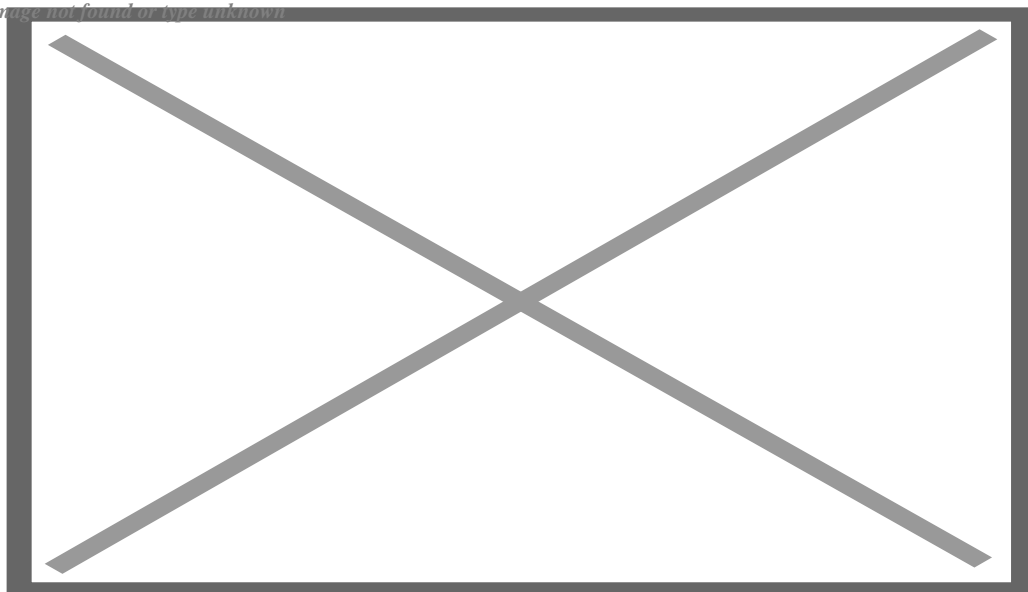


Report that UK could send migrants to the Balkans

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**London is reportedly considering paying countries to accept rejected asylum seekers
UK could send migrants to the Balkans / The Times © Getty Images / Dan Kitwood**

London, March 24 (RHC)-- Britain is exploring the option of sending migrants who have been refused asylum to “return hubs” in Western Balkan states, The Times reported on Friday, citing government sources. The proposal comes as London continues struggling with a years-long crisis of asylum seekers crossing the English Channel in small boats.

Despite a series of measures implemented by the UK in an effort to reduce and control immigration, the latest polls suggest that it remains the second most important issue for the country’s citizens after the economy. At the same time, 72% of Brits say that immigration is poorly handled by the government.

The sources told the newspaper that the government is currently assessing an arrangement whereby nations such as Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia would be paid for accepting each failed asylum seeker. Hubs in those states would then be used for deporting migrants from countries the UK does not have repatriation agreements with.

The proposed scheme reportedly stipulates removing rejected asylum seekers from countries deemed unsafe under UK law, such as Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia to the offshore hubs. Meanwhile, the failed

asylum seekers from states seen as safe, such as Vietnam, Pakistan and India, could be temporarily detained in such hubs while arrangements are made to deport them to their home country.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is seeking to cooperate with other European countries that are planning to create such hubs in third-party states, the sources told The Times, adding that the Netherlands is currently discussing the scheme with the Ugandan government.

In July 2024, the UK abandoned plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda under a controversial immigration policy after the Conservatives lost the elections to the Labour Party. Starmer declared the scheme “dead,” opposing his predecessor Rishi Sunak’s claim that it would “stop the boats.” The plan has been ruled illegal by the UK’s highest court, which has deemed Rwanda unsafe for deportees.

Last year, UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced plans to introduce a series of measures aimed at tackling immigration and strengthening border security. The measures, which included a surge in enforcement and return flights, as well as increasing detention capacity and implementing sanctions against employers who hire workers illegally, have been blasted as “a waste of taxpayer money.” Critics claimed that the policies lack detail and fail to recognize “the dignity and humanity of migrants.”

[SOURCE: RUSSIA TODAY / RT]

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