



www.migrationwatchuk.org

Asylum Amnesty; the decks are far from cleared

Summary

1. On October 24, 2003 the Home Secretary announced that 15,000 families who had sought asylum before October 2000, and most of whom had had their application rejected, would be granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. The families selected were ones who had a child at the time of making their application. The Home Secretary described this amnesty as a "one-off exercise". This is extremely implausible. Another batch is already in the pipeline.

2. This is now the third asylum amnesty in Britain and the Government's continuing failure to return failed asylum seekers makes it highly likely that a similar exercise will be required in the future. We estimate that in the period 2001-2003 a further 19,000 families have had, or will have, their asylum applications rejected and will fail to leave the UK. Most of these 19,000 families - our estimate is 14,000 of them - will have had a dependent child at the time they made their application. So, there is likely to be a future need for a similar size exercise to that just announced unless the Home Secretary takes special action to remove these families.

Details

3. In 2001 and 2002 there were 155,000 applications for asylum in the UK (excluding dependants). In 2003 there are likely to be a further 45,000 applications (again excluding dependants) bringing the total for the 3 year period to 200,000.

4. An analysis of decisions in the period 1997-2002 shows that just under 37% of applicants will be accepted for asylum or be granted leave to remain in the UK. A further 13% will depart from the UK, leaving 50% of applicants who will fail to be granted asylum or leave to remain and who will stay in the UK illegally. This equates to 100,000 principal applicants for the period 2001-3.

5. Of these principal applicants, we estimate that about 19% (19,000 people) will have families and around 14% (14,000 people) will have a dependent child .

6. The Government has granted an amnesty to 15,000 principal applicants who have families and who had a dependent child when they arrived in the UK. The amnesty will apply to those who sought asylum in the UK before October 2000...

7. So, although the Home Secretary has described this as a "one-off exercise" it seems highly

likely that there will be a need for a similar exercise, involving a similar number of people, in the future.

8. The only way that this can be avoided is if the government finds a way of successfully removing asylum seekers, including asylum seeker families. There is no indication of this happening - indeed if they were able to do this there would have been no need for the current amnesty.

28 October, 2003

NOTES

- 1 2003 estimate based on Q1 and Q2 actual figures and numbers continuing at Q2 levels in Q3 and Q4.
- 2 A family is defined as a principal applicant with one or more dependants. The proportion with dependants has been calculated by reference to table 8.3 of the Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2002 which analyses those seeking support through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) by numbers of dependants.
- 3 Assumes 50% of families with 1 dependant and 100% of all families with two or more dependants have a dependant child.