics and culture.

A crucial principle which was overlooked, was the principle of democracy.

And it was seen as entirely proper for the British people to express their wishes at the ballot box on matters such as taxation, healthcare, education, pensions, international relations, the environment, and law and order.

And yet concerns about immigration – its impact upon communities or control over immigration numbers or policy, would in some quarters be met with derision and scorn by parts of the political class.

Far too many politicians were indifferent to public opinion about this issue.

And too many were happy to assert that even raising the topic of immigration was racist.

It has taken a referendum and change in government for politicians to recognise that by choosing to ignore this issue, public frustration has also contributed and led to a reframing of this debate.

It is a fact that successive governments failed to control immigration – and there are a whole number of reasons as to why.

The problems and unhappiness this caused by among the public became impossible for any politician to continue to ignore.

The British people voted to take back control of our borders in the 2016 EU referendum.

They then drove the message home again at the 2019 general election.

And political parties of every hue have an obligation and responsibility to face reality.

In 2016, the British people withdrew their consent to be governed – in part – by the European Union.

They also withdraw their support for a broken immigration system.

We, therefore, have a democratic mandate and imperative to fix it.

In addition to seeking to fix the broken system, we also have a responsibility to dispel many of the false myths and assertions around this

issue.

Some still deny that immigration could ever be excessive, inane claiming that it is only ever a question of adequate investment.

This is to deny reality.

People across the country do not want their communities and way of life to change beyond recognition.

And yet acknowledging this is not to be “anti-immigration”.

Neither I, the Prime Minister or our great country are anti-immigration.

And to those who say that I am – they are wrong.

Instead they are seeking to sow dissent, rather than address the very concerns raised by the British public.

It is an undeniable fact that immigration has and continues to enrich – in every sense of the word – our nation immeasurably.

People from every part of the world are here in the UK and are making enormous contributions to our society, culture, economy, and individual lives.

We all cherish this. And I want this to be part of our national life and place in the world and for it to become stronger.

Immigration is part of my own story.

My family were forced from Uganda and they had the privilege to make a home in the UK.

They worked ferociously hard to keep a roof over our heads and secure a life for my family.

I owe them more than I can ever say.

I am as proud as a Briton and I am proud of my parents and of my British-Indian background.

And I join the millions of British Indians and children of migrant families who have established a life in one of the greatest countries in the world.

But there are many who struggle with this concept.

They do not speak for the silent majority who look to their government to establish appropriate measures and controls on who comes to and settles in the UK.

I believe in fairness and in law and order.

And I love our country just as much as someone whose great-great-grandparents

were born here – and I want our nation to succeed.

The government is taking back control of immigration.

Because there is such a thing as too much immigration and such a thing as too little immigration.

And yes, the optimal level will be different at different times, and no, calculating it may not be an exact science.

That doesn't mean we should conclude it is hopeless.

The answer is to fix the system – to make it logical and fair.

The first thing we have done is restore public confidence in the immigration system.

Over the last few decades, public confidence in our broken system was shot to pieces.

But we have already taken a number of important steps, delivering on the election manifesto promises of ending free movement and introducing a new, points-based system.

We have published a fair but firm plan to stop people risking their lives on dangerous journeys to the UK, break the business model of people smuggling gangs, and speed up the removal of those with no legal right to be here.

But we know there is more to do.

The simple reality is it is not possible for everyone who wants to come and live here to do so.

The concept of 'open borders' is a flawed one.

It would not be fair to the people of this country, whose taxes fund public services and who have made it clear that they want control.

It would not be fair to those fleeing torture and persecution who want to use safe and legal routes to get here.

The United Kingdom has a long, proud tradition of providing a home for people fleeing persecution and oppression...

Such as, Jewish people escaping Hitler in the 1930s and 1940s.

Hungarians in the 1950s as the Soviet menace rolled in.

Exiled Ugandans in the 1970s.

Bosnians from the war-ravaged former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

And victims of the Syrian conflict in recent years.

The entire government is committed to a generous and compassionate approach to those in need.

And many of us have intensely personal reasons for feeling that way.

There is another wrong-headed approach to immigration that we must challenge.

And this is the fantasy approach.

It is sheer fantasy to say that we can give a home to anyone who wants to come here.

Currently, there are an estimated 80 million displaced people around the world.

As I have said before, our asylum system is fundamentally broken.

It is so unwieldy that the costs of the system have sky-rocketed to more than £1 billion this year.

Our New Plan for Immigration is key to fixing it.

It will improve the routes available to those in need, so they don't have to put their lives in the hands of people smugglers.

Refugees who make their home here will be given support – more support to integrate into the community, learn English, and become self-sufficient.

I want them not just to survive. I want them to thrive.

British nationality law has not changed since 1983 and it is now full of anomalies.

Under my plan, the Home Secretary will be able to grant citizenship in compelling and exceptional circumstances where someone has suffered historical unfairness beyond their control.

We are also taking action so that the Windrush generation are not prevented from qualifying for British citizenship because, through no fault of their own, they were unable to return to the UK and meet residence requirements.

Immigration practices and processes of successive governments badly let down the Windrush generation. I am utterly determined that this should not happen again.

And we will fix the injustice which prevents a child from acquiring their father's citizenship if their mother was married to someone else at the time of their birth.

My hands will no longer be tied, by an out of date broken system.

Our plan will reduce the incentives for people to come here illegally, thereby removing the opportunity for criminal gangs to profit.

Allowing these repugnant gangs to continue to line their pockets is morally wrong and against our national interest.

The profits they make fuel other terrible crimes including modern slavery and extreme violence.

They use the same routes and methods to smuggle guns and drugs on to our streets.

And we are coming after these gangs.

Those responsible for these heinous crimes will face the full force of the law, with new maximum life sentences for people smugglers.

Since the start of 2020 we have secured more than 65 small boat related prosecutions totalling over 53 years in custodial sentences.

Despite those who want to maintain the status quo – we will continue to enhance our operational efforts against them, with greater powers for Border Force to stop small boats.

Small boat detections reached record levels last summer.

As this summer approaches and the weather improves, more people will be encouraged to make these dangerous crossings.

Just last week we have seen thousands of migrants entering the Spanish territory of Ceuta. Every day people are putting their lives at risk getting in small boats to cross the Mediterranean.

There is a desperate need to reform the global approach to ensure protection for those genuinely fleeing persecution – so they can find sanctuary in the first safe country – rather than place their lives in the hands of people smugglers.

The UK will provide leadership and do everything we can to prevent more lives being lost.

The next strand of our plan is about speeding up the removal of those with no legal right to be in the UK.

For too long, we have been frustrated by those who know how to play the system.

More than 10,000 foreign national offenders remain in the UK.

Among that number are individuals who have committed serious crimes, including murder and rape.

Since the start of the year, we have removed more than 800 foreign national offenders.

But there is much more to do. And we are taking further action.

I have a message to those who seek to disrupt the efforts of our enforcement officers.

They should think about whether their actions may be preventing murderers, rapists and high harm offenders from being removed from our communities – and they should think long and hard about the victims of these crimes.

We will not allow such disruption to prevail.

Dismissing public concern about this state of affairs is monstrous.

Refusing to deal with it would be a gross dereliction of duty.

Enough is enough.

We are listening to the British people and we will deliver for them.

And as set out in the Queen's Speech, we will bring forward legislation to put the new plan for immigration into effect.

The British people want an immigration system that is fair.

And finally, politicians have caught up with them.

As we shape our reformed immigration policy, it is fair, rational, and right that we think about the skills our country needs to flourish.

The people have spoken: they wanted us to end free movement – and we have.

At the start of this year, we delivered one of the biggest shifts in our approach for decades, implementing a new points-based Immigration system.

As a member of the European Union, the accidentally said EU could not control who came to this country to live and work.

Now we can prioritise skill and talent over where someone comes from.

We know that high-skilled migration helps foster innovation – that's important for the UK's economic growth.

The unprecedented and devastating pandemic has made this need all the greater – and of course the government has acted.

We have removed the cap on skilled workers and granted free visa extensions for thousands of frontline health workers and their dependents.

As society opens up and we look forward to brighter days, our immigration system will play an important role.

Attracting the most qualified people from overseas will enable us to build back better and stronger.

And yes, we want employers to train and invest in our domestic workforce.

But we know that they always need access to global talent.

This is why the system is designed to keep the UK at the forefront of innovation.

We are introducing bespoke routes to enable more students, scientists, academics, investors, and entrepreneurs to come here.

Our global talent route for leaders in science, engineering, digital technology, medicine, humanities, arts, and culture is already thriving.

And recent reforms mean that prestigious prize-winners can fast-track the endorsement process and make a single visa application.

We provided and promised a simpler sponsorship process for skilled workers – and we have delivered.

Our immigration system must let us respond quickly and effectively to world events.

It worked very well in our response to the draconian national security laws imposed on Hong Kong by the Chinese Government.

In recognition of the UK's unique obligations towards those with British Nationality Overseas status, we created the BN(0) visa.

This opened for applications at the end of January. And within weeks, we launched a digital route for BN(0)s to submit their biometrics and validate their identity using a digital app.

Global Britain will always stand up for what is right and uphold our commitments – and this new route underlines that.

This is how a flexible and modern immigration system should work.

Far from turning away from the world, we are forging ever closer links with international partners.

And Global Britain isn't just a slogan – it's a philosophy that underpins everything we do.

Earlier this month, I signed a ground-breaking agreement with India.

It tackles illegal migration, both in the UK and in India, accelerating the process of those who have no legal right to stay.

But it also gives opportunities for thousands of British and Indian citizens to live and work legally in each other's countries.

This agreement shows the way forward as we strive for a new gold-standard for immigration – one which is both fair and firm.

The EU Settlement Scheme is another success story for this government.

We all remember the dire warnings about our ability to deliver.

Our opponents even said that we had no intention of doing so.

But we have delivered.

As of the end of April, the Scheme had received more than 5.4 million applications and concluded more than 5.1 million.

There have been more than 4.9 grants of status.

And with just over a month left until the deadline to apply, our message to EU citizens and their families remains the same: we value your contribution to our country immensely and we want you to stay.

We have made substantial progress.

But we are relentless in pursuit of improvements to our society and security.

So today I have published a statement outlining our strategy for legal migration and border control.

It is underpinned by a clear ambition:

To put in place the world's most effective border system.

One that enables and supports growth and prosperity for the United Kingdom.

One that is simple to understand and operate.

The system will prioritise public protection by making our borders more secure.

Those who play by the rules and seek to come to our country legally will encounter a system that is straightforward and fair.

British people will have confidence that the strongest controls are in place.

There will be a seamless experience for people coming to the UK for legitimate purposes.

As Home Secretary, my number one priority is the safety of the British public.

Security is at the very heart of our New Plan for Immigration

This year, we will end the use of insecure ID cards for people to enter our country and we will apply tougher UK criminality rules.

We are working on further reforms, including Electronic Travel Authorisations, as part of a simpler and more secure, universal permissions to travel requirement.

Our new plan will make it easier to identify potential threats before they



reach the border, through targeted and effective interventions from co-ordinated multi-agency operations.

Our new fully digital border will provide the ability to count people in and Count people out of the country.

We will have a far clearer picture of who is here and whether they should be – and will act when they are not.

To the question – what's next for immigration – the answer is wholesale reform of the system.

Anything short of that would not be fair, would not keep our country safe, and would not meet the demands of the British people I serve.

They want a new system that works for the law-abiding majority and against those who abuse our hospitality and generosity.

One that welcomes those most in need of sanctuary and one that slams the door on dangerous criminals.

One that attracts top talent from around the world.

Our immigration system is broken – and we will fix it.

We will ensure it reflects the values and the wishes of the majority of Britons.

I know they are welcoming and open-minded.

I know they want an approach to immigration that is fair but firm.

And – at long last – they finally have one.