

Statement for Refugee Week 2026

FORWARD stands courageously for Justice, Dignity and Inclusion, will you?

Friday 19th June 2026

In recent years, the environment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the UK has become increasingly hostile. Communities are facing intensified scrutiny, harmful political and media rhetoric, and policies that too often dehumanise, exclude and divide. On the occasion of Refugee Week 2026, under the theme of **Courage**, FORWARD stands in solidarity with refugees and migrants across the UK and reaffirms a simple but urgent truth: no one seeking safety, dignity or opportunity should be met with hostility.

Human mobility is not a crisis to be managed; it is a defining feature of human history. People move to escape persecution, conflict and violence. They move to reunite with loved ones, provide for their families, rebuild their lives, and pursue hope and opportunity. Migration has shaped societies, cultures and economies for generations, enriching communities and contributing to collective progress. It is evident everywhere that UK has benefitted hugely from migration.

At the same time, we must confront an uncomfortable reality: migration does not occur in a vacuum. Historical and ongoing global inequalities, including the legacies of colonialism, economic exploitation, conflict, climate injustice and geopolitical power imbalances, continue to shape who is able to thrive, who is displaced, and who is forced to move. Any meaningful conversation about migration must acknowledge these structural realities and the responsibilities they create.

Despite navigating systems that are often complex, under-resourced and unjust, refugees and migrants demonstrate extraordinary courage every day: the courage to survive, rebuild, contribute and advocate for themselves and their communities. We also recognise the courage of grassroots organisations, community leaders, activists and allies who challenge injustice, provide critical support, and continue to advocate for change despite limited resources and increasing pressures.

As an organisation rooted in community leadership, partnership and social justice, FORWARD believes in a society that is not merely tolerant of diversity, but actively welcoming and inclusive. We believe that dignity, equality and human rights must be at the heart of public policy and public discourse.

This Refugee Week, we call on institutions, policymakers, the media and the wider public to demonstrate courage: the courage to reject fear-driven and divisive narratives; the courage to listen to lived experiences; and the courage to build systems that uphold rights, strengthen communities and ensure everyone can participate fully in society.

FORWARD calls for:

- **An end to hostile environment policies and narratives** – Government policies, political rhetoric and media narratives that stigmatise, criminalise or scapegoat refugees and

migrants must be replaced with approaches grounded in human rights, dignity, protection and justice.

- **Recognition of the structural drivers of migration** – Public policy and public discourse must acknowledge the realities that drive displacement and migration, including conflict, poverty, inequality, climate change and historical responsibilities linked to colonialism and global power structures.
- **Fair, humane and accessible asylum and immigration systems** – The UK must ensure timely, transparent and rights-based asylum and immigration processes that prioritise safety, wellbeing and family unity, while ending practices that cause unnecessary hardship and uncertainty.
- **Sustained investment in community-led organisations** – Long-term, flexible funding must be made available to grassroots and community-led organisations that provide essential support, advocacy and services to refugees and migrants.
- **A national commitment to inclusion and belonging** – Government, institutions and civil society must actively promote social cohesion, challenge misinformation and racism, and celebrate the contributions that refugees and migrants make to communities across the UK.

Courage is also found in solidarity: in those who speak truth to power, challenge injustice, and choose compassion over fear. At a time when division is too often normalised, we must collectively choose a different path—one rooted in humanity, dignity and shared responsibility.

FORWARD remains committed to working alongside communities, partners and allies to build a more just, inclusive and equitable society, where everyone, regardless of where they come from or why they arrived, can live with safety, dignity and hope.

We invite individuals, organisations and decision-makers to stand with us in advancing a vision of an equal UK and a more just world for all.

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