



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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15 February 2026

Dear Prime Minister and Home Secretary

'Fairer pathway to settlement' – our response to the cruelty of government proposals

We are the UK Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF UK). WILPF's mission is to build a global peace by addressing the root causes of violence, conflict and inequality. We wrote to you in November 2025 to express our horror at the latest proposals for change to the asylum system. We urged the government to rethink its whole approach to asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with the UK's historical commitment to international law, justice and compassion. Our November statement is attached – *WILPF UK condemns government proposals for asylum seekers and refugees, and urges a rethink to its draconian approach*.*

Today we write to add our voice to the multitude of voices (including voluntary organisations, NGOs and other organisations) already responding to the cruelty of some of the proposals in your statement and accompanying consultation on earned settlement, which is apparently supposed to represent a 'fairer pathway to settlement'. In particular we make the following points:

- People choose to settle in the UK for many different reasons and can have **complicated migration routes before arrival**, often outside their control. For this reason we consider it fundamentally wrong to apply different decision-making depending on the route of arrival.
- We support the open letter of 14 November to the government signed by over 300 voluntary organisations, that urges the government to **scrap any proposals to tie volunteering to immigration status** and to consult with charities before floating any plans relating to volunteering. Making volunteering a condition of belonging in this country is both immoral and impractical.
- The consultation specifically mentions and targets a large group of so-called low skilled, low waged migrants who arrived on a Health and Care visa in 2022-2024. They will become eligible to apply for settlement, if they wish to stay, from 2027. These people are already working in communities, doing essential work. Why not encourage them to stay? It is **immoral to retrospectively change the rules** after people have arrived in good faith. Facing a longer, more complicated pathway to settlement is especially harsh on women who could spend their twenties and thirties in uncertainty and insecurity making it difficult to build relationships and start a family. How can this lead to more integration?
- Who will replace migrant workers? Making it harder for migrants who are already here to gain settled status may lead more to choose to return home. Yet the vacancies will still need to be filled. Pressure from recruiters will mean more visas but these proposals will lead to the creation of a **migrant class of workers who have reduced employment rights** and no long-term stake in our society. We should be aiming to build a high-wage, high-productivity economy in which the workers needed will want to come here.
- The Resolution Foundation reports that there are 1 million people with full-time caring responsibilities, a third of whom, in the lower income families, were unable to work because of their duties. These people, mostly women, need more support, and **the opportunity to earn an income**.
- Youth unemployment is increasing but many have health issues that need time and money to support them into work. There are now more people over 70 paying income tax than under-30s according to HMRC data from the 2022-23 financial year. **We need more young workers**.

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- Our communities need to see more leadership that talks about hope, working together, how to survive multiple crises, welcoming displaced people and more. **We need to hear how the current problems within our society can be addressed. We do not need even more cruelty being built into the immigration system.**

The world is an increasingly unstable place due to geopolitical tensions but also the ever-worsening climate and nature crises. **We urge the government to establish a properly cross-government approach to pull all these issues together and create a long-term strategy for increasing the true resilience of our society.**

Yours in peace

Fiona McOwan, National Secretary, for WILPF UK Executive Committee

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**https://wilpf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Statement-on-refugee-rights_November-2025.pdf*