# Labour faces backlash over rising Channel migrant crossings and removal shortfalls



Amid escalating public frustration over migration, the newly elected Labour leader has found himself on the defensive following the alarming arrival of over 1,000 Channel migrants in just one weekend—an astonishing figure that underscores the ongoing chaos at our borders. While the Labour Party seeks to position itself as a steward of change, Sir Keir Starmer's claims have attracted sharp criticism, particularly from the conservative factions who are rightly questioning the credibility of his administration’s record on small boat crossings.

Starmer's assertion that "almost 30,000 people" were removed from the UK has been dismissed as deceptive, with critics pointing out that this number encompasses all foreign nationals lacking residency rights—not just those crossing the treacherous channel. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp has aptly pointed out that the reality on the ground reveals a noticeable decline in the removals of small boat arrivals since Labour assumed office. With only 2,240 small boat migrants removed in the past year—a three per cent drop—it's evident that the new government is struggling to deliver.

The rising tide of small boat crossings continues unabated, with Labour officials conceding that internal Home Office assessments predict this year could see a record number of Channel crossings. Already, over 38,000 migrants have landed on British shores since the change in leadership, and that uptick lays bare the ineffective strategies Labour is trying to implement. Critics, including Alp Mehmet from Migration Watch UK, have decried Starmer’s assertions as misleading, echoing concerns that Labour’s approaches mirror the very failures of the Conservative regime that preceded it.

As the Labour government wrestles with this escalating crisis, their relationship with France remains tenuous at best. Despite Starmer's lofty assurances of collaboration to intercept dinghies at sea, concrete action has yet to materialize, leaving the administration grappling with its operational delays. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper’s calls for expediency from French authorities reflect a growing dissatisfaction within Labour ranks regarding their inability to swiftly resolve illegal crossings.

Labour's strategy appears convoluted, as their focus on dismantling smuggling networks is starkly at odds with a genuine necessity for comprehensive immigration reform. Observers are increasingly skeptical about the feasibility of Labour's promises to streamline the asylum system and lessen reliance on costly accommodations. Their intentions to boost returns and forge offshore agreements with other safe countries flounder under the weight of a narrow focus on small boat crossings, leaving their administration vulnerable to the same political pitfalls the Conservatives have faced.

In addition, the Labour government’s commitment to addressing the root causes of migration through international aid is another area where skepticism reigns. Official pledges of £84 million for enhancing education and economic prospects in Africa and the Middle East hardly scratch the surface of what is required. During a recent summit, Starmer's vague call for "practical solutions" over simplistic gimmicks signals a troubling indecisiveness regarding how to genuinely tackle the migration issue.

As the next general election looms and migration discourse continues to envelop public sentiment, both Labour and conservative factions face immense pressure to develop effective and humane responses. The coming months will be fraught with scrutiny as voters assess the integrity and effectiveness of the strategies wielded by the Labour government in an ever-evolving political landscape. The current trajectory does little to inspire confidence that Labour can manage migration competently, setting the stage for alternative voices to rise.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14773997/Keir-Starmer-dishonest-Labour-small-boats-PM.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/ec018bba-71e8-4d2a-ad69-0c9b9ae4c323> - The article discusses the political and practical challenges surrounding the Labour government's strategy to address small boat crossings across the English Channel, echoing the Conservative government's earlier, unfulfilled pledge to 'stop the boats.' The crossings represent a small proportion of total immigration but carry significant political weight due to their visibility, particularly in coastal communities. While the previous Conservative government cut off other irregular migration routes, making boat crossings more prevalent and visible, Labour has focused on targeting smuggling gangs to reduce crossings—a strategy that has not yet shown results. A notable success in reducing numbers came through bilateral agreements, like that with Albania. The author argues that focusing on reducing small boat crossings without expanding legal migration routes might not yield effective results and may mirror previous policy failures. The piece suggests Labour risks inheriting the same political liability over this issue as the Conservatives, unless it broadens its approach to offer more legal migration options while disrupting smuggling networks.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-tougher-immigration-policy-risks-trapping-victims-modern-slavery-2025-02-07/> - Britain's 2015 Modern Slavery Act, once a cornerstone in the global fight against human trafficking, has seen its protections eroded by new immigration rules introduced in 2023 aimed at curbing illegal migration. The heightened proof requirements for state support have resulted in a significant rise in the rejection rate of modern slavery claims, leaving thousands of victims without assistance and deterring others from seeking help due to fears of deportation. Concerns have been raised by numerous experts, including charities, law enforcement, the judiciary, and government officials, who argue that modern slavery is a human rights issue and should not be conflated with immigration control. Despite appeals to amend the legislation, the new Labour government has maintained the stance of the previous Conservative administration. The disparity in first-stage approval rates between British nationals and foreigners, alongside the rise in reconsideration requests being accepted, casts doubt on the efficacy and fairness of the current system. Experts warn that the stricter regulations may hinder efforts to combat exploitation and support victims, thereby perpetuating modern slavery within the country.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/482ef398-038c-4ef0-9c36-72cb0c580576> - The UK's asylum system faces significant challenges, with many asylum seekers like Ako and Ali trapped in a cycle of uncertain and lengthy processes. With migration being a top voter concern ahead of the general election, both Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer promise to reduce asylum seekers entering the UK via small boats. However, critics question the feasibility of their plans. Labour intends to streamline the system by processing historic cases, hiring more caseworkers, and scrapping the Rwanda scheme, which has only worsened the backlog. Nevertheless, the low rate of asylum approvals and rising appeal cases may persist under Labour, potentially exacerbating delays. The controversial Rwanda scheme faces criticism for its impracticality and high costs. Labour proposes boosting returns, cutting reliance on expensive asylum hotels, and possibly arranging voluntary returns. Their plan emphasizes an efficient Border Security Command to target smuggling gangs and a potential, legally compliant offshoring agreement with other safe countries. While Labour's strategies are ambitious, they face skepticism regarding their success in deterring small boat crossings and providing humane yet effective solutions to the asylum system's complications.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/d83661777617aae46a5cb6942f544e54> - UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced a new initiative to significantly reduce immigration numbers and make it more difficult to settle in the country, in response to increasing public concern and the electoral rise of the anti-immigrant Reform UK party. Speaking in Downing Street, Starmer pledged to tighten all areas of the immigration system—work, family, and study—emphasizing a controlled, selective, and fair approach. These measures include raising salary thresholds and English language requirements for employment visas, ending overseas recruitment for care home jobs, and requiring 10 years of residency for citizenship. Migration has long been a contentious issue in the UK, especially post-Brexit, with net migration reaching 900,000 in the year to mid-2023. Despite past Conservative efforts to curb immigration, numbers have remained high, fueled by international crises in Ukraine and Hong Kong and dangerous Channel crossings by small boats. Critics argue that eliminating low-skilled visas risks harming essential services like care homes, while refugee advocates and some Labour members caution against adopting rhetoric and policies resembling those of the far-right. Conservatives claim Labour’s proposals are insufficient and demand a binding annual cap on immigration.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czvxp9d5lrko> - Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has pledged £84m for projects in Africa and the Middle East to stop illegal migration 'at source'. The government said the new funding for education, employment opportunities and humanitarian support would help address the factors driving people to leave their homes. Speaking at the fourth summit of the European Political Community (EPC), which the UK hosted at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, Sir Keir agreed with French President Emmanuel Macron that there was 'no easy silver bullet' to stop small boats crossing the English Channel. But the PM said he wanted to focus on 'practical solutions', not 'gimmicks'. The EPC, which includes the 27 members of the European Union as well as 20 non-members like the UK, is a more informal forum for cooperation.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023-mar/06/tory-plan-to-stop-small-boats-will-actually-fuel-people-smuggling-says-expert> - One part of the proposals would set out that anyone who had crossed the Channel on a small boat would not just be removed to a third country but barred permanently from re-entry or ever applying for British citizenship. The proposals have been widely condemned by refugee groups and others as impossible to enforce and likely to lead to tens of thousands of people fleeing war and persecution being locked up. Starmer questioned the timing of the latest attempt to tackle the Channel crossings, suggesting it was an electoral tactic for May’s local contests in England. “We had a plan last year which was put up in lights – ‘It’s going to be an election winner.’ These bits of legislation always seem to come when we’ve got a local election coming up,” he told LBC Radio. “It was going to break the gangs – it didn’t. Now we’ve got the next bit of legislation with almost the same billing. I don’t think that putting forward unworkable proposals is going to get us very far.” Starmer was referring to the government’s Nationality and Borders Act, last year’s attempt to tackle the problem by bringing in a two-tier system which reduces the support available to those seeking asylum by irregular means.