

# The **INTERFAITH** **MANIFESTO**

## **For the just treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants**

The May 7th general election this year offers an opportunity for voters to play a vital role in deciding what sort of society we want to live in. It also offers the various political parties the opportunity to set out their vision for the future. But when they do, we want them to promote a society that respects all its members - including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.



Too often, the debate about immigration turns into the denigration of migrants. Immigrants and refugees are scapegoated, and blamed for all the ills of our society - an overstretched NHS, low wages, unemployment and lack of housing - while asylum seekers are demonised and abandoned, their traumatic past forgotten or dismissed, our responsibility to them passed on to somebody else.

We do not believe that migrants, refugees or asylum seekers have an adverse effect on the UK, and we do not believe that immigration is the greatest problem we face in the UK at the moment, despite the

enormous amount of publicity it receives from the press and politicians. We should not cast migrants and asylum seekers as the other in our society; difference is a source of strength, not division. Our politicians must stand up for a Britain that recognises and appreciates its diversity, that protects those fleeing persecution, and values those who come to the UK to work hard and contribute.

So let the 2015 general election be remembered for its positive messages. The press and politicians often claim that the British people are worried about the number of refugees and migrants here. But many of us disagree, and our voice must be heard too.

We, the undersigned representatives of faith communities in Great Britain, call on our political leaders to pursue ethical, moral and fair policies towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

# **WE BELIEVE IN A BRITAIN WHERE:**

- There is a fair immigration and asylum system
- Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are treated with dignity and respect and helped to integrate into British society
- Politicians and the press do not stereotype or demonise refugees, asylum and migrants
- No asylum-seeking children are placed in detention centres, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Asylum seekers are never forced into destitution
- Asylum seekers have the right to work if they have been waiting more than six months for their case to be resolved
- Migrant workers are protected from exploitation such as slavery, servitude or bonded labour

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

First, we ask you to sign the manifesto.

But actions speak louder than words. So we also hope that your community will commit to fulfilling two (or more) of the following actions between now and the general election on May 7<sup>th</sup>.



## 1 Circulate the manifesto

- Distribute it throughout your community through emails, newsletters and any other platforms you use.

## 2 Preach about it

- Speak about immigration in your sermons, through pre-election education events, panels or discussion groups.

## 3 Engage your youth

- Run briefing events for first-time voters.
- Encourage youth groups to run educational activities for their members.

## 4 Get involved

- Volunteer at a drop-in centre for asylum seekers/refugees near you.
- Organise/contribute to food and clothes collections for drop-in centres.

## 5 Get political

- Write to your prospective parliamentary candidates to find out their views on immigration. Ask them to commit to fulfilling the manifesto post-election.
- Attend local pre-election events (such as hustings) and question your parliamentary candidates about these issues.
- Monitor and correct your local and national press for bias or inaccuracies regarding these issues.

## Keep in touch

Make sure you let us know how your community has responded to the manifesto. Let us know what you have done or have planned from the five action points above and what help, if any, you might need. Keep not only your community, but also the wider world engaged with your community's participation in the Interfaith Manifesto by sharing events, articles or sermons on Twitter and Facebook and by using the hashtag #InterfaithManifesto.