

**FREEDOM  
FROM  
TORTURE**  
EMPOWERING  
SURVIVORS,  
REBUILDING  
LIVES

**SURVIVORS  
SPEAK OUT** →

*Nothing about us, without us*

# A REFUGEE RIGHTS MANIFESTO

**Freedom from Torture and Survivors Speak OUT:  
a call to all political parties**



# WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE MAKING THESE CALLS:

**No one should experience torture. As survivors and the community that supports them, we know the lasting damage that it does. But we believe that those who have survived unimaginable horrors, and who have come to the UK for safety, deserve our compassion and support to recover. They need to heal, to feel safe and strong again, and be able to rebuild their lives.**

That is why Freedom from Torture exists. To offer a welcome and empowering environment, and hope for a better future, to people who have experienced the worst of humanity. Side by side with the members of Survivors Speak OUT – a national network of survivors of torture - we campaign for the rights of survivors, and to improve the asylum system so that they can live in peace and rebuild their lives.

In recent years, the UK has experienced unprecedented political attacks on the principle of refugee protection and on the system that is in place to process claims for asylum. Survivors of torture now face an increasing risk that they will not receive effective protection in the UK, and may be removed to countries where they face further persecution or even return to the hands of their torturers.

Despite this, we see hope for the future, and we share that hope with a growing movement of people across the UK. Freedom from Torture and our lived experience colleagues in the Survivors Speak OUT network share a vision of the UK as a place of welcome for torture survivors and refugees: a place of safety where people can rebuild their lives as members of their community in their new country. Through the Together with Refugees coalition we are mobilising caring people in communities all over the country to call for a fair, effective and humane approach to supporting refugees.

This manifesto – crafted in partnership with survivors of torture – articulates our shared priorities for a bold and progressive programme of reform that would herald a new era for refugee rights in the UK.

# 1

## **BUILD A POLITICAL CONSENSUS ON REFUGEE RIGHTS THAT CELEBRATES THE GROWING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE PROTECTION IN THE UK**



- Defend and promote a consensus on refugee protection built on compassion, fairness, competence, accountability and sustainability.
- Champion our shared humanity and values by celebrating our role as a provider of protection and a home for survivors of torture and people seeking sanctuary.
- Reject the scapegoating and demonisation of refugees that has marred political debate.

# 2

## **GUARANTEE A WARM WELCOME AND ACCESS TO PROTECTION IN THE UK FOR TORTURE SURVIVORS AND ALL THOSE WHO ARRIVE ON OUR SHORES SEEKING SANCTUARY, NO MATTER HOW THEY ARRIVE**



- Champion a welcome based on compassion, non-discrimination and an understanding of the building blocks of safety and rehabilitation.
- Rebuild a system for the intake of new arrivals that is flexible enough to respond to fluctuating numbers in a manner that is dignified and humane. It should also prioritise the identification of health and welfare needs, including vulnerabilities resulting from an experience of torture or trauma.
- Abandon any expulsion schemes, whether with Rwanda or elsewhere.

# 3

## REBUILD AN ASYLUM SYSTEM THAT IS COMPASSIONATE, FAIR, EFFICIENT AND HUMANE AND THAT TREATS ALL PEOPLE WITH DIGNITY



- Guarantee access to justice through the provision of legal aid funded legal advice throughout the asylum process, by ensuring access to expert evidence, including forensic documentation of torture, and by preserving legal remedies to correct flawed decision-making.
- Clear the backlog of asylum claims by expediting grants for manifestly well-founded claims and commit resource to fast and fair decision-making so that no new backlog develops.
- Treat refugees with dignity by ending immigration detention and contingency accommodation, by ensuring access to healthcare, including specialist trauma-informed rehabilitation services, and by providing safe and suitable community-based housing for all.
- Prioritise the best interest of the child and protect and promote their rights and welfare, including when assessing age, providing support and accommodation, and access to education.

# 4

## PROMOTE THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AS FUTURE CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY, FROM THE MOMENT THEY ARRIVE



- Grant refugees long-term status so that survivors can recover and rebuild their lives in safety: replace five-year refugee leave with indefinite leave to remain, with a quick and affordable route to citizenship and generous family reunion rights.
- Ensure access to education including for skills-development, such as English language training.
- Give asylum seekers the right to work if they have been waiting at least six months for their decision.

5

# RECOGNISE THE VALUE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY



**Recognise lived experience leadership and agency in addressing the challenges associated with forced displacement and draw on their expertise to find humane and compassionate solutions, by ensuring their voices are at the heart of UK national and international policy on refugee rights.**

6

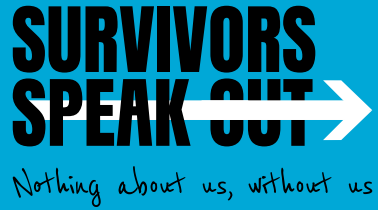
# ACT AS A GLOBAL LEADER TO BUILD INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS THE PUSH FACTORS GENERATING REFUGEES, WITH A FOCUS ON SOLIDARITY, RESPONSIBILITY SHARING AND RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW



**Reaffirm the UK's commitment to international treaties, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the UN Convention against Torture and collaborate with global partners to provide sustainable solutions to the challenges posed by forced migration, including through resettlement.**

A night photograph of a Gothic cathedral, likely Westminster Abbey in London, with its intricate stonework and spires illuminated by warm yellow lights. The scene is reflected in the dark water of a river in the foreground. A semi-transparent blue horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES' in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. The text is slightly blurred and has a soft glow, making it stand out against the dark background. In the lower right corner, there are several thick, white, diagonal lines that create a sense of movement and depth. The overall mood is somber yet hopeful, emphasizing the message of solidarity.

TOGETHER  
WITH  
REFUGEES



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## Survivors Speak OUT



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