



MEDIA RELEASE

AEGIS TRUST, JUSTICE, REDRESS

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Government moves towards closing genocide loophole in UK law

Following concerted lobbying from a coalition of peers, leading legal figures and human rights NGOs, the Government yesterday tabled a fresh amendment to the Coroners and Justice Bill that will help close a legal loophole which has in the past allowed genocide and war crimes suspects to visit the UK or live here for years without fear of prosecution.

The loophole exists due to the fact that current UK legislation on genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity applies only to people who are legally defined as resident in the UK. This does not include anyone on student, business, tourist, academic or skilled / domestic worker visas, or anyone who has been refused asylum under Article 1F(a) of the Refugee Convention but who cannot be returned home for fear of persecution.

Under the Government's new amendment however, all those who have leave to enter the UK to work or study, and anyone seeking asylum or who has been refused asylum but cannot be returned home, would be considered legally resident for the purposes of this legislation. A provision has also been added to include 'any individual who is in lawful custody in the United Kingdom', for example a person who has been detained under immigration powers or following a declaration by the Home Secretary that their presence in the UK was 'not conducive to the public good'.

"We're pleased with the Government's response to this campaign," said Nick Donovan, the Aegis Trust's head of campaigns. "We now look forward to the police being properly resourced to track down and investigate suspected génocidaires in the UK." Sally Ireland, Senior Legal Officer at JUSTICE said 'The government has today sent a strong signal that the UK will not be a safe haven for war criminals and mass murderers'.

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