

UK set to use force in fingerprinting asylum seekers and refugees

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London, February 16 (RHC)-- The UK is set to forcibly fingerprint foreign migrants, according to sources in London. British Home secretary Priti Patel has proposed a new plan to use force to take fingerprints from refugees and asylum seekers at French ports.

Her controversial plan, which allows obtaining prints in Calais and Dunkirk (France) by the use of "reasonable force," has faced severe criticisms by charities and Border Force staff, who believe that this extreme move will lead to violence and self-harm.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, has made an impromptu visit to Calais as part of a wider effort to clamp down on migrant crossings. The aim of the Home office's new plan is to more effectively facilitate the deportation of asylum seekers in the event they manage to cross the English Channel.

Similar measures were undertaken nine years ago but were swiftly abandoned, as the refugees slashed their fingertips in an effort to prevent being deported by neutralizing the government's ability to identify them by their finger prints.

Under the Dublin Regulation, an asylum seeker has to lodge their application in the first European country they have submitted fingerprints. However, in spite of the probable harmful consequences, the House of Commons is voting for the policy to be reinstated in the next few weeks.

Lucy Moreton, an official in the Immigration Services Union (ISU), pointed to the fact that when Theresa May had introduced forced fingerprinting as Home Secretary in 2012, the situation was "horrible", and the public don't want to see such scenes of "cutting or even burning" of refugees' hands and fingers again.

Josie Naughton, co-founder of the international Help Refugees charity, concurred with Moreton by saying: "The Home Secretary's desire to forcibly take fingerprints is deeply problematic." "Not only would the move put her [Priti Patel's] government in a deeply murky position from a legal standpoint, but fingerprinting has led to serious violence affecting asylum seekers in the past," Naughton added.

More broadly, the proposed change to the law, which permits the use of force against refugees, also runs the risk of fuelling unrest at England's border with France. This is particularly worrying in the context of the intensifying cross-Channel illegal migration into Britain and the government's frantic, but hitherto failed, efforts to stem the tide.

Late last summer it was widely reported that the Home Office had requested the help of the Ministry of Defense to help contain the problem by deploying air and naval assets to track down and intercept the migrants at sea.

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