

Visa brake imposed on 4 countries after widespread visa abuse

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Government to end study visas from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan, and work visas for Afghans.

An 'emergency brake' on visas has been imposed for the first time on nationals from 4 countries following a surge in asylum claims from legal routes.

Asylum applications by students from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan rocketed by over 470% between 2021 and 2025 – making them among the most likely nationalities to claim.

Meanwhile the number of Afghans on work visas claiming asylum is now outstripping the number of visas issued.

In an unprecedented step, the Home Office will end sponsored study visas from all 4 countries and skilled worker visas for Afghan nationals.

Tough action is required as asylum claims from legal routes have more than trebled since 2021, making up 39% of the 100,000 people who applied last year. In total, 133,760 people have claimed asylum after arriving legally in the past 5 years.

Many are then accommodated at taxpayer expense, with an above average proportion of people from these 4 countries claiming destitution. Asylum support is currently costing more than £4 billion a year – with nearly 16,000 nationals from the 4 countries currently supported at public expense, including over 6,000 in hotels.

The government is clamping down on visa abuse like this so we can maintain our ability and proud tradition of helping those genuinely in need.

The move comes as Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood will introduce new legislation this week to restore order and control to our borders. She will make a speech on Thursday at the IPPR think tank outlining how these reforms are in line with British values.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said:

Britain will always provide refuge to people fleeing war and persecution, but our visa system must not be abused.

That is why I am taking the unprecedented decision to refuse visas for those nationals seeking to exploit our generosity.

I will restore order and control to our borders.

The measures also follow the Prime Minister's decision to adopt a more hard-edged approach to diplomacy to ensure our rules are always respected and the migration system is based on fairness.

Between 2021 and the year ending September 2025, the proportion of Afghan asylum claims to

study visas issued was 95%, while applications by students from Myanmar soared sixteen-fold over the same period.

Claims by students from Cameroon and Sudan spiked by more than 330%, posing an unsustainable threat to the UK's asylum system.

While the government has successfully reduced student asylum claims by 20% over the course of 2025, further action is needed as those arriving on study visas still make up 13% of all claims in the system.

Since coming to office, the government has also slashed £1 billion from the asylum support bill.

The announcement comes days after the government confirmed protection for refugees will be halved to 30 months from 2 March to reduce the pull factors driving dangerous small boat crossings.

In November, the Home Secretary threatened to shut down all UK visas for Angola, Namibia and the Democratic of Congo unless their governments agreed to take back illegal migrants.

Four months later and cooperation has been secured with all 3 countries. Flights are off the ground and illegal migrants and foreign national offenders are being returned.

The government has also pledged to open new capped safe and legal routes as an alternative to dangerous small boat crossings once order has been restored to the asylum system.

Britain has offered sanctuary to over 37,000 Afghans via its 2 resettlement schemes since 2021, while 190,000 visas were granted on humanitarian routes in 2025.

Between 2010 and 2025 the UK has resettled the sixth largest number of refugees referred by the UNCHR in the world, demonstrating this government's commitment to helping those genuinely in need.

The visa brake will be introduced via an Immigration Rules change on 5 March 2026 and come into force on 26 March 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/visa-brake-imposed-on-4-countries-after-widespread-visa-abuse>