**Sanctuary in Parliament 2018**

**Towards a fairer system**

**Sanctuary in Parliament,** an annual event which brings local City of Sanctuary groups from around the country to Parliament to meet their MPs, will take place on **12 November 2018** in Portcullis House, Westminster. It will focus on working towards a fairer, more compassionate system for people seeking sanctuary in the United Kingdom.

After fleeing war, torture and persecution in their countries of origin, many people will face ongoing hardships in the UK while stating their claim for protection. City of Sanctuary groups support people to overcome these obstacles and campaign for a system that allows them to find safety and dignity as they rebuild their lives in the UK. We believe that a fairer, more compassionate system is one in which no-one is detained without knowing when they will be released; it is the ability to enjoy a family life with loved ones and the realisation of the legitimate aspiration to provide for oneself and one’s family and to contribute to society through employment. For this reason, this year’s event will focus on three strategic aims which we believe to be both achievable and essential to maintain the dignity of people seeking sanctuary. We will be asking MPs to support:

1. The right to work for people who have asylum claims outstanding for more than six months;
2. Extension of refugee family reunion;
3. An end to indefinite immigration detention;

We believe that 2018 provides an important opportunity to advance these issues. The forthcoming Immigration Bill, expected towards the end of this year, will reform policy on immigration in the United Kingdom in an unprecedented way. Concurrently, the scandal over the treatment of the Windrush generation has brought to public consciousness the impact of the Government’s hostile environment policy and the Home Office’s burdensome bureaucracy on individual human lives.

As these changes unfold, we see both risks and opportunities for those seeking protection from persecution in the UK. We risk that the needs of sanctuary seekers are forgotten in the midst of a fundamental rethink of the immigration system, and that some of the most harmful practices currently inflicted on people seeking sanctuary (such as detention without a time-limit), are allowed to continue unreformed. At the same time, a system in flux presents openings for action, and there have been some new and welcome signals that aspects of the Government’s “hostile” immigration policies merit reconsideration.

At **Sanctuary in Parliament 2018**, we will work towards the three goals outlined above by: increasing support for and understanding of these issues amongst Members of Parliament and initiating and strengthening long-term partnerships between MPs, their constituents active in the City of Sanctuary movement and refugees and people in the asylum system. The event will be used to facilitate the engagement of people seeking sanctuary with Parliamentarians and provide an opportunity for City of Sanctuary groups to come together around these shared campaign goals.

**Sanctuary in Parliament** is organised by [City of Sanctuary UK](https://cityofsanctuary.org/about/), the national umbrella organisation for City of Sanctuary groups across the UK. The aim of the organisation and its member groups is to ensure that our country is a welcoming place of safety for all and is proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.