# Sir Keir Starmer’s return hubs plan faces rejection from Albania amid Channel migrant crisis



Sir Keir Starmer's proposal for "return hubs" aimed at failed asylum seekers has ignited a wave of criticism, particularly following the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama’s outright rejection of such facilities in Albania. Intended to relocate individuals whose asylum claims are denied in the UK to third countries like Kosovo, this initiative not only appears impractical but also raises serious questions about the Labour government's commitment to tackling the real issue of illegal migration. With over 37,000 migrants crossing the Channel this year, this plan does little to address the crisis and signals a party floundering in the face of a major policy failure.

Critics, including the Shadow Home Secretary, have dismissed Starmer’s scheme as "laughable," spotlighting the inadequacy of Labour's record on removals. Instead of addressing the entrenched problems in the asylum system, this proposal distracts from the urgent need for robust measures to actually deter the tide of illegal crossings. The lack of formal agreements with countries that might host these return hubs only underscores the superficiality of the plan. Kosovo’s President Vjosa Osmani has indicated that discussions are non-existent, throwing further doubt on the feasibility of these so-called hubs.

Moreover, international migration experts have pointed out the moral and logistical complexities inherent in establishing offshore processing centres. Starmer's focus on return hubs appears to misinterpret the nuances of migration, targeting those who have already exhausted their legal avenues while failing to address the real drivers of unlawful entry. In his recent remarks in Albania, Starmer touted the initiative as a groundbreaking innovation; however, it remains vague and devoid of specific commitments from potential partner countries.

The Albanian government has shown clear hesitation to engage in discussions about these return hubs, particularly in light of Rama’s condemnation of the UK’s blame game regarding Albanian migrants. He has rightly emphasized that the real root of the Channel migration crisis lies within the UK’s failing immigration system, a critique that should resonate deeply with voters frustrated by years of mismanagement.

Starmer's approach suggests a broader shift in Labour's stance on immigration, stumbling from ineffectual rhetoric to half-hearted proposals. While the Home Office cites record deportations, the persistent increase in illegal crossings begs the question: how much longer will the public tolerate empty promises and inadequate responses?

As Starmer prepares for the European Political Community summit in Tirana, it is critical that the actual outcomes reflect a genuine commitment to addressing the migration challenges faced by the UK. His ability to maneuver through these international discussions will determine whether Labour can salvage its credibility on this pressing issue.

This situation not only highlights an urgent need for cohesive and effective immigration strategies but also reveals the inadequacies of the current leadership in facing Europe’s evolving migration landscape. The British public deserves a political party that genuinely prioritizes control over its borders and effective migration solutions, rather than relying on unproven and vague proposals.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2060274/starmers-send-migrants-kosovo-illegal-crossings> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/a2a86b3ab6e0b834176fa699942b6885> - The Associated Press reports that UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has announced discussions with several countries to establish 'return hubs' for migrants whose asylum claims were rejected. During a visit to Albania, Starmer praised the concept as a key innovation to address irregular migration effectively but did not disclose which countries are involved. Albania, despite an agreement with Italy to host migrants temporarily, has rejected similar deals with other nations and ruled out cooperating with the UK on this matter. The previous British government had attempted to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, a plan Starmer criticized and discontinued. The new proposal differs by focusing only on rejected asylum seekers rather than outsourcing asylum processing. Migration expert Meghan Benton emphasized the legal and moral distinctions between different programs proposed across Europe. Meanwhile, joint UK-Albanian efforts have led to a steep decline in Albanian migrants crossing the English Channel, although overall migration by small boats has risen over 30% this year. Starmer also signed a defense cooperation agreement with Albania during his visit and is set to participate in the European Political Community summit in Tirana. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/a2a86b3ab6e0b834176fa699942b6885?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/c6bb168f-4869-4a15-99a8-23048488705b> - The Financial Times reports that UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has confirmed that his government is in discussions with various countries, primarily in the Western Balkans, about establishing 'returns hubs' for individuals whose asylum applications have been rejected in the UK. These hubs would serve as temporary processing centers before deportation to the individuals' countries of origin. The initiative is part of Starmer’s broader strategy to reduce immigration, alongside measures like new bilateral agreements and increased arrests. During a visit to Albania, Starmer emphasized the need for effective migrant returns, although Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama clarified that Albania would not participate in the scheme. The model differs from the Conservative Party's Rwanda plan, as it only involves those who have exhausted legal avenues in the UK. Despite rising small boat crossings in 2025, the Home Office has deported 24,000 migrants in a nine-month span—the highest since 2017. Starmer acknowledged the scheme is not a definitive solution but a component of a comprehensive strategy to manage illegal migration. The UK plans to continue detailed assessments to ensure the program is legally compliant and cost-effective. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/c6bb168f-4869-4a15-99a8-23048488705b?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-seeking-third-countries-host-deported-migrants-2025-05-15/> - Reuters reports that the British government, under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, is in negotiations with several unspecified third countries to establish 'return hubs' for migrants who have been denied asylum and have exhausted all legal means to stay in the UK. This move aims to bolster the government’s credibility on immigration control, a politically sensitive issue. Starmer is seeking effective alternatives to the previous Conservative administration’s controversial plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, which he had previously criticized and scrapped upon taking office. During a visit to Albania, Starmer emphasized efforts to combat human trafficking and was met with a refusal from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to establish a similar returns model for the UK. The proposed policy targets individuals who are using legal delays to avoid deportation and would involve relocating these individuals to safe third countries while awaiting necessary documentation. Further specifics of the plan are expected to be revealed in due course. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-seeking-third-countries-host-deported-migrants-2025-05-15/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/04/30/edi-rama-albania-pm-uk-immigration-crisis/> - The Daily Telegraph reports that Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama has criticized the UK for attempting to blame Albania for its Channel migration crisis. Speaking at the Delphi economic forum in Greece, Rama stated that Britain is in a 'bad, bad place' and that UK ministers have tried to blame Albanians to feel like they still have control. He emphasized that the migration issue is not Albania's problem and that the UK should focus on resolving its own issues. Rama also mentioned that relations between the two countries have deteriorated due to comments made by UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who branded Albanian migrants as criminals and accused them of abusing the UK's modern slavery laws. Rama called these remarks a 'disgraceful' moment for British politics and stated that singling out the Albanian community is not acceptable. He suggested that the UK is going through a 'nervous breakdown' over its failure to manage immigration. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/04/30/edi-rama-albania-pm-uk-immigration-crisis/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/4566173e-e99d-4a3e-8394-163d796b262e> - The Financial Times reports that UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has suggested that Britain might offshore the processing of asylum claims, exploring a possible deal under which asylum seekers could be processed closer to their origin countries, such as a deal between Italy and Albania. This announcement was made during a European Political Community (EPC) meeting, where the main focus was combating people smuggling gangs and other issues related to irregular migration. Starmer is aiming to rebuild UK-European relations post-Brexit and has pledged not to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Additionally, he announced £84 million in funding to address migration at its source. The EPC meeting, which included leaders from 44 countries, offered a platform for Starmer to propose a reset in UK-European relations that encompasses defence and security cooperation. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/4566173e-e99d-4a3e-8394-163d796b262e?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/return-hubs-get-un-backing-in-boost-for-potential-plans-to-deport-failed-asylum-seekers-13351488> - Sky News reports that 'return hubs'—which would see Britain send failed asylum seekers to another country—have been endorsed by the UN's refugee agency. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper met the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, last month to discuss the idea. It had been reported that the government is looking into the prospect of paying countries like the Balkans to take in failed asylum seekers—ministers hope this might discourage people from crossing the Channel in small boats. The Home Office confirmed Ms Cooper met with Mr Grandi to discuss the 'principle of returns hubs' but said reports about 'payments and specific locations are not right'. ([news.sky.com](https://news.sky.com/story/return-hubs-get-un-backing-in-boost-for-potential-plans-to-deport-failed-asylum-seekers-13351488?utm_source=openai))