

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
The Office of the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Tuesday 3rd October 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We write in the interest of your office clarifying the position of the UK Government with respect to the protection from persecution afforded under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The Home Secretary implied that many LGBTQ+ and women refugees in the UK and across the world should not be entitled to protection as refugees because in her view, now roundly criticised by the United Nations, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention definition is not being properly interpreted. She also suggested that they are misusing their identities to make false claims for international protection.

It is now well-established and long-settled that persecution of LGBTQ+ people and women falls within the Convention's protection. Every day, the signatories to this letter work with women and LGBTQ+ refugees and bear witness to their scars from being persecuted. By any standard, many signatories of this letter work daily with people who did not want to leave their homes, their families, their communities, their cultures – they had to flee to save their lives.

The undeniable and stark reality is that many LGBTQ+ people and women face persecution across the world. Countless LGBTQ+ people are often forced to flee their own countries due to a litany of human rights abuses including torture, ill-treatment, and denial of the most basic of rights to survive. Likewise, many women who apply for asylum have survived extreme harm, including gender-based and sexual violence, torture, ill-treatment, trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Moreover, LGBTQ+ and women refugees often face exclusion and violence in countries to which they have fled or on journeys in search of safety. To be granted asylum, they often have to disclose serious assaults to which they have been subjected, sometimes repeatedly and at risk of retraumatisation. LGBTQ+ people also face the enormous challenge of having to 'prove' their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Far from being unusually or improperly privileged by refugee law or practice, LGBTQ+ and women refugees face significant barriers to their right to seek and enjoy asylum even long after escape from the country in which they face persecution.

We note that your Government's own statistics suggest that only 2% of all asylum claims made in the UK in 2022 included sexual orientation as a reason for seeking protection. We regret that the Home Secretary intentionally singled out this small minority of people for reasons that have nothing to do with genuine concern or respect for international law, refugees or their protection.

In the past, the UK Government had strong words of support for both LGBTQ+ people and women in the face of the manifest risks to their safety and human rights arising from the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. Along with these words, it helped LGBTQ+ people and women fleeing persecution from the Taliban at the time of the evacuation. This is the leadership we need, not a race to the bottom and turning our back on LGBTQ+ people and women in some of the world's most hostile contexts.

We as a coalition of human rights organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum, women and girls, and LGBTQ+ people, ask that you as Prime Minister stand with the leaders of the vast majority of the UN Member States and reaffirm the UK's commitment to the 1951 UN Refugee

Convention and its 1967 Protocol as well as its commitments to the protection of the rights of LGBTQ+ people and women around the world.

Above all, we need compassion and support from our political leaders and a clear affirmation that they will abide by international law and respect the lives of all who face persecution and are entitled to asylum.

Signed,

Amnesty International UK	Steve Valdez-Symonds, Programme Director
End Violence Against Women Coalition	Andrea Simon, Director
Human Rights Watch	Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director
Oxfam GB	Aleema Shivji, Chief Impact Officer
Rainbow Migration	Leila Zadeh, Executive Director
Refugee Council	Enver Solomon, CEO
Stonewall	Robbie de Santos, Director of Communications
Women for Refugee Women	Alphonsine Kabagabo, Director
17-24-30 National Hate Crime Awareness Week	Mark Healey, Founder / CEO
ActionAid UK	Dr Halima Begum, CEO
Affirm, Baptists Together for LGBTQ+ Inclusion	Revd Andy Fitchet, Co-Director
African Rainbow Family	Aderonke Apata, Founder and CEO
After Exploitation	Maya Esslemont, Director
AleX Higgins Academy	Stefan Lewis, Founder / Director
Allsorts Youth Project	Katie Vincent, CEO
Andro and Eve	Finn Warman, Artistic Director and Chief Executive
Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees	Gee Manoharan, Policy & Communication Manager
Asylum Matters	Paul Hook, Director
Asylum Support Appeals Project	Kat Lorenz, Director
Asylum Welcome	Mark Goldring, Director
Aylesbury Vale LGBT Social Group	Julien FitzGerald, Founder / Chair of Trustees
Balaclava.Q	Stiofan O'Ceallaigh, Director
Bi Pride UK	Avi Kay, Chair
BiPhoria	Jen Yockney MBE, Covenor
Blossom LGBT CIC	Oscar Hoyle, Chief Executive Officer
Blue Square Coding LTD	Rafael Glod, Director
Breakout Youth,	Zoe Grant, Charity Manager
Bruntwood LGBTQIA+ Network	Aaron Boxley, Co-Chair
Burma Campaign UK	Mark Farmaner, Director
Bury LGBTQI+ Forum	David Catterall, Co-Chair
CA Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent	Jude Hawes, Head of Specialist Services
Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign	Catharine Walston, Trustee
Care4Calais	Steve Smith, CEO
Chase Pride	Kathryn Downs, Chair of Trustees
Chester Pride	Richard Euston, Head of Charity
Choose Love	Emma Stevenson, Deputy CEO
Circular3	Patrick Ogunmuyiwa, Partner
City of Sanctuary Sheffield	Thomas Martin, Director
City of Wolverhampton Council	Cllr Anwen Muston
CliniQ, Michelle Ross	Founder
Club F.O.D	Jamie Wake, CEO
Daniel Browne Therapy	Daniel Browne, Counsellor and Psychotherapist
Darlington Assistance for Refugees	Fran Wood, CEO
Derbyshire LGBT+	Ian Robson, CEO
Detention Action	James Wilson, Director
Detention Forum	Jonathan Ellis, Project Director
Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support	Alex Vessis, CEO
Ditch the Label	Sue Jones, Head of Operations
Diverse Church Charity	Jade Irwin, Director
Doctors of the World	Simon Tyler, Executive Director

Doncaster Conversation Club
ELOP: LGBT Mental Health & Wellbeing
Enfield LGBT Network
English for Action (EFA) London
Equality Network
Families Together London
FFLAG
First Brick Housing
FODI (Sunderland)
forRefugees
Forward CIC
Free2B Alliance
Freedom from Torture
Friends of the Joiners Arms
Galop UK
Gay Pride Shop
Gender Action for Peace and Security
Gendered Intelligence
George House Trust
GIRES
Good Chance Theatre
Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
Greater Manchester Pride Network
Helen Bamber Foundation
Hope at Home
Hope Projects
House Of Rainbow CIC
Human Dignity Trust
Human Rights Consortium Scotland
Humanists UK
IMIX & West and Refugee Services
Inclusive Community Church
International Alert
International Gender and Sexuality Alliance
It Gets Better UK
It's All About You Wellbeing CIC
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group
Just Right Scotland
Kaleidoscope Trust
Kingston Race and Equalities Council
Latin American Women's Rights Service
LCR Pride Foundation
LEAP Sports Scotland
Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network
Lesbian Immigration Support Group
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
LGBT Bedfordshire
LGBT Foundation
LGBT Health and Wellbeing
LGBT Out in the Bay
LGBT Youth Scotland
LGBT+ Consortium
LGBT+ Manchester Walking Tours
LGBT+ Northern Social Group
LGBTQ+ Affinity Group
LGBTQ+ Labour
LGBTQIA+ Oxfordshire
Liberation
Liberty

Jan Foster, Trustee
Teresa Sharpe, CEO
Tim Fellows, CEO
Stephanie Habib, Executive Team
Tim Hopkins, Director
Dr David Wheeler, Co-coordinator
Sarah Furley, Chair
Lynne Nicholls, Chair
Steve Newman, Chair
Amber Bauer, CEO & Founder
Tina Carnally, Director
Lucie Brooke, Director
Sonya Sceats, Chief Executive
Amy Roberts, Chairperson
Leni Morris, CEO
Jason Guy, Director
Eva Tabbasam, Director
Jay Stewart, CEO
Darren Knight, Chief Executive
Cat Burton, Chair
Naomi Webb, Artistic Director
Denise McDowell, Chief Executive
Dr Carl Austin-Behan OBE DL, Ambassador
Kerry Smith, CEO
Helen Hodgson, Operations Director
Phil Davis, Director
Reverend Jide Macaulay, Founder & CEO
Téa Braun, Chief Executive
Mhairi Snowden, Director
Andrew Copson, Chief Executive
Sadia Sikandar, Chair of steering group
Reverend Dwayne Morgan, Pastor and Chair
Nic Hailey, Executive Director
Julien FitzGerald, Co-founder
Dr Alexander Rhys, Director
Max Cohen, Director
Alexandra Lopoukhine, Interim Executive Director
Sheila Rushforth, Volunteer Director
Emma Hutton, CEO
Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Executive Director
John Azah OBE, CEO
Gisela Valle, Director
Andi Herring, CEO
Hugh Torrance, Executive Director
Jon Beech, Director
Jane Traies, Trustee and Volunteer
Rosario Guimba-Stewart, CEO
Ashley Spiers, Director
Dr Paul Martin OBE, Chief Executive
Mark Kelvin, CEO
Robert Mee, CEO
Dr Mhairi Crawford, CEO
Paul Roberts OBE, Chief Executive Officer
Joshua Martin, Founder
Cat Hurst-McGahey, Chair
Mott MacDonald and Lynne Hamilton, Co-Chairs
Roland Baynes, Officer
Mazz Image, Director
Dorothy Gould, Founder
Akiko Hart, Interim Director

Lips Inked Arts CIC	Delphine Evans, Director
London Friend	Monty Moncrieff MBE, Chief Executive
Loving Me Trans+ Domestic Abuse Service	Moss, CEO
Mafwa Theatre	Tamsin Cook, Co-Artistic Director
Maison Foo	Bethany Sheldon, Artistic Director
Manchester Liberal Democrats	Councillor Chris Northwood, Deputy Leader
Manchester Pride	Mark Fletcher, CEO
Mermaids	Lauren Stoner, Interim CEO
Micro Rainbow	Sebastian Rocca, Founder and CEO
Migrants Organise	Zrinka Bralo, CEO
Migrants' Rights Network	Julia Tinsley-Kent, Policy and Comms
Mott MacDonald	Lynne Hamilton, Co-Chair of LGBTQ+ group
Music Action International	Kayleigh Swanson, Development Manager
NACCOM	Bridget Young, Director
NAM aidsmap,	Matthew Hodson, Executive Director
National AIDS Trust	Deborah Gold, Chief Executive
National Student Pride	Lucy Young, Corp. Partnerships Officer
Navigate Brighton	Jack Chapman, Chair
Naz and Matt Foundation	Matt Mahmood-Ogston, Executive Director
New Citizen's Gateway	Dr. Nazee Akbari, Chief Executive Officer
New to the UK North Shields	Pat Bond, Chair
North East Law Centre	Clare Hurst, Deputy Centre Director
North Midlands LGBT Older Peoples Group	Andrew Colclough, Vice Chair
Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust	Hannah Dunleavy, Pastoral & Resourcing
Northern Rebound LGBTQ+ Squash Group	Martin Cooper, Chairperson
Not A Phase	Danielle St James, Chief Executive
Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum	Debbie Royle, Deputy Director
Nottingham Arimathea Trust	Rebecca Kogan, Project Coordinator
Notts LGBT+ Network	Maia Abel, Chair & Trustee
Oasis Charitable Trust	Rev Steve Chalke, Founder
Oldham Pride	David Austin, Chair
One Life To Live	Nicola David, Founder
OneBodyOneFaith	Luke Dowding, CEO
Open House, Oasis Church Waterloo	Dave Moreton, Community Advocate
Open Table Network	Kieran Bohan, Director
Our Room Manchester	Fergal McCullough, Director
Our Second Home	Amos Schonfield, CEO
Out in Cov - Group for LGBTQ asylum seekers	Jon Homer, Co-ordinator
Out In The City	Tony Openshaw, Co-ordinator
Out with Prostate Cancer	Dave Wardell, Coordinator
OUTpatients	Stewart O'Callaghan, CEO
Ozanne Foundation	Jayne Ozanne, Director
Paned o Gé	Daniel Huw Bowen, Director
Pell Frischmann	Hannah Green, LGBTQ+ advocate
Peter Tatchell Foundation	Peter Tatchell, Director
Pink Therapy	Dominic Davies, Founder and CEO
Plan International UK	Rose Caldwell, CEO
Polari	Luke Oliveira-Davies, Founder
POMOC	Magda Fabianczyk, Co-Director
Praxis	Sally Daghlian, CEO
Pride Cymru	Gian Molinu, Chair
Pride Edinburgh	Jamie Love, Director
Pride in Gloucestershire	Richard Stevens, Chairperson
Pride in Leadership	Matt Haworth, Co-Founder
Pride in STEM	Dr Alfredo Carpineti, Chair
Pride Outside CIC	Ellis and Lou Beardsmore, Co-CEO's
Pride Radio	Mark Nichols, Operations Manager
Protection Approaches	Andy Fearn & Dr Kate Ferguson, Directors
Proud2Be CIC	Max and Maya Price, Founders
Queer Britain Museum	Lynne Bradley, Head of Operations

Queer House Party	Nik Hann, Director
QueerAF	Jamie Wareham, Director and Founder
Quest	Gerard Swan, Chair
Rainbow Refugees NI	Niamh Rowan, Chair
Redbridge Rainbow Community	Simon Shaw, Chief Executive
REDRESS	Rupert Skilbeck, Director
Refugee Action	Asli Tatliadim, Head of Campaigns
Refugee Futures Ltd	Heather Petch, Executive Director
Refugee Legal Support (RLS)	Nick Pilkington, Fundraising and Comms
Refugee Women Connect	Alison Moore, CEO
Refugees at Home	Carly Whyborn, Executive Director
René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights	Mia Hasenson-Gross, Executive Director
ReportOUT	Drew Dalton, CEO and Chair of Trustees
Right to Remain	Magdaline Moyo, Organiser
Roshaniya	Nemat Sadat, Chief Executive Officer
Safe Passage International	Gunes Kalkan, Head of Campaigns
Say It Loud Club	Aloysius Ssali, Founder & CEO
Scottish Trans Vic	Valentine, Manager
SecurityWomen	Juliet Colman, Director
Seraphus	Christopher Desira, Director
Southampton Pride CIC	Jay Edwards-Bannon, Comms Manager
Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC)	Mariko Hayashi, Executive Director
Sparkle - The National Transgender Charity	Jay Crawford, Chair, Board of Trustees
Sports Media LGBT+	Jon Holmes, Founder and Lead
St Paul's Church, Birmingham	David Tomlinson, Revd.
Staffordshire Sexual Health Charity	Rowan Cookson, Volunteer Co-ordinator
Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC	Maari Nastari, CEO
Stonewall Cymru	Charley Crabb, Cymru Manager
Stonewall Scotland	Colin Macfarlane, Director of Nations
STOPAIDS	Saoirse Fitzpatrick, Advocacy Manager
Stories & Supper	Dr Helen Taylor, Director
Stories of Hope and Home	Helena Madden, Trustee
Student Action for Refugees (STAR)	Emily Crowley, Chief Executive
Student Christian Movement	Naomi Nixon, CEO
Surrey LGBTQ Pride	The Board of Directors
Tees Valley of Sanctuary	Satinder Collins, Chair
The Comfrey Project	Eleni Venaki, Director
The Gay Business Association	Jean-Francois Dor, Chairman
The Gay Professional Network	Jean-Francois Dor, Founder
The Hummingbird Project	Mel Gould, Global Social Club Lead
The Kite Trust	Pip Gardner, Chief Executive
The Outside Project	Carla Ecola, Managing Director
The Proud Trust	Lisa Harvey-Nebil, CEO
The Rainbow Project	Scott Cuthbertson, Director
The Refugee Support Group	Mike Martin, Chair
The Regeneration Project	Paul Bailey, Reverend
The Suit and Tie Society	Jean-Francois Dor, Facilitator
The William Gomes Podcast	William Gomes, Director
the3million	Andreea Dumitrache, Interim Co-CEO
Think2Speak	Lizzie Jordan, CEO
Time for Inclusive Education (TIE)	Jordan Daly, Director
Time to be Out	William Roche, Chair
Trans in Gloucestershire	Amber Burns, Trustee
Trans Masculine Support & Advice UK	Alec Scott Rook, Founder/Admin
Trans Media Watch	Jane Fae, Chair
Trans Pride South West	Spencer Blackwell, Chair
Trans-Ed	Leah Thompson, Director
TransActual	Chay Brown, Director of Operations
TransLucent.Org.UK	Steph Richards, CEO
Trust for London	Alex Sutton, Director of Grants

UK Black Pride	Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Executive Director
Unicorns LGBTQIA+ Netball Club	James Braun Founder and Chair
Unique Transgender Network	Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE, Chairperson
United Nations Association – UK	Marissa Conway, CEO
United Pride Friends	Michael Chick, Chairperson and Co-founder
Usurp Art	Poulomi Desai, Trustee
Village Church (C of E Manchester Gay Village)	Paul Pritchard, Reverend
Voices in Exile	Mel Steel, Director
We Stand Together	Jonny Wineberg, Director of Operations
Welsh Refugee Council	Andrea Cleaver, CEO
West London Queer Project	Aubrey Crawley, CEO
West London Welcome	Joanne MacInnes, Director
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	James Eccles Churton, Councillor
Wigan Pride	Scott Williams, Chair
Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales	Victoria Vasey, Director
Wolverhampton Methodist Church Circuit	Linda Gilson, Deacon
Young Roots	Grace Capel, Chair of Trustees