



Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP
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Rt Hon Theresa May
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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Dear Justice and Home Secretaries,

Over many years, Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) has provided essential legal advice and representation to 110,000 asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, including many children. Many of the charity's clients have been deprived of their freedom in this country through detention or wrongful imprisonment, and without RMJ's help they would have faced torture or death if forced to go home.

Sadly, we have become aware that this pioneering charity is at risk of closure simply because of delays in legal aid payments for work already done. It would be a tragedy if RMJ were allowed to go under because of bureaucratic rules. No charity can be expected to wait six months or more for the money it is owed, and no private sector organisation will be able to replace RMJ's longstanding commitment to those with the greatest needs.

If RMJ has to close, 10,000 individuals will immediately be left without a lawyer. The Government has said it wants to speed up asylum decisions, but closing RMJ would be a huge backward step. Many asylum seekers will be unable to access good quality legal support, or any support at all. Lives will be put at risk and there are likely to be

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many more miscarriages of justice - which are already common in our asylum system. This would also add to the UK Border Agency's enormous backlog, as the cases of existing clients would have to be suspended while new lawyers are found.

RMJ is not asking for more money, just what it is owed. The Government's decision to review legal aid is the perfect opportunity to cut out inefficiency so that good quality providers like RMJ can be saved.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Avebury, House of Lords
Keith Best, Director of Medical Foundation
Sir Geoffrey Bindman, civil rights lawyer
Julie Bishop, Chief Executive of the Law Centres Federation
Donna Covey, Chief Executive of Refugee Council
Caroline Slocock, Chief Executive of Refugee and Migrant Justice
Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty
Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind
Guy Goodwin-Gill, Fellow All Souls, Oxford
David Harker, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Baroness Howe, House of Lords
Professor Francesca Klug, London School of Economics
Martin Narey, Chief Executive of Barnardo's
Professor Sir Nigel Rodley
Jan Shaw, Amnesty International UK Refugee Programme Director
The Earl of Sandwich, House of Lords
Roger Smith, Director of Justice
Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury
Maurice Wren, Director, Asylum Aid

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