

Date:

Dear Member of Parliament,

Throughout history, the ability to seek refuge has been essential to Jewish survival. As a supporter of René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights, I am calling on the government to place humanity at the forefront of immigration policy and practice.

In light of the [Windrush Lessons Learned review](#), and the Secretary of State's call to politicians, "[we must all do better at walking in other peoples' shoes](#)",¹ I am writing to ask you to consider the devastation the Coronavirus pandemic is causing the most at-risk in our country.

Refugees and asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable to the threat of Coronavirus. Those who are undocumented have no recourse to public funds, which will continue to impede their ability to access housing and healthcare during this global emergency. Those who are detained, already at-risk of developing serious mental and physical health problems, are unable to access basic hygiene or practice the social distancing and safety measures recommended by the Health Department.

Whilst the Coronavirus crisis threatens us all, and the health and safety of those we hold dear, we must not forget our duty to protect refugees and asylum seekers. We are all affected by this crisis, but we are not all affected equally. The government must take the message of the Windrush review to heart and recognise "[migration and Home Office policy is about people](#)" and "[it should always be rooted in humanity.](#)"²

I support René Cassin in calling for the government, under the current circumstances, to release everyone currently detained under immigration powers, so as to reduce the threat of the virus, and ensure that asylum seekers have access to healthcare, housing and Universal Credit welfare benefits, without the threat of detention or deportation.

Our Jewish values commit us to treat the stranger with dignity and respect, for we were once strangers in the land of Egypt. We urge the UK government to do the same.

Sincerely,

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[René Cassin](#), the Jewish voice for human rights, draws upon Jewish values and experience to promote and protect universal human rights.

¹ Priti Patel, Oral Statement to Parliament on Windrush Lessons Learned Review (19 March 2020)

² Wendy Williams, 'Lessons Learned Review' (March 2020)