

New UK-Nigeria partnership to speed up removals

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The UK makes it quicker to return Nigerians with no legal right to remain.

Visa overstayers, foreign criminals and failed asylum seekers will be removed from British soil far more easily under a new agreement struck this week during the state visit of Nigeria's President, Bola Tinubu.

UK letters, an alternative identification document issued to individuals without a valid passport and used to support the return of people with no right to remain in the UK, will be recognised by the Nigerian government for the first time.

The agreement, reached between the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, and Nigeria's Minister of Interior, Dr Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, removes one of the major administrative hurdles to returning people, meaning the UK will no longer have to wait for emergency travel documents to be issued by Nigeria.

The new deal adds to the sweeping reforms the Home Secretary has made to the UK immigration system to secure the UK's borders and remove incentives attracting illegal migrants to Britain.

Minister for Border Security and Asylum Alex Norris said:

Anyone who abuses our systems, breaks our laws or tries to cheat their way into Britain will be stopped and removed.

Today's agreement is another step in our mission to restore order to the border by ensuring those who have no right to be here are swiftly removed.

Nigeria is a key partner in our work to tackle illegal migration, as the UK's largest African visa market and home to thousands of Nigerians who have built their lives here. We owe everyone across the system fairness.

Minister of Interior Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo said:

For us, as a country, we keep saying that we are totally committed to being a responsible country in fulfilling our core obligations.

It is good that we are starting this with the UK. This relationship with the UK means a lot to Nigeria. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has shown great commitment to this.

So it is one relationship that we aim to be able to sustain for generations yet to come. And for us to sustain that relationship, we must remember: 'He who comes to equity must come with clean hands.' So we need to be as open and as fair as possible.

Hopefully, this strengthened partnership will be a template for other bilateral understandings.

The agreement marks a shared commitment to safe, fair and well-managed migration. Annual returns to Nigeria have nearly doubled to 1,150. Returns and deportations of illegal migrants and foreign criminals from the UK have reached nearly 60,000 since the 2024 election.

A further agreement to launch joint operations and share information has been reached to crack down on criminal gangs abusing visa routes, making sure all arrivals are genuine and ready to contribute.

Following a series of high-profile cases involving fake job sponsorships, sham marriages and forged financial or employment records, a new standardised document-checking system will verify the authenticity of applications. Nigeria will also review its laws to tackle immigration crime, ensuring the toughest possible sentences are handed down to offenders.

The UK has strengthened its commitment to protecting Nigerian women and children at risk of exploitation, while improving business-visa schemes to help UK and Nigerian companies pursue investment opportunities aimed at driving economic growth.

A new partnership targeting online scammers involved in romance fraud, investment scams and cryptocurrency schemes will also deliver stronger protections for the UK public. The new “fusion cell” model will bring together public-sector bodies, banks, tech firms and communications companies to rapidly share intelligence on criminal tactics so swift action can be taken.

The UK’s National Economic Crime Centre already uses this fusion-cell model with strong results, including more than 400 arrests and £7.5 million seized under Operation Henhouse in February 2025.

Today’s partnership will build on work already disrupting high-harm fraud networks, preventing millions in losses and protecting vulnerable people across the UK. Earlier this year, National Crime Agency officers and the Nigerian Police Force worked with Meta to uncover hundreds of cryptocurrency-linked social media accounts used to target UK residents, leading to the arrest of 7 suspects in Agbor, Nigeria.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-nigeria-partnership-to-speed-up-removals>