

# ASYLUM IS A FRONT LINE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE:



## A MESSAGING GUIDE

This messaging guide is a companion to Refugee Action's briefing, *Asylum in the UK: a front line for racial justice*.

Alongside the evidence in the briefing, this messaging approach intends to establish that the fight for racial justice and the fight for refugee rights are one and the same.

These two movements will be stronger together than in artificial separation.

We'll lay out the principles, messages and ideas that empower us to speak with one, refugee-inclusive voice.



### MESSAGE 1: THE ASYLUM SYSTEM ISN'T 'BROKEN'. THE RACISM IS INTENTIONAL.

**Supporting messages:** People often describe the racist outcomes of the asylum system as evidence that it is 'broken' or being dismantled by the government.

It's not being demolished; it is constantly being rebuilt this way. The asylum system is designed to discriminate.

**Principle:** Communicate the deliberate choice of governments to punish Black and Brown refugees and people seeking safety.

Reframe the problems in the system as political choices made by anti-refugee politicians.

Help the public see through the government's attempts to shift blame onto refugees, exposing the agenda to scapegoat them as racist.

### MESSAGE 2: THERE'S NO RACIAL JUSTICE WITHOUT JUSTICE FOR RACIALISED PEOPLE SEEKING SAFETY.

**Supporting messages:** We will never achieve racial justice while people seeking safety still face enforced poverty, detention and now forced deportation to Rwanda.

**Principle:** People seeking safety's fight to secure rights and dignity is inseparable from the fight of other racialised minority groups in the UK, whatever their status or nationality.

Any separation of refugees from movements for racial justice would be based on artificial categorisations that reflect racial inequality.

## MESSAGE 3: RACISM IN THE ASYLUM SYSTEM IS A CONTINUATION OF BRITAIN'S IMPERIAL PAST.

**Supporting messages:** The British Empire's 400 years of conquest, colonisation and violent resource extraction has shaped much of the world, including the UK's current asylum system.

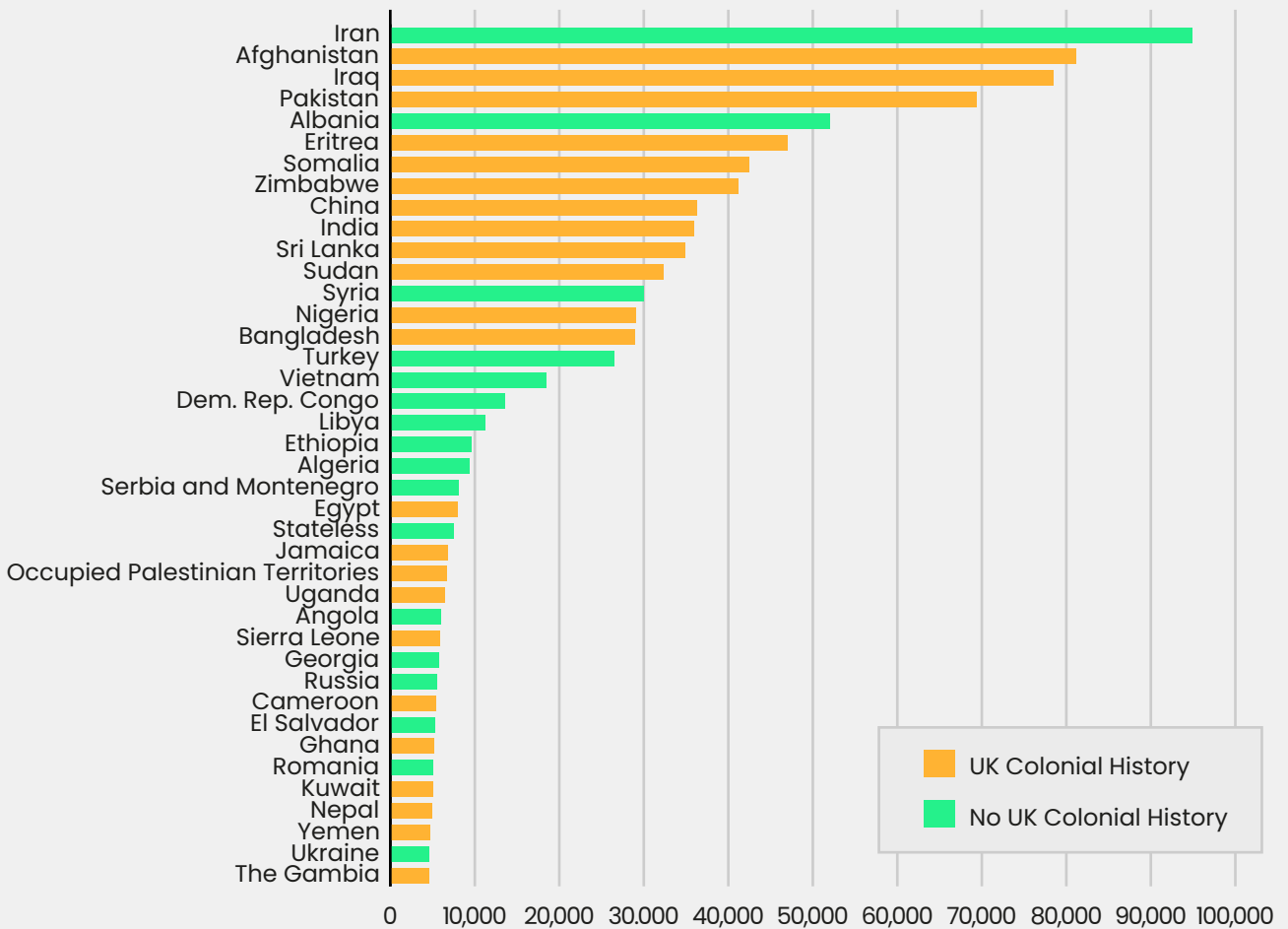
Countries don't randomly emit refugees, the volatility that refugees are escaping is often a consequence of Britain's actions in the past. Even the recent past, considering the people from Iraq and Afghanistan seeking safety in the UK.

**Principle:** It cannot be ignored that 70% of the roughly one million asylum applications in the UK since 2001 came from citizens of countries that the British Empire either ruled directly or destabilised.

When telling the backstory of the racist asylum system, we must include the fact that the people being abused by Britain in the present are the descendants of people abused by Britain in the past.

## MESSAGE 4: ALMOST 70% OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS SINCE 2001 WERE MADE BY PEOPLE FROM COUNTRIES THAT EXPERIENCED COLONIAL RULE, VIOLENCE OR RESOURCE EXTRACTION AT THE HANDS OF BRITAIN.

Total UK Asylum Applications (2001-23) - separated by UK Colonial History



Source: Home Office (2024). Immigration System Statistics for year ending December 2023, Asylum and Resettlement - Applications, Initial decisions, and Resettlement. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65d884a387005a001a80f8bf/asylum-applications-datasets-dec-2023.xlsx>

**MESSAGE 5: RACISM IS AN ATTEMPT TO DEVALUE AND DEHUMANISE REFUGEES, IT'S APPLIED TO MAKE ABUSING THEM SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE.**

**Supporting messages:** Racism is about whose lives matter. Look at the conditions the government traps people seeking asylum in.

Detention treats people like their freedom doesn't matter. Forced poverty treats people like their needs don't matter. Being banned from working treats people like their aspirations don't matter.

**Principle:** Defend against the dehumanisation of refugees. Always reiterate their rights to safety and dignity.

**MESSAGE 6: RACIST LANGUAGE FROM POLITICIANS AND DEHUMANISING DEPICTIONS OF REFUGEES BY THE MEDIA INSPIRE RACIST VIOLENCE FROM THE FAR RIGHT.**

**Supporting messages:** Government ministers have used racist language when referring to people seeking asylum in the UK. This sows division in communities and emboldens people with racist agendas, who feel empowered when they hear elected leaders using dehumanising language and tropes.

**Principle:** Call out racism against refugees in wherever it appears, including politics and the media. Explain in simple language what constitutes racism and how it puts people in danger. For further information see our report.

**MESSAGE 7: REFUGEES HAVE A RESILIENCE MOST OF US CAN NEVER IMAGINE.**

**Supporting messages:** In the face of racism, hope for a better future gives refugees strength. Those of us who have never had to seek safety from danger can take a lead from their courage and fight back against prejudice.

**Principle:** Communicating the enormity of the impact racism has on people's lives can instill a feeling of despair. But despair doesn't get us anywhere. Always leave room for hope and talk about the ways refugees and people seeking asylum are resisting racism every day.



**THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS AND THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE ARE THE SAME FIGHT. THERE'S PLENTY OF WORK TO DO, LET'S DO IT TOGETHER. READ THE FULL REPORT AND MORE AT [WWW.REFUGEE-ACTION.ORG.UK/RACISM](http://WWW.REFUGEE-ACTION.ORG.UK/RACISM)**

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