

Silver Motion - Ukraine and the Nationality and Borders and Nationalities Bill

This Council notes

1. The Russian Federation has launched an unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine – a sovereign, democratic country. The brutality of the Russian invasion, notably, the alleged use of cluster munitions, thermobaric weaponry, and the direct targeting of civilians in Ukraine.
2. Ukraine's longstanding ambitions to join the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), and believes these ambitions are legitimate, and that Russia has no right to dictate whether Ukraine can enter these organisations if Ukraine democratically chooses to do so.
3. There is currently a Bill in Parliament titled the 'Nationality ~~ies~~ and Borders' Bill that would reform the asylum system and make it much more difficult for people seeking sanctuary to claim asylum in the UK, and will create a two-tier system, penalising people seeking safety based on the journeys they make.

This Council believes

4. Russia's invasion of Ukraine should be condemned in the strongest possible terms, and Bristol should stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine against Russian aggression.
5. President Putin's claim that "Ukraine has never had any real claim to statehood", and that it is just an "administrative region created by the Russian/Soviet Empires" is abhorrent and an attempt to assimilate Ukrainian identity with Russian identity – while the two are distinct.
6. The invasion highlights the need to introduce measures that tackle the influence of Russian oligarchs on British politics and prevents them from being able to launder money in the UK.
7. Proposals for the strongest possible sanctions imposed by the UK, the EU, and its allies, such as removing Russia from the SWIFT financial system are necessary.
8. This conflict has already displaced over a half million Ukrainians, and as a City of Sanctuary, Bristol has a duty to accept as many refugees as possible – Ukrainian or otherwise. The Government's Nationality and Borders Bill would hinder these efforts, as it would treat such people forced to make dangerous journeys to safety as criminals, and should not become law.
9. The right to seek asylum is a universal right. It is ~~hypocritical~~ deeply unfair of the UK government and EU to ~~support~~ treat asylum seekers from Ukraine differently to those ~~while turning away~~ refugees from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. This council supports refugees from all parts of the world regardless of race or creed.
910. The Nationality and Borders Bill will lead to greater poverty and homelessness in Bristol and will undermine people's ability to rebuild their lives. This Bill also risks undermining our obligations in international law.
1011. The UK needs an asylum system that empowers people seeking safety to rebuild their lives and enables communities to welcome them. This not only includes people fleeing from wars or oppression but in the future will also include those fleeing the effects of climate change.

Full Council resolves to:

1. Call on Party Group Leaders to collectively write a public letter to the Government stating the views laid out in this motion, and calling on it to:

- scrap the Nationality and Borders Bill, ~~legislate to allow more refugees to be granted asylum in the UK~~
- waive visa requirements for refugees trying to enter ~~the UK from Ukraine~~ (as the EU has already done) and any other conflict areas.
- provide Councils with the necessary funding to support ~~refugees, them, and call on the UK Government to~~
- work with Local Authorities and communities to build a fairer and more effective asylum system, ~~including providing safe and legal routes to claim asylum, lifting the ban on asylum seekers working, and lifting the ban on asylum seekers receiving benefits (the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' condition).~~

2. Use Council resources to support drives providing aid to the over half a million refugees that have been forced to leave Ukraine.

3. Publicly restate its commitment to refugees through its website, public statements and its partnership with City of Sanctuary.

4. Support, where possible, the Russian citizens who ~~have~~ bravely protest their Government's actions, - knowing full well of the potential consequences of protest in President Putin's Russia - and look at ways to offer political asylum to outspoken critics of Putin's regime, if given the support of the UK Government in these efforts.

5. Review the Council's policies and practices regarding housing, social care, education and information provided on our website to ensure that we are helping asylum seekers and refugees to the maximum of our legal ability, with reference to the LGA guidance 'Resettling refugees' and the NRPF Network's 'Guidance for Councils'.

6. Encourage partners through the One City partnership to pledge active measures they can take to support any asylum seekers and refugees who live in our city, and ask them to report back in a similar approach to the "One City Climate Ask".

Motion to be moved by: Cllr Bennett

Date of Submission: 1st March 2022

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