

Ending Hostile Environments in and beyond migration policy

This statement was endorsed by participants in the stakeholder conference Hostile Environments and Struggles for Justice, held at St Ethelburga's Centre in East London on 9 November 2019. The conference was organised by Waling Waling, Migration Mobilities Bristol and the Permanent Peoples Tribunal on the Human Rights of Migrant and Refugee Peoples, and supported by the Horizon 2020 project ETHOS – Toward a European Theory of Justice and Fairness.

The UK Government purposively designed and implemented the Hostile Environment to make the UK hostile to migrants. The Hostile Environment is an environment which facilitates and perpetuates racism and cruelty. As we saw with the Windrush scandal its consequences are not only felt by migrants.

Government policies have created a hostile environment for many people in the UK and not only for migrants. Speaking from our lived experiences we find that:

- Policies on housing have sold off common assets, normalised insecurity, systematised evictions, pushed us into illegalised arrangements and then demonised us as we live in overcrowded and unfit accommodation;
- Policies on health have drawn medical staff into surveillance, prioritised borders over medical care;
- Policies on education have taken away our right to study, imposed high fees, made it impossible to access English classes, not recognised our qualifications;
- Policies on Universal Credit have shrunk our horizons, treated us as beggars;
- Policies on 'security' have demonised Muslims, fostered racism and Islamophobia;
- Policies on legal aid have normalised injustice, making it impossible for us to get redress.

The Hostile Environment breeds suspicion and division when solidarity is in the interest of the vast majority. At a time when our shared communities and our shared earth are proving so vulnerable and endangered, the politics of division and deservingness are risking our future. The British government is working against the interests of migrants and citizens alike. We

refute the hypocrisy of the claim that the British government respects basic rights as it inflicts austerity on low waged and unwaged people and demands that ordinary people enforce its racist immigration laws. We call for us all to find connections and common interests between struggles.

We recognise and celebrate the struggles and victories of migrants, of workers, of Grenfell activists, of Roma, of those on benefits, of the homeless, of disabled people. They are building solidarities and resistance and uncovering common interests.

We demand JUSTICE.

Of the UK government:

- Free movement for all. First steps: end visa and citizenship fees; restore the visa for domestic workers; regularise undocumented people; close detention centres; support family reunion; end the exclusion of migrants from recourse to public funds.
- Decent housing for all and an end to profiting from property. First steps: stop criminalising squatting; end buying for investment and starting building for people; make renting secure and affordable.
- Healthcare for all. First steps: end the NHS surcharge and stop asking patients for their passports.
- Restore the rights of workers and unions. First steps: repeal anti-trade union laws; increase the minimum wage; recognise and socialise care contributions; provide free English classes; end welfare sanctions.

Of multinational corporations:

- End profiteering and capitalising on misery through detention;
- Pay your taxes;
- Support trades union membership.

Of humanitarian actors:

- Resist being drawn into surveillance;
- Understand the situation of non-citizens and educate others;
- Incorporate those you support in decision making;
- Always remember the rights of women.

Of local authorities and services:

- Do not deal with property developers and millionaires;

- Resist the outsourcing of service provision to private companies and small charities;
- Expand education services;
- Promote cultural diversity among school students and teachers;
- Provide free or cheap public transport;
- Reduce pollution;
- Learn from each other's best practice.

We pledge

To strengthen our movement through holding ourselves to the highest anti-racist, pro-migrant standards, open to all genders and nationalities. We will reflect on our own practices and be alive to power operating within our own organising through the vectors of citizenship status, language, education, race and religion and gender.

Now is the time for equality, solidarity and social rights, so we can reach a place where the world can be shared.