Building a new coalition campaign for deep change for asylum-seekers and refugees

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The Asylum Reform Initiative

• Set up in 2019 by six national organisations to develop a strategy to drive long-term, deep change in Britain’s approach to asylum-seekers and refugees (Asylum Matters, British Red Cross, Freedom from Torture, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, Scottish Refugee Council).

• Ben Jackson became its first Director in 2020, with a small team now in place. Co-funded by its members and foundations.

• In consultation across the sector, ARI as been incubating proposals on building a broad coalition for system change over recent months, especially ahead of to stimulate discussion, thinking and action. All the more urgent because of the Government’s planned Borders Bill to ‘fix a broken asylum system’.
Why?
Why a new coalition?

• Our times:
  • Scale of global crisis. Unjust, broken UK system.
  • Media & public narratives. ‘What the public think’.
  • Black Lives Matters. Windrush. Hidden support.
  • Post-Covid: “Them and Us” or “Bigger Us”?

• Our movement:
  • Active, passionate, diverse, collaborative.
  • But also under attack, stretched, fragmented.
  • React to our opponents’ agenda, not set our own.
  • People with lived experience need power & prominence in national campaigns.
  • Insider / outsider? Both.

How can we harness the power of our diverse movement to set the agenda, inspire hope & win change?
How?
How could a new coalition help us win change?
How could a new coalition campaign help us win change

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Catalysts</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Outcomes(2022)</th>
<th>Big Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incubate the approach</td>
<td>Develop &amp; project compelling common narrative.</td>
<td>Borders Bill threat adds urgency to unite.</td>
<td>Our current approach isn’t working.</td>
<td>Uplift in media coverage of our case for system change.</td>
<td>Core public consensus for a just, humane &amp; effective asylum system.</td>
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<td>Harness the energy of the movement.</td>
<td>Project our message – not respond to our opponents.</td>
<td>Coalitions &amp; collaborations been building.</td>
<td>UK decisionmakers oppose reform or feel they must assuage a hostile public. Only sustained external pressure can change this.</td>
<td>Use Bill to rally pressure for campaign wins - spur momentum to wider change.</td>
<td>Thriving, diverse &amp; united movement. People with lived experience leading.</td>
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<td>Mobilise some central capacity.</td>
<td>Mobilise our united base and allies – activate the sympathetic-but-inactive.</td>
<td>Thriving &amp; diverse grassroots movement.</td>
<td>Long-term pressure for system change - but built by wins in steps.</td>
<td>Scotland, Wales &amp; mayors elections – starts to build leadership for change from below</td>
<td>Core political consensus on a just, humane &amp; effective asylum.</td>
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<td>Bring supporter base together.</td>
<td>Lobby better to harvest openings created by public pressure.</td>
<td>Funders who support collaboration.</td>
<td>Scope for local and nations leaders to leverage UK change.</td>
<td>Borders Bill passes but fails to carry public opinion – a turning point for a fight-back?</td>
<td>Asylum-seekers &amp; refugees get just and humane treatment in the system.</td>
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**Big Goals**
- Core public consensus for a just, humane & effective asylum system.
- Thriving, diverse & united movement. People with lived experience leading.
- Core political consensus on a just, humane & effective asylum.
- Asylum-seekers & refugees get just and humane treatment in the system.
Three planks of the coalition approach.

1. Shift media & public narrative.
2. Build movement & support base.
3. Develop political support & win policy change.
When & where?

Refugees are human beings

[Heart symbol]
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<th>External</th>
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<td><strong>Prepare, consult, convene</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mar Apr</strong></td>
<td>• Government proposals announced</td>
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**Campaign launch:**

**Project broad support for a better alternative**

Launch of coalition (website, brand etc) with sector backing; Popular & news media;
Lay out our call for a positive alternative; Campaign pledge for better action; allies & diverse voices speak up in support;
Engage decisionmakers & policymakers.

**Campaign days of action:**

**Build pressure for a different path**

Link to Refugee Week: media – inc. support for local & nations coverage;
Campaign mobilisation for better alternatives with strong local angle e.g. constituency-level with MPs & coming Bill;
parliamentary work builds cross-party support.

**Build & broaden support:**

Media work uses 70th anniversary to celebrate contribution of refugees to life in Britain – and threat posed by current proposals.
Legal angles re. UN Convention; continue to build allies & support for better approach; public support from new allies.

**Sustain & escalate pressure:**

Further campaign day of action, media, mobilisation event, coordinated parliamentary work? Details TBC.
Coalition building & next steps

• Incubate concept & sector consultation
• Develop approach & initial plan
• Initiate coalition
• Prepare for action
• Launch
• Deliver key campaign ‘moments’ & joint action.
Thanks – and questions.