

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Great Britain & Northern Ireland (Europe) > Migrants - refugees, racism (UK) > **Children Rights: The UK government has disgraced Britain in front of the (...)**

Children Rights: The UK government has disgraced Britain in front of the entire world by announcing its own 'Muslim ban'

Tuesday 14 February 2017, by [HARVEY Carlyn](#) (Date first published: 13 February 2017).

The UK government has disgraced Britain in front of the entire world by announcing its own 'Muslim ban' UK.

Contents

- [An unthinkable decision](#)
- [Tory ethos writ large](#)

On 8 February, the Conservative government caused uproar by quietly scrapping a promise to help thousands of vulnerable refugee children. It decided that rather than provide refuge for thousands of children, it would only accept 350.

Yet while most were still reeling from that revelation, the government disclosed another even more sickening decision. According to *The Independent*, the Home Office confirmed it has placed a temporary halt on accepting refugee children with disabilities [1]. The move comes just weeks after US President Donald Trump caused an uproar for banning people, including refugees, from seven Muslim-majority countries temporarily entering the country.

The US and UK decisions differ in scale and focus. But both are supposedly temporary measures. Yet the "unthinkable" temporary suspension of disabled refugee children to the UK reportedly has no confirmed end date yet.

And it shows a remarkable level of indifference from the Tory government to the vulnerable and the threats they face.

Really need help? Sorry, not you

The UK set up its Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme in 2016 [2]. It committed, in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to take in "at risk" refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.

Separately, an amendment to the Immigration Bill, known as the Dubs Amendment [3], bound the government to taking vulnerable children who had already made the journey to Europe. It is this scheme that will now be capped at 350 refugees.

But the UNHCR also had a limit placed on the applications it processes. The Home Office has requested it "temporarily limit" those with complex needs, including mobility issues and learning disabilities. Because, the government asserts, it doesn't have "suitable reception capacity" for them.

A Home Office spokesperson confirmed that there was a temporary suspension of new referrals in the “most complex cases”. But the spokesperson denied it amounts to a total block on those with disabilities. Furthermore they claimed the pause would allow the government to ensure support for such refugees is in place on arrival.

The government also runs the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. It has committed to resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 through this scheme [4]. The spokesperson said:

“We work closely with the UNHCR and local authorities on both schemes and always ensure the necessary care packages are in place as we plan the arrival of vulnerable children and their families.” [5]

An unthinkable decision

Yet the government’s decision to put a brake on the entry of child refugees with disabilities has faced criticism. Director of Human Rights Watch’s disability rights division, Shantha Barriga, said [6]:

“People with disabilities endure unimaginable hardship during conflict, and many faced huge hurdles in escaping the violence. That the UK now says it’s not prepared to accept refugees with disabilities is unthinkable.”

“It’s an indefensible decision and blatant discrimination. The UK is not simply lacking ‘suitable accommodation’ in this case, but seems to be lacking political will.”

Meanwhile, head of advocacy at the Refugee Council Dr Lisa Doyle insisted:

"The refugees who benefit from the UK’s resettlement programmes are by definition the most vulnerable, and refugees with disabilities will often have specific needs.

While the Refugee Council knows that communities up and down the country are keen to help welcome refugees it appears there is an urgent need for accessible accommodation."

Tory ethos writ large

Although the government’s decision is disgraceful, it’s not surprising. In November 2016, the United Nations published a report that concluded the UK government had committed “grave” and “systematic” violations of the rights of its citizens with disabilities [7]. And those violations were largely a result of the austerity policies and welfare reforms pushed through since 2010.

So the government’s already evident disregard for those with disabilities has now spread to its refugee programmes. Rather than using its seven years in office, the first five in coalition, to fund and strengthen support for people with disabilities, it has de-funded and diminished it. All in the name of austerity.

And the horrific impact of those choices are now becoming clear. Not only at home, but in our tragic dealings with refugees abroad too.

Carlyn Harvey

Get Involved!

- Write to your MP to share your views on this decision.

<https://www.writetothem.com>

- Join the Refugees Welcome campaign.

<https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk>

- Support Disabled People Against Cuts.

<http://dpac.uk.net/category/disability-rights/>

P.S.

* The Canary. FEBRUARY 13TH, 2017:

<http://www.thecanary.co/2017/02/13/uk-government-disgraced-britain-front-entire-world-announcing-muslim-ban/>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/disabled-child-refugees-uk-suspend-entry-home-office-resettlement-unhcr-united-nations-lord-dubs-a7571451.html>

[2] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-3000-child-refugees-extra-cris-home-office-announces-a6994171.html>

[3] <http://www.thecanary.co/2017/02/09/mps-distracted-article-50-tories-sneakily-u-turn-make-trump-proud/>

[4] <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/syrian-families-arrive-east-kilbirde-9773934>

[5] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/disabled-child-refugees-uk-suspend-entry-home-office-resettlement-unhcr-united-nations-lord-dubs-a7571451.html>

[6] Idem.

[7] <http://www.thecanary.co/2016/11/08/uk-government-just-slammed-violating-human-rights-theresa-may-doesnt-care/>