



Sibanda Noble

Amnesty for all.

When the new home secretary John Reid took over the Home office in 2006, he said the whole Home Office department was not fit for purpose. The Home Office has also said that it does not really know the number of illegal immigrants who are in the UK.

One backlog we can identify is the so-called legacy cases (now known as case resolutions) - approx 450,000 cases where the Home Office have identified as not being concluded. The costs to process this number is staggering and there will be a further cost of 10,000 to forcibly remove anyone who is not granted asylum.

But yet, the solution of the moment for the Home Office is still to spend more money and resources on this marvellous expedition even if it's gobbling tax payers' money with no immediate end to it.

If a system is discovered not to be fit for purpose, then a positive solution can be devised and thereafter to start on a new clean slate. In the immigration debate, this will effectively mean bringing in the swear word "Amnesty for all". Yes, I have said it! An amnesty for all failed asylum seekers and illegal immigrants that offers between two to five year temporary and renewable work permits would be fair and reasonable.

So how would it work for those on legacy cases? The Home Office would announce that it was giving an amnesty of temporary work permits to all those with irregular status. Those going through the asylum system would be given a choice to swap status and to abandon the asylum process completely (with a tight agreement not to return to asylum status again once they have moved to the amnesty status of temporary work permit.)

With an amnesty the government can cut down on the current expenditure on judicial reviews, fresh claims and test court cases on the examples of Zimbabwe, Sudan, Iraq, etc, which have been going on and on, appeal after appeals. These resources can be used to secure the borders for new entrants and protect the local citizens. The UK would have much to gain from the amnesty too as immigrants from different countries have a vast amount of needed skills including former teachers, doctors, professors, scientists in gene therapy and stem cell research as well as pilots.

Without some form of amnesty, immigrants will continue to be exploited by rogue companies and the government will continue to lose money in trying to hunt and deport illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers.

In addition, the amnesty should also allow recipients to travel out of and into the UK within the 2-5 years (depending on the length of amnesty). The current over-stayers, illegal immigrants, failed asylum seekers who are at the moment still outside the system may choose to attempt a new life back in their native country if they had an assurance they could return. That way, they could try to resettle, open business ventures, secure jobs but know they could return if it didn't work out.

So has this worked anywhere else? When the British administration was about to hand over the territory of Hong Kong back to People's Republic of China in 1997, Hong Kong citizens were given the opportunity to be UK citizens through the British National (overseas) & Hong Kong laws.

Initially there had been wrangles among different players whether to grant this blanket status as it would bring a flood of Hong Kong residents into the UK. There was 3.5 million who already had the status of BDTC (British Dependant Territory Citizenship) and another 2 million who were eligible to apply for the same status, which in theory meant that a possible 5.5 million could (most probably) pack and head for England. However to the surprise of critics, many of the eligible 2 million never applied and the 3.5 million that had British status never packed their bags for England.

When a survey was conducted on why they did not go to the UK, the conclusion for many was "why rush to go to the UK when you could always go at anytime. Having the security and a mechanism of escape was the crucial element for the

Hong Kong citizens, as it is for anyone worried about persecution.

Sibanda Noble is a Zimbabwean refugee and campaigner.

Comments

1) If the government gives amnesty to asylum seekers ,it will be a great idea because we are really tired of going to the post office every week to collect money from them whiles we are capable to provide for ourselves. they should allow us to show our capability. In fact that money can go to the pensioners and other government needs.

2) I would like to support Sibanda Noble about his article on Amnesty for all. A lot of immigrants have suffered a lot in trying to get to England and other places for sanctuary from various persecutions, most left their perfectly lovely and rewarding careers, left their families behind and have not seen them for years. After all the United Kingdom is well known out there to speak out or against human rights abuses of any kind by anyone even governments, it is known as a champion of democracy. So when persecuted people decide to avoid imminent death all they can remember to go to at once is where there is democracy or human rights protection.UK government should stand up like the advocate it is and honour its signatory to the 1951 Geneva Refugee convention by protecting immigrants and asylum seekers.

3) Amnesty for all is a non starter, the immigrants who come here to England never want to mix with others or integrate into the community and they expect to be given amnesty for what. By the looks of things it seems that these people were useless in their home country, we don't see them in the community, and we don't see them in our bars and nightlife, nor in our festivals nor in our churches, where are they? Are they working?, what are they doing if they are working is that what they are here for? The polish and others are doing their own thing here, it seems everyone want to come and do their own thing in our own country. When you are in Rome do like the Romans do.

4) although the solution you've just posted makes sense it is not itself practical, how can someone fleeing their country try to go back and make a life, wasn't the reason for them coming here to have a better life? if the government was to allow every asylum seeker/refugee to work as they came in they wouldn't be resorting to such stupendous measures to calm down the situation.it becomes difficult because the more you deny someone something the more appealing it becomes, if we all had a choice the government wouldn't be having this problem at all.

5) for better britian "Amnesty for all"
