

# Priti Patel signs historic removals agreement with Albania

Home Secretary Priti Patel has this week signed a new agreement to remove Albanian nationals who have no right to be in the UK, as part of a 2-day visit to Tirana.

The signing comes days after the Home Secretary's plans to overhaul the immigration system were laid before parliament in the [Nationality and Borders Bill](#), which will make the [New Plan for Immigration](#) law.

The new agreement, signed alongside Albanian Minister of Interior Bledar Cuci, will strengthen the existing arrangements the UK has to remove Albanian nationals who have no right to be in the UK. This includes failed asylum seekers, foreign national offenders (FNOs), and individuals who have overstayed their visas.

Albanian nationals make up the largest number of foreign national offenders in UK prisons totalling 16% of the FNO population.

The Home Secretary has accelerated the removal of foreign criminals following the easing of coronavirus travel restrictions, and since April the government has removed 254 Albanian criminals from the UK as well as 85 other Albanian nationals with no right to be here.

Speaking from Tirana, Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I am determined to fix our immigration system, clamp down on illegal entry, and remove those with no right to be in UK as swiftly as possible.

Our New Plan for Immigration, coupled with this new agreement, will speed up the removal of Albanian nationals who have committed crimes in the UK and overstayed their welcome.

I make no apology for removing dangerous foreign criminals to protect the British people and, so far this year, more than 1,000 foreign criminals have been deported, with more being removed every single week.

The new agreement on removals to Albania will support the legislative changes the Home Secretary is making as part of the landmark [Nationality and Borders Bill](#).

The Bill will expand the Early Removal Scheme making it easier to remove as many foreign criminals from the UK as early as possible and maintain the British public's confidence in the justice system.

Whilst in Albania, the Home Secretary also met Prime Minister Edi Rama where she welcomed the continued cooperation between the UK and Albania in tackling serious organised crime in the region. They also reaffirmed their shared commitment to cracking down on Western Balkan based organised crime groups involved in drugs trafficking, illicit finance, and organised immigration crime to the UK.

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## [British Embassy Paris: second call for Franco-British projects](#)

### **Context**

The relationship between the UK and France stretches back hundreds of years. Our partnership today spans the full spectrum of issues, from trade and defence to science and culture, at both the national and sub-national level. But we also share common challenges, which we must work on together to address. This includes the fight against climate change.

Following the first UK-France call for local and regional projects in 2019, the British Embassy in Paris is launching a second competition to encourage cooperation between our two countries' communities. In the context of the UK presidency of COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, the competition will support collaborative projects between French and UK towns and cities that help promote environmentally-friendly outcomes.

### **Funding**

A total of £30,000 is available to support common projects led by local authorities and community groups. These funds may be allocated to two or more projects, depending on the nature of the bids received. Bids should be for no more than £15,000.

Partnerships are now invited to put in bids for this support.

### **Objectives**

The fight against climate change requires strong local action, and local authorities in both countries have deep expertise in this field. We are therefore looking to support projects led by French and UK partners that contribute to the protection of the environment and biodiversity and the fight against climate change.

The aim is also to support existing or new links between French and UK communities. These could be based on existing twinning relationships or working with a partner on common challenges or shared ambitions.

The allocated funds could be used, for example, to support business forums or meetings to exchange best practice, to help launch a longer-term project, or to support youth or local communities' training on environmental issues.

Funds must be spent by 28 February 2022

Bidders need to have secured the agreement of a partner in the other country to help implement the project. We regret that the British Embassy will not be able to support bids that have not yet secured a partner.

## **Selection criteria**

### **Who can apply?**

The British Embassy in Paris will review applications from:

- UK local authorities (including Combined Authorities and Mayoral Combined Authorities) and/ or community groups who have already secured the agreement of a French partner to support implementation of the project if the bid is successful.
- French local authorities and/or community groups who have already secured the agreement of a UK partner to support implementation of the project if the bid is successful.

Whilst the Embassy can offer some light touch support, project management and delivery will be the responsibility of the bidder or any local organisation they choose to work with.

## **Criteria**

Project(s) selected must satisfy the following criteria:

- Green projects contributing to local environmental policies or initiatives (tackling climate change, contributing to reducing pollution, recycling waste, protecting biodiversity, renewable energies, sustainable transport...)
- Be practical with clear objectives and deliverables
- Demonstrate how it will strengthen co-operation locally between the UK and France, both in the immediate and longer term
- Demonstrate the benefit to local communities on both sides of the Channel

Funds must be spent by 28 February 2022. The British Embassy will reimburse expenditure on presentation of receipts.

## **Timetable**

Applications must be submitted online by Monday 20 September 2021 to [UKFranceFund21@fco.gov.uk](mailto:UKFranceFund21@fco.gov.uk) The Jury will include members of the British Embassy in Paris and of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The winners will be notified on Monday 11 October 2021.

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# The IAGCI invites tenders to evaluate UK Home Office Country Information Products – Deadline extended

## **Background**

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) is part of the Office of the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Its purpose is to review the content of all Country of Origin Information (COI) produced by the UK Home Office. Country of Origin Information is used in procedures that assess claims of individuals for refugee status or other forms of international and humanitarian protection. It is also used in policy formulation.

The IAGCI reviews products to provide assurance to the Independent Chief Inspector that the content is as accurate, balanced, impartial and as up to date as possible. COI is contained in:

CPINs are generated on an ongoing basis for the top 20 asylum intake countries, and commonly address a specific type of common asylum claim(s) or provide general information for several claim types. They are compiled from material produced by a range of recognised external information sources (news sources, academic literature, independent research reports, fact finding reports from UK government or from other governments, etc). These documents also contain Home Office policy on the recommended position to be taken with respect to various types of claims, based on the available and accepted country information.

Information Request (IR) responses are made directly by case workers or others to the Home Office. These relate to information that is not covered in the CPINs. The IAGCI includes in its reviews a consideration of the COI included in a sample of (not more than ten) IR responses. Each IR response is typically a maximum of 2 pages in length.

## **Tender Details**

IAGCI commissions country experts or experienced researchers to evaluate and report upon the country of origin information contained in UK Home Office information products. At its next meeting, the IAGCI requires a country expert to review the use of country information used in the following CPINs (3 separate tenders, 1 for each country):

### **Tender 1: [Zimbabwe](#)**

[Country policy and information note: opposition to the government, Zimbabwe, February 2019](#) (79 pages)

[Country policy and information note: medical treatment and healthcare, Zimbabwe, April 2021](#) (39 pages)

## **Tender 2: [Ethiopia](#)**

[Country policy and information note: opposition to the government, Ethiopia, July 2020](#) (125 pages)

## **Tender 3: [Iran](#)**

[Country policy and information note: Women fearing 'honour' based violence, Iran, March 2021](#) (36 pages)

[Country policy and information note: Women – early and forced marriage, Iran, February 2021](#) (48 pages)

[Country policy and information note: Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political groups, January 2019](#) (45 pages)

For each tender, the expert is also asked to consider a selection of approximately 10 Information Request Responses, which will be provided by the Chair of IAGCI, and are an average of 2 pages long.

## **Description of work**

Country Policy and Information Notes aim to provide an accurate, balanced and up to date summary of the key available source documents regarding the human rights situation, with respect to the issues selected for coverage, in the country covered. The purpose and scope of the reports are clearly set out in an introductory section of the document. Reviewers should evaluate the reports in this context and seek to identify any areas where they can be improved. Specifically the review should entail:

- assessing the extent to which information from source documents has been appropriately and accurately reflected in the CPIN Reports
- identifying additional sources detailing the current human rights situation in the country with respect to main grounds for asylum claims (which are noted in each CPIN Report)
- noting and correcting any specific errors or omissions of fact
- making recommendations for general improvements regarding, for example, the structure of the report, its coverage or its overall approach
- ensuring no reference is made to an individual source which could expose them to risk

## **Reviewers should follow these specific guidelines:**

- the review should focus exclusively on the country of origin information contained within the document, and not pass judgement on the policy guidance provided
- the CPIN should be reviewed in the context of its purpose as set out above. It should consider the situation in the country up to the stated 'cut off' date for inclusion of information

- when suggesting amendments, rather than ‘tracking changes’ on the original CPIN, a list of suggested changes should be provided as part of a stand-alone review paper, and each report should be reviewed separately. A reporting template will be provided to reviewers (for reference please refer to most recent reviews on the IAGCI webpage for examples of the template)
- any suggestions for additional information (or corrections to information in the document) must be referenced to a source document for the Home Office to be able to use it (preferably Open Source). The Home Office may use foreign language source documents, but only if the information is considered essential and is not available in English language source

[Previous reviews of COI](#) products can be viewed on the ICIBI website.

The selected reviewers will be requested to attend an IAGCI meeting when their review will be considered. Under Covid 19 measures this may be done remotely rather than at the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in London. The meeting is due to take place in October 2021. Alternative arrangements may be made if attendance is not possible.

Representatives from the UK Home Office also attend the meeting to provide responses to comments and recommendations made in the review.

Reviews commissioned by IAGCI may be used as source documents for future CPIN reports or other Home Office information products.

## **How to Apply**

Researchers interested in conducting any of the reviews should submit:

- a one page letter demonstrating their expertise in human rights and/or asylum issues pertaining to the particular country or countries
- their c.v.

Payment for this work will be set at £2,000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to [IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk](mailto:IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk) by close of Friday, 20 August 2021.

We are only able to accept expressions of interest from individuals and not from institutions or consultancy groups.

Successful bids will be notified by 31 August 2021. Final reviews will be due by the close of Wednesday, 1 September 2021 and will be discussed at the IAGCI meeting in October 2021.

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# UK and India hold first financial markets dialogue

The Dialogue saw government-to-government discussions to strengthen cooperation on four key themes: Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City; banking and payments; insurance, and; capital markets. It was led by senior officials from Her Majesty's Treasury and the Indian Ministry of Finance, with participation from independent British and Indian regulatory agencies.

The creation of the Financial Markets Dialogue to strengthen financial services cooperation and address regulatory barriers for UK and Indian firms was agreed at the tenth Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) between the UK and India by Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last year.

Bilateral trade between the UK and India stood at over £18 billion in 2020, with India accounting for the UK's second largest source of investment in terms of number of projects. British and Indian investments support nearly half-a-million jobs in each other's economies. In May this year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced their ambition to double the value of UK-India trade over the next decade as well as a shared intent to begin work towards negotiations on a comprehensive free trade agreement (FTA).

## **Alex Ellis, British High Commissioner to India, said:**

The 2030 Roadmap agreed by Prime Ministers Modi and Johnson aims for a transformation of the UK-India relationship, especially as we look to build back better from Covid-19. The first Financial Markets Dialogue held today will strengthen links on financial services and create new opportunities for UK and Indian business. I'm pleased to see the strong progress we have already made ahead of the upcoming Economic and Financial Dialogue between our finance ministers.

## **Further information**

The Joint Statement on the Financial Markets Dialogue is available on Gov.uk, [here](#).

Independent regulatory agencies participating today included the Reserve Bank of India, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, International Financial Services Centre Authority, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, the Bank of England, and the Financial Conduct Authority.

The full list of agreements from the tenth UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue can be found [here](#).

The public consultation for a UK-India FTA was launched on 25 May by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss. Through the consultation, the UK is engaging closely with businesses and seeking views on doing business with India, which will inform the UK's approach and mandate. It is expected to conclude on 31 August 2021.

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## [Proposed changes to enclosed space regulations on ships](#)

News story

Enclosed spaces present one of the biggest hazards to those working on board ships and fishing vessels.



Entry into Sunbeam's refrigerated salt water tanks, which were enclosed spaces, was routine business for the crew

Without positive ventilation, the atmosphere within an enclosed space can quickly deteriorate and result in oxygen deficiency, become toxic, flammable or explosive. Enclosed space hazards are not limited to atmosphere contamination; other dangers can include exposure to extreme heat or



flooding.

MAIB has conducted many investigations into fatal accidents that occurred in enclosed spaces on both Merchant ships and commercial fishing vessels. In our most recent report of the investigation of the death of a crew member on board the UK registered fishing vessel Sunbeam ([MAIB Report 19/2020](#)), we made a recommendation, that was accepted by the MCA, to apply the Merchant Shipping (Entry into Dangerous Spaces) Regulations 1988 to all commercial fishing vessels.

During DfT's Maritime Safety Week, all members of the fishing industry are urged to consider the MCA's public consultation for the proposed merchant shipping and fishing vessels (entry into enclosed spaces) regulations 2021, which would replace the merchant shipping (entry into dangerous spaces) regulations 1988.

The MCA would like your views by Monday 19 July 2021 on:

- the implementation of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) amendments into UK legislation
- extending the regulations to vessels not currently regulated by SOLAS, and
- extending the regulations to fishing vessels

[Consultation on entry into enclosed space regulations on ships](#)

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