MP’s name

I am very concerned about the provisions of this bill and am writing, before the second reading on 19 and 20 July, to ask you, as my MP, to stand up for the principle of refugee protection.

I am a member of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN).  Since our formation in 2006 we have advocated for justice and compassion in the asylum system and have been dismayed at the direction that asylum and migration policy has taken for more than a decade.  This Bill reaches an all-time low.

QARN was disturbed by the New Plan for Immigration (NPI) and drafted guidelines to help our members in responding to the consultation.  It is unclear what has happened to the many responses to the consultation.  They have not been acknowledged, the consultation response has not been published, and it would appear that our concerns were not taken into account as key features of the NPI appear in the Bill.

The government claims that it aims to increase fairness, but the proposal of differential treatment of asylum seekers, depending on how they reach the country, is patently unfair.  The concern about exploitative smuggling networks is not addressed by criminalising those who use them because they have no other option.  It is not illegal to use irregular and unsafe routes when legal ones are not available.  The creation of more safe and legal routes would undermine the smugglers’ business model more effectively than criminalising unsafe routes.

I am also concerned about the proposal for reception centres, and their location.  The damaging effect of immigration detention is well documented.  QARN made a submission to the APPG consultation on Quasi Detention, drawing on what we had heard from those who had been held in army barracks in Kent and Pembrokeshire.  Offshore processing should not be on the agenda.

I get the impression that this government is privileging the views expressed by right wing activists and the tabloid press rather than the opinions of the very substantial section of the British public that believes British values include respect for all and fair treatment of citizens and non-citizens alike.  This reputation, which we have held internationally, is seriously damaged by the current approach exemplified in the proposals outlined in this Bill.

I hope that you will press the government to treat asylum seekers with the dignity they deserve.  I believe that this represents the views of many of your constituents.  Thank you.

Street address