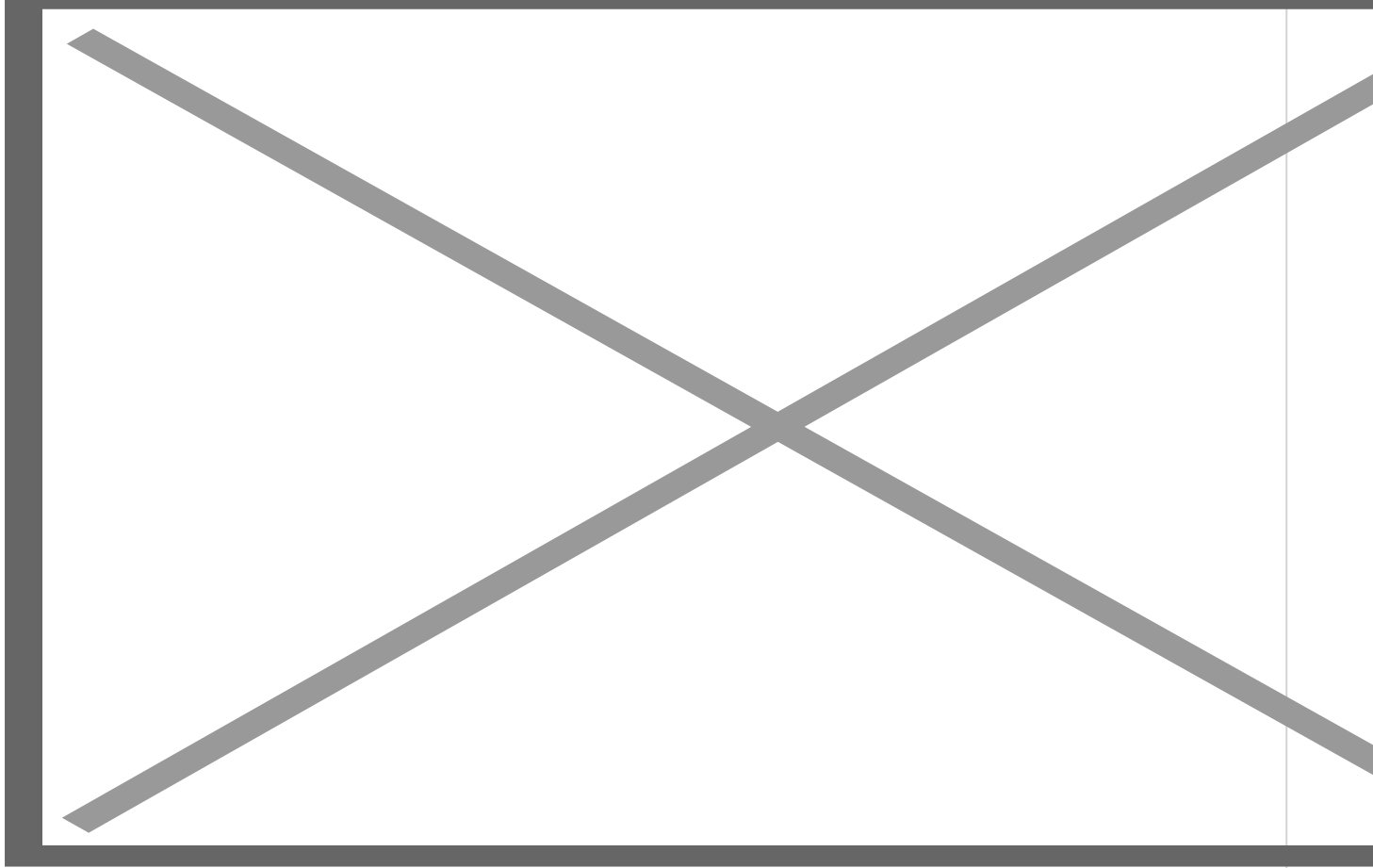


Children among thousands of refugees in prison-like facility in UK

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Migrants are processed at Manston refugee detention center in Kent, South East England. (File photo)

London, November 6 (RHC)-- Thousands of refugees, including children, are being held in prison-like conditions at a refugee detention center in England, and that has drawn concerns about the British government's treatment of asylum-seekers.

About 1,600 migrants who arrived on British shores after crossing the Channel in small boats are being held in a center located at the site of a former British air force base in a village in Kent, South East England. Up to 4,000 refugees were staying there at one point this week, with some reportedly detained unlawfully for a month or more.

The overcrowding at the center reached a breaking point this week after hundreds of people were moved there from another migrant processing center nearby that was hit with gasoline bombs.

According to independent government inspectors, families are sleeping on floors in dangerously overcrowded conditions that presented fire and health hazards. They warned of the risk of outbreaks after cases of scabies, diphtheria and other conditions were reported. The conditions at the center in the village of Manston has put a spotlight on wider problems in Britain's asylum system.

Critics say London's incompetence in managing the system goes beyond Manston. The opposition Labour Party said only 4% of asylum claims from small boat arrivals were processed last year, meaning more than 100,000 people are in limbo waiting for their applications for protection to be considered.

About 40,000 people from countries that include Afghanistan, Iraq and Albania have crossed one of the world's busiest shipping lanes in dinghies and boats from northern France so far this year. UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman, however, defended the government's policies, describing the increasing number of migrants arriving via the Channel as "an invasion on our southern coast." She drew widespread criticism for describing the surge as an "invasion."

Critics, including Labour, have blamed Braverman's hardline stance against unauthorized immigration for aggravating problems within the asylum system. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said the migrant crisis is a "serious and escalating problem." He acknowledged that "not enough" asylum claims are being processed, but maintained his Conservative government was getting a grip on the situation.

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