

Lawyers
defending
human rights



Save Refugee and Migrant Justice Campaign

Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) is a campaigning legal charity that provides free, high quality legal advice and representation some of the most vulnerable people in the UK. Our lawyers have helped more than 110,000 children and adults on every level of the immigration and asylum process. Our work is free, and it saves lives. But without your help, it might have to stop.

What's happening

Refugee and Migrant Justice is facing possible closure due to bureaucratic rules that lead to late payment by the Government for asylum and immigration legal work.

The problem is that the Legal Services Commission, which funds legal aid work, has changed its payment scheme. We used to get paid monthly to cover the work we do. But now, we get paid only after each case has closed, which depends on the timing of Home Office and tribunal decisions. Asylum cases can take months, or even years, but RMJ still faces the cost of doing the work. No charity can be expected to wait that long for payment and no private sector organisation will be able to replace RMJ's outstanding commitment to those with the greatest needs. As a charity, it is also not possible for us to get bank loans.

RMJ is not asking for extra money, just for the Legal Services Commission to pay us the money it owes us or, failing that, give Government backed interest free loans to make up the difference. The new Government is committed to a fundamental review of legal aid and this is the perfect opportunity to cut out inefficiency and pay providers like RMJ promptly and fairly.

What this means

If RMJ is forced to close, more than 10,000 asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants will be left without legal assistance. That includes almost 900 children as well as victims of trafficking, torture and armed conflict. Many cases will have to be put on hold, adding to the UK's already enormous asylum backlog. Lives will be put at risk and there are likely to be many more miscarriages of justice, which sadly are already common in the asylum system.

Who will be affected

Asylum seekers who have fled their homes and families in fear of persecution or death. Home Office officials often fail to identify asylum seekers in need of protection, including those with additional vulnerabilities, such as victims of torture, rape or trafficking. Thousands of asylum seekers are detained each year having committed no crime. They are given no indication of the length of detention and can be kept for months or years.

Children who have travelled to the UK with or without their families. Many children are treated as adults by the Home Office. Even those who are accepted as children can face an intimidating culture of disbelief when telling their story and are interviewed without legal representation or an independent adult present. We fight to help them secure protection

and a real chance of a future. The Government has announced that it will end the detention children, but many will continue to be detained while it is deciding what alternative arrangements it will put in place.

Victims of trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation. We work to make sure victims of trafficking are given the legal protection they deserve and campaign to stop victims of trafficking being prosecuted for 'crimes' committed under duress.

Case Study

David* was forced to become a child soldier after witnessing the brutal murder of his parents. With RMJ's help he gained refugee status and is rebuilding his life. He hopes to begin studying biology at university this year.

Without RMJ's specialist legal advice, David could have been deported back to Uganda. We continue to support David to make sure that he can move on from the trauma of his childhood to build a new life in the UK.

"The Home Office didn't want to listen to what happened to me in Uganda; they said I wasn't at risk in Uganda. My social worker referred me to RMJ, and they fought my case. I was awarded refugee status in 2007. I hope to attend university soon to study Molecular Biology. One day, I hope to complete a PhD.

"I am so grateful that RMJ fought my case. RMJ has helped so much... with everything. When social services threw me out, they helped, they fought for that. With student finance, with everything.

"The asylum system in the UK is very hard. I thought England was a democratic country. I thought you had human rights, but there are no human rights for asylum seekers. My friends have given up on life. People are driven insane by the asylum process. I am lucky I found the right people to help me."

How you can help

Download letter templates from www.rmj.org.uk

Write to:

The Secretary of State for Justice, Kenneth Clarke **at**

**Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 0AL**

- Copy your letter to **The Immigration Minister, Damian Green** by writing to Emily.Warren2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
- If you wish, you can also send a copy to your **local MP**: find out who they are at <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/>

Refugee and Migrant Justice, formerly the Refugee Legal Centre, is a registered charity (no. 1012804)