MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Date:

Dear

**Please oppose the destitution of asylum seekers**

In 2013, the government announced that there would be no increase in asylum support rates to take account of inflation for the second year in succession. This triggered a legal challenge testing the lawfulness of the amount paid to destitute asylum seekers and on 9 April 2014, the High Court handed down its judgment in a case which the Judge described as considering “what was sufficient to keep about 20,000 people above subsistence level destitution, a significant proportion of whom are vulnerable and have suffered traumatic experiences.”

The Judge found that the Government’s assessment of the amount needed by asylum seekers to avoid destitution was flawed and ordered the decision be taken again. In August 2014, the Government completed its review of support rates and concluded that current support rates were adequate to meet essential living needs and would not be increased. There has now been no increase in asylum support since April 2011.

I am very disappointed that the level of support currently being provided to people who have come to the UK to seek sanctuary from conflict and persecution is to remain unchanged. I believe the government should raise asylum support rates to at least 70% of Income Support, the equivalent of £7.17 a day for most adult asylum seekers, for the following reasons:

* Most asylum seekers currently receive just over £5 a day which is insufficient to pay for essentials like food, clothing, toiletries and transport, and pursue an asylum claim.
* Asylum seekers generally arrive in the UK with very limited possessions and will need to purchase essential items (e.g. warm clothing), rather than just replace them.
* Asylum seekers spend an average of around 18 months on Section 95 support - over 10,000 have currently been waiting more than six months for an initial decision.
* Asylum seekers are effectively prohibited from working to support themselves.
* Those without enough to live on may resort to other survival strategies such as illegal work, prostitution and begging. This is bad for them and for society in general.
* Asylum applications in the UK have been less than 26,000 a year for the last five years - easily within the UK’s capacity to deal with efficiently and humanely.
* Higher support rates do not lead to more applications as evidenced by the fact that many EU countries (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, etc.) have far more generous support systems than the UK, but receive much fewer applications.

In view of the above I urge you to show your support for people seeking protection in this country by signing the cross-party EDM on the High Court judgment on asylum support (EDM No. 99). If you prefer not to sign EDMs I would appreciate it if you would write to the Home Secretary regarding the current level of asylum support rates and ask the Government to ensure that Section 95 support is at least equal to 70% of Income Support and that rates are subsequently increased in line with inflation each year.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this important issue, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,