



Belfast human rights activist could be deported due to Home Office incompetence

Description

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home office

Never attribute to malice what can be explained by incompetence. In Belfast, Home Office [incompetence](#) is threatening Nina Briggs, head of the [Migrant Workers' Union Northern Ireland](#) with deportation.

They insist that Briggs' active appeal against the unfair Home Office decision does not exist. That is despite an immigration tribunal confirming the department submitted documents in her case in December 2025.

Briggs has spent the last 14 years living in Britain or the North of Ireland. Born in the US, she came to Britain to study at St Andrews University in Scotland back in 2012, at age 16. She subsequently entered into a relationship in which, she told the *Canary*, her partner subjected her to terrible domestic abuse. This resulted in physical injuries and severe post-traumatic stress disorder, which a GP and therapist said caused "permanent disability".

Home Office ignores conclusive evidence of domestic abuse

The abuse resulted in Briggs returning to the US to seek treatment between 2018-2019. By the time she had fully recovered, COVID had hit. Travel restrictions during this period meant she was unable to head back to Britain or the north of Ireland. She eventually came to Belfast in 2021, under another student visa, this time for a PhD in intergroup contact and mending conflict at Queen's University Belfast.

Ordinarily, anyone who stays legally in Britain and North of Ireland for 10 years continuously can be [automatically granted Indefinite Leave to Remain](#) (ILR). This gives the holder most of the rights of a British citizen, but without full citizenship. Briggs' reasonable claim is that the period of her medical

care in the US, along with the COVID timeframe, should count towards that 10 year period, on compassionate grounds.

Here's where the malice part of the Home Office enters the picture. The department, tasked by [successive sadists](#) acting as [home secretary](#) tries to find any way it can not to grant people the right to stay. In this case, they deemed Briggs' evidence "not compelling". She told the *Canary*:

This is despite having evidence about the domestic violence from a GP, therapist, witness statements, and testimony from a domestic violence shelter.

Briggs appealed, and the Home Office now claims, implausibly, that her case does not exist. She has now been left in what she refers to as "3C limbo". This is in reference to Section 3C of the [Immigration Act 1971](#). Its terms should extend the rights of her last visa while her appeal is underway. However, because the Home Office say that appeal doesn't exist, they have not granted her those rights. She said:

It means I can't get health care, or legal aid. Nor can I self-employ or fundraise. I'm also facing a no-fault eviction, and Right to Rent checks prevent me from securing new accommodation.

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Racist department prevent woman from attending family funerals

It's a reminder of the cruelty inherent to [Britain's immigration system](#). That has been compounded by the rules preventing Briggs from leaving the country while stuck in this situation. If she did, the Home Office would rule that she had abandoned her case. This would effectively be an admission of guilt for the "crime" of overstaying a visa. Such a finding would permanently affect her ability to travel.

During this period "which extends back to October 2024" she has been unable to attend funerals for her grandmother, a cousin, an uncle, and several friends. Both her mother and stepmother have cancer.

Briggs has further grounds to request the right to stay. Despite being an accomplished data scientist who would be an asset to society here, the Home Office rejected her application for a skilled worker visa. She is bolstering her separate ILR application with evidence of her human rights work. This includes extensive efforts to combat human trafficking and modern slavery, areas the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) tends to fall short on.

High number of poor quality refusals

As part of the efforts against modern slavery, Briggs has helped on investigations into children being [dragged into criminality](#) via [racist pogroms](#) led by loyalist paramilitaries. She told the *Canary*:

Unionist community leaders and politicians have spoken to have been sympathetic to that work. It's their community - they don't want a whole generation of boys with their lives ruined due to getting a criminal record so early.

News of Home Office ineptitude won't surprise anyone who follows the department closely. [Free Movement have highlighted](#) the "high number of poor quality refusals" as one of the "stand out problems of the asylum system". [The National Audit Office slated the Home Office](#) for not having:

"a full understanding of how the Skilled Worker visa route is operating.

The department [fails to train its staff properly](#), and doesn't have enough of them, resulting in [huge backlogs on applications](#)

As a result of all this, combined with a dose of malice injected by the right, we risk losing the expertise and compassion of people like Nina Briggs.

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1. News

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