



Mahmood's plan to win back the left taken to task

Description

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Shabana Mahmood, Zoe Gardner, and a protesters banner which reads 'safe routes now' Labour's hardline home secretary Shabana Mahmood is scheming to win over the Labour left, according to the *Guardian*. Her plan is to introduce new safe routes for refugees. According to migration activist Zoe Gardner, however, Mahmood's proposals are little more than a rebranding exercise:

Mahmood's safe routes amount to rebranded community sponsorship. A lovely but incredibly minor part of refugee protection.

If your church can sponsor a refugee family, great. It simply does not come close to replacing the need for an expansive state-run resettlement program.

Zoe Gardner (@ZoeJardiniere) [June 27, 2026](#)

Safe routes

[The Guardian reported](#) that Mahmood wants to shore up support for her immigration bill with Labour's progressive left. As the progressive left of the Labour Party is practically non-existent, the fact that she's having to make any concessions at all suggests the soft left have concerns too.

Mahmood also attracted criticism from Labour peer lord Alf Dubbs a Jewish man who fled from the Nazis as a child in 1939. Dubbs described Mahmood's policies as performative cruelty. Dubbs also said:

This is Labour's reset moment when we can consign to the past some of the appalling language used by politicians to describe refugees: "invaders", "an island of strangers", "tearing our country apart"

Speaking on the planned changes, the *Guardian* wrote:

With Burnham set to take over in No 10 next month, Mahmood has been attempting to soften some of her hardline plans including reassessing separate proposals to make migrants wait 10 years instead of five for indefinite leave to remain.

Additionally:

[Burnham] is understood to have agreed that the new immigration bill should be introduced as planned on Tuesday, even though he is not expected to be installed as prime minister until 20 July.

The bill is due to be introduced within the week and will include two safe and legal routes for refugees to open from the autumn - a sponsored family route allowing community groups to identify refugees to support, and a university student route with applications taking place within months and refugees arriving next year. A third scheme will allow employers to sponsor refugees from next year.

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[Burnham has flip flopped on Mahmood's policies](#) going from criticising them to backing them to supposedly wanting to water them down.

Shabana Mahmood - Rebrandineering

Speaking more on the "rebranded community sponsorship", [Gardner said](#):

This is the ultimate neoliberal get-out card. We replace a state obligation to provide sanctuary to some of the world's most persecuted people with private acts of charity.

All the onus on the individual, state capacity to assist those most in need stripped back again.

Community sponsorship cannot reach the scale of state run protection programs, & is likely to have diminishing returns year on year.

I repeat, it is a lovely, wonderful thing for a community to do. It should be a nice add-on to a functioning state-run protection system.

The promotion of this scheme also allows people on the right to ask "if you care so much about refugees, why aren't you part of the scheme to rehome them?" Obviously this is like asking someone why they don't fill potholes themselves or perform their own open heart surgery.

Barely touching the sides

Gardner also said

Weâ??re talking about safe routes now, but up until now there have been safe routes. For example, there was family reunification. So if somebody was recognised as being a refugee who had escaped from torture or from war or persecution, they would have been entitled to bring their wife or husband and their children if they were under 18 to live with them in the UK. This government has taken away that safe route.

Now, they say theyâ??re going to look at introducing some new safe routes. Theyâ??ve also suggested that these routes would be capped at potentially a couple of hundred per year. Iâ??m afraid that simply isnâ??t going to touch the size of whatâ??s necessary. And anybody whoâ??s being realistic knows that.

Also, safe routes need to be targeted at the people who would otherwise take the unsafe routes if they are going to replace the unsafe routes. So it would be great to have another resettlement scheme for people from Sudan, for example. But if we donâ??t have a scheme that directly targets the people who are going to take the boats, then the boats will keep coming.

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In closing, she added:

Not to mention of course that THE MOST EFFECTIVE SAFE ROUTE WE HAD â?? family reunification â?? HAS BEEN TRASHED BY THIS LABOUR GOVERNMENT 🙄

Until they bring that back in full, forgive me, but Iâ??ll not be â??won overâ?? by Shabana Mahmood 😞 pic.twitter.com/F8MtRUzjc7

â?? Zoe Gardner (@ZoeJardiniere) [June 27, 2026](#)

Gardner is far from the only ex-supporter who Labour will struggle to win back. More and more voters have seen through the bullsh*t, and they wonâ??t be fooled again.

Featured image via the Canary

By [Willem Moore](#)

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