# Home Office launches campaign in Iraq to deter Channel crossings



The Home Office has launched a series of advertisements in Iraq aimed at discouraging individuals from attempting to cross the English Channel, focusing on the risks associated with illegal migration. This campaign coincides with a reported 20 per cent increase in the number of illegal migrants making the journey this year, bringing the total to 2,716 so far.

This initiative reflects similar efforts made by the previous Conservative government, which had introduced campaigns in nations such as Albania and Vietnam during 2023 and 2024. The most recent data highlights a surge in crossings, with 592 migrants arriving in the UK in 11 boats on a single day last Sunday, marking the highest daily total for March on record.

The Home Office asserts that these advertisements aim to counteract what they describe as the "dangerous lies" propagated by "ruthless criminal gangs." The adverts are currently featured across social media platforms, applications, and news websites. One advertisement displays a haunting image of a destroyed dinghy adrift in the sea, accompanied by a testimony from a survivor who stated, "the boat was too crowded" and mentioned that "people disappeared into the sea."

Dame Angela Eagle, a government minister, commented, "Ruthless criminal gangs spread dangerous lies on social media to exploit people for money, and we are exposing them using the real stories of their victims." The campaign also includes testimonies from individuals, including one woman who recounted being promised a well-paid job but instead found herself in a situation of enslavement.

The appeal of the advertisements aims to resonate particularly with prospective migrants in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where there has been a noticeable contribution to the overall numbers of individuals attempting the perilous crossing. In 2024 alone, more than 2,000 of the 36,816 migrants who made the journey originated from Iraq.

The Refugee Council has expressed skepticism regarding the effectiveness of such campaigns, arguing that individuals who are "desperate to flee persecution" are unlikely to be deterred by social media efforts.

In addition to the campaign in Iraq, the Home Office revealed plans for UK ministers to sign a joint communique with the government of Vietnam. This agreement aims to enhance collaboration in combating the exploitation of irregular migrants, disrupting the operations of criminal gangs, improving intelligence sharing, and facilitating the return of individuals without proper rights to reside in the UK. Officials noted that Vietnamese and Iraqi nationals rank among the top ten groups of individuals crossing the Channel illegally.

The government is navigating increasing pressure from the opposition, particularly from Sir Keir Starmer’s leadership, to demonstrate effective measures against illegal immigration. This comes in the wake of claims from the Conservative Party that the cessation of processing illegal migrants in Rwanda has eroded a significant deterrent to these crossings. Data indicated that the number of small boat migrants reaching the UK since Labour took power has risen by 29 per cent compared to the same timeframe in 2023. Between July 5, 2024, and the year's end, 23,242 migrants crossed the Channel, compared to 18,004 in the same period of 2023.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-03/government-adverts-launched-to-warn-of-misinformation-from-people-smugglers> - This URL supports the claim that the Home Office has launched advertisements in Iraq to discourage illegal migration, highlighting the risks and dangers associated with crossing the English Channel. It also mentions the campaign's focus on countering misinformation spread by people smugglers.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-expands-campaign-to-stop-migrant-smugglers-and-their-lies> - This URL corroborates the expansion of the UK's campaign to stop migrant smugglers, including digital advertising in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and highlights the government's efforts to dismantle people smuggling gangs through international partnerships.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/home-office-to-pay-influencers-to-post-on-tiktok-urging-migrants-not-to-cross-channel-13071224> - This URL explains the Home Office's strategy of using social media influencers to deter illegal migration, including campaigns in countries like Albania and Iraq. It also mentions the use of various platforms to counter misinformation spread by smugglers.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-03/government-adverts-launched-to-warn-of-misinformation-from-people-smugglers> - This URL further supports the claim of a significant increase in migrant crossings, noting that 592 migrants arrived in the UK on a single day, marking a record for March. It also discusses the government's efforts to combat people smuggling through legislation and international cooperation.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-expands-campaign-to-stop-migrant-smugglers-and-their-lies> - This URL provides additional details on the joint communique between the UK and Vietnam, aimed at enhancing cooperation to combat irregular migration and disrupt criminal gangs. It highlights the importance of international collaboration in addressing these issues.