



## Sign-on Letter for Migrant Inclusion in COVID-19 Vaccine Access in the UK

5 May, 2021

The Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

The Rt. Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Rt. Hon. Johnson and Rt. Hon. Hancock,

**We, members of the migrant and refugee community; people with chronic and underlying health conditions such as HIV, viral hepatitis, TB, hypertension, and diabetes; public health professionals; community advocates; civil society representatives; and concerned citizens; urge you to immediately provide COVID-19 vaccines to all people who are migrants, refugees, displaced or non-national people residing in the United Kingdom (UK). Keeping the most vulnerable populations safe from COVID-19 through universal vaccine access keeps everyone safe.**

The global pandemic will not be over until it is over for everyone, regardless of immigration status, and this includes migrants and refugees, who are most at risk. There were an estimated [9.5 million non-UK citizens \(14% of the population\)](#) in the UK in 2019. However, people who are migrants or refugees face immense barriers to healthcare, and too often lack coverage in national health systems, health insurance, and the financial resources to seek medical care.

Primary healthcare is inaccessible to people with [irregular migration status](#). In fact, last year, the European African Treatment Advocates Network (EATAN) survey among 300 migrants in the EU, UK, and countries of origin in sub-Saharan Africa found that 5% could not access prescription medications at all and an overwhelming 87% had experienced disruptions or some impacts on accessing prescription medications during the pandemic. This indicates significant barriers to accessing life-saving medications and attending to healthcare needs. Even a 5% drop in treatment access puts people at risk

of health complications, vulnerable to COVID-19 infections, and can cause a rise in hospitalizations.

People who are migrants or refugees in the UK experience a [higher incidence of poverty](#), overcrowded housing conditions, reliance on public transportation, and a high concentration in unsafe work places or jobs where physical distancing is difficult, leaving them more vulnerable and at a much higher risk of COVID 19 infection compared to those with full legal status. Data collection on mortality rates among these populations differ across the UK and EU countries, however, significantly worse outcomes have been documented among the Black and ethnic minority (BAME) communities where many migrants live. In the UK, [one-third of COVID-19 patients](#) were BAME, despite comprising only 22% of the population. [The risk of COVID-19 death](#) was twice as great for Black men, 1.4 times greater for Black women, and 1.5 times greater for South Asian men, compared with white peers, and taking into account other socioeconomic variables.

[According to Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\) experts](#), “Nobody should be afraid to seek the care they need.” The UK’s COVID-19 response must be inclusive to ensure migrants and refugees are incorporated into [public health strategies and planning](#) because the success of vaccination campaigns rely on voluntary and low-threshold access. Most available vaccines are given in two doses over the course of a few weeks. People who are migrants or refugees must be encouraged to seek vaccines and be reassured that there are strictly enforced firewalls between health and immigration officials, such as a ban on subpoenas of health records, so that they seek follow-up doses.

In October 2020, the European Commission’s [Preparedness for COVID-19 Vaccination Strategies and Vaccine Deployment](#) plan cited refugees as a priority group. However, undocumented migrants are not included, and other displaced people or non-nationals are not prioritized for vaccination. Furthermore, each country is responsible for developing their own vaccine strategies, which define and prioritize the groups for vaccination. Exclusion of these populations from national vaccine plans risks ongoing transmission within and outside these groups and will prolong the epidemic in countries.

Our demands have been echoed by the UN Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW); the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees of the Council of Europe; and the Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants of the InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights. Aligning with the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights statement](#) and [guidance](#), we urge the UK to ensure non-discriminatory, equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines to all people regardless of their nationality, immigration and migration status.

We call on the UK to enact the [following policies](#):

- Must adhere to their international obligations on the right to health, right to science, and non-discrimination.
- Must provide non-discriminatory, equitable distribution and access to COVID-19 vaccination to all migrants, refugees, displaced people, non-nationals, and their

- families, regardless of nationality, migration status, or other grounds of discrimination.
- Must prioritize the non-discriminatory, equitable access to vaccines that takes into account the particular vulnerabilities, risks, and needs of migrants, refugees, displaced people, non-nationals, and their families, who are most exposed and vulnerable to the SARS-CoV-2 virus/COVID-19.
  - Must prioritize people for vaccination on the basis of medical needs and public health, by establishing appropriate health criteria that are in line with human rights standards and norms. This includes prioritization according to social determinants of health, such as migrants and refugees in irregular situations, those with low-income, people living in camps or unsafe conditions, people in immigration detention, and migrants and refugees in transit.
  - Must explore all policy options to ensure optimal use of available pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity across countries, including supporting the TRIPS Waiver proposal submitted by India and South Africa to the World Trade Organization and supported by over 100 countries, to secure a greater pool of COVID-19 vaccines and other health technologies needed to address the pandemic. This will curb vaccine rationing and exclusion of migrants, refugees, displaced people, non-nationals, and their families.
  - Must adopt measures to overcome healthcare access barriers and provide focused outreach and provision of information among migrants, refugees, displaced people, non-nationals, and their families, in languages they understand and in formats they can access.
  - Must ensure national vaccination communications, campaigns, and plans avoid rhetoric and terminology that stigmatize and reinforce harmful narratives against migrants, which may further exclude and prevent migrants and refugees from seeking the COVID-19 vaccines and healthcare they need.
  - Must enact firewalls between immigration enforcement and the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, in order to prevent the fear or risk of reporting, detention, deportation, and other penalties as a result of migration or immigration status. Vaccine registration should not be used to collect nor share information about migration or immigration status.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully,

Elijah Amooti  
European African Treatment Advocates Network, UK/EU

Bryn Gay  
Treatment Action Group, United States

## Organizations

1	Adela Senkubuge	Reinventing Success	UK
2	Alex Sparrowhawk	UK Community Advisory Board	UK
3	Alex Stais, CIO	Providence St. Joseph Health	United States
4	Dr Amelia Hempel-Jorgensen	The Open University	UK
5	Ana Isabel Peña López	Plataforma de Salud Mental de Aragón	España
6	Ana Martínez Calvo	Plataforma de Salud Mental de Aragón	España
7	Andrea Maria Ricci	LILA Piemonte ODV - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
8	Dr Andrew Gargett	The Open University	UK
9	Andria	AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) London	UK
10	Dr Anna Comas-Quinn	The Open University	UK
11	Annamaria	LILA - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
12	Annemarie	The Open University	UK
13	Aura Roig	Metzineres. Environments of Shelter for Women Who Use Drugs Surviving Violences (ICEERS)	España
14	Ayesha Peeran	The Open University	UK
15	Bhavika Jessani	The Open University	UK
16	Brook K. Baker	Health Global Access Project	United States
17	Dr Carol Azumah Dennis	The Open University	UK
18	Cathy Crawford	Cathy Crawford	UK
19	Christina Antoniadi	Christina Antoniadi	UK
20	Concepción Sarasa Bosque	Salud Aragon	España
21	Dr Coral Jones	Doctors in Unite	UK
22	Cristina Sam Momo	SOS RACISMO	España
23	Dean Baker	Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington, DC	United States
24	Dr Milka Sokolovic	European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)	België
25	Dr Neda Milevska-Kostova	International Alliance of Patients Organisations	UK

26	Edith Espinola	Asociación SEDOAC	España
27	Edith Espinola	Red de Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe - RED LATINAS	España
28	Edwin Bernard	HIV Justice Network	Netherlands
29	Dr Elizabeth FitzGerald	The Open University	UK
30	Elizabeth Tilley	Open University (The)	UK
31	Félix Fuentenebro	Medicus Mundi Spain	España
32	Fereshte Goshtasbpour	The Open University	UK
33	Fernando Gutiérrez Gómez	"Ciudadanía contra la Exclusión Sanitaria" Cantabria	España
34	Filomena Ruggiero	FEDERACIÓN DE PLANIFICACIÓN FAMILIAR ESTATAL	España
35	Fiona Pettitt	UK Community Advisory Board	UK
36	Flavia Kyomukama	Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS (AGHA) Uganda	Netherlands
37	Francesca Pippo	The Open University	UK
38	Francisco Rossi	IFARMA Foundation	Colombia
39	Freek Spinnewijn	FEANTSA	België
40	GEMA	Medicus Mundi Gipuzkoa	Spain
41	Dr Gerry Howley	The Open University	UK
42	Giacomo Dessì	LILA Cagliari ODV - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
43	Grant Sugden	Waverley Care	UK
44	Dr Helena King	The Open University	UK
45	Dr Inma Alvarez	The Open University	UK
46	Ivan Finney	The Open University	UK
47	James Mugga	Connect Uganda radio	UK
48	Javier Padilla Bernáldez	Colectivo Silesia	España
49	Jeff Ukiri	BHA For Equality	UK
50	Jo Marie Chrosniak, HM	Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investment	United States
51	Jonathan R Rix	The Open University & The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences	UK
52	José Luis Ayerbe Aguayo	Medicus Mundi Sur	España
53	Jose Manuel Lalana Cuenca	Sociedad Aragonesa de Salud Mental (SASM-AEN)	Aragon

54	Jose Mejia	METRO Charity	UK
55	Judy Byron, OP	Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment	United States
56		Médecins du Monde	Global
57	Karen Horsley	The Open University	UK
58	Karen Rodríguez	Red de Hondureñas Migradas	España
59	Karen Watson, CFA	Congregation of St. Joseph	United States
60	Kurt Barnes	The Episcopal Church (DFMS)	United States
61	Laura Supino	LILA - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
62	Lella Cosmaro	Fondazione LILA Milano - Italian League for Fighting AIDS	Italia
63	Letonde Hermine Gbedo	Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle prostitute Onluss	Italia
64	Dr Licia Brussa	TAMPEP Network	The Netherlands
65	Lilian kaluma	European African Treatment Advocates Network (EATAN)	UK
66	Lorena Ortiz Cabrero	SOS RACISMO Madrid	España
67	Louise Cliff	TB Europe Coalition	UK
68	Lucy Polo	Asociación por Ti Mujer	España
69	Dr Luis Andrés Gimeno Feliu	Spanish Society of Family and Community Medicine	España
70	Lydia Kuykendal	Mercy Investment Services	United States
71	M <sup>a</sup> Angeles Cardiel Alonso	Plataforma Solidaria de Torrero	España
72	Makinder Chahal	Trade Sexual Health	UK
73	Manuel Díaz Olalla	Sociedad española de medicina humanitaria (SEMHU)	España
74	Mare Tralla	AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) London	UK
75	María A Encinas	REDER	España
76	Maria Di Benedetto	LILA - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
77	Dr Maria Leedham	The Open University	UK
78	Marilyn Llanes, OP	Adrian Dominican Sisters, Portfolio Advisory Board	United States
79	Mark Fielding	The Open University	UK
80	Martyn Hammersley	The Open University	UK
81	Mary Dugan SC	Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Ohio	United States
82	Meg Jones-Monteiro	Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)	United States
83	Memory Sachikonye	UK Community Advisory Board	UK
84	Merenptah Asante	Umbrella UK	UK
85	Mesfin Ali	Embrace UK Community	UK

86	Dr Mirjam Hauck	The Open University	UK
87	Miss A Chowdhury	The Open University	UK
88	Dr Montserrat León Latre	Servicio Aragonés de Salud	España
89	Natalie Coleman	The Open University	UK
90	Natalie Olivadoti	The Open University	UK
91	Nuria Homedes	Salud y Farmacos	United States
92	Pat Miguel Tomaino	Zevin Asset Management	United States
93	Paul Sommerfeld	TB Alert	UK
94	Paulette Johnson	The Open University	UK
95	Peter Keogh	The Open University	UK
96	Petra Vackova	The Open University	UK
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98	Dr Prithvi Shrestha	The Open University, UK	UK
99	Ramón Espacio	National Coordinator NGO on HIV/AIDS (CESIDA)	España
100	Ramón Espacio Casanovas	National Coordinator NGO on HIV/AIDS (CESIDA)	España
101	Rebecca Wilhelm	The Open University	UK
102	Reyes Velayos	Apoyo Positivo	España
103	Robert van Steensel	Individual	Netherlands
104	Rose Mary Meyer	Shareholder Education and Advocacy Group	US
105	Rose Murasa	NNHG	UK
106	Roy Trevelion	UK Community Advisory Board	UK
107	Rubén Mora Mesquida	Stop SIDA	España
108	Sabrina Penon	Fondazione LILA Milano ONLUS	Italia
109	Dr Samantha Murphy	The Open University	UK
110	Sandra Curridori	FONAZIONE LILA MILANO	Italia
111	Sarah Jex	The Open University	UK
112	Sergiy Kondratyuk	International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC)	South Africa
113	Sister Teresa George, D.C.	Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise	United States
114	Soledad Lucero	Movilidad Humana	España
115	Sophie Strachan	Sophia Forum	UK
116	Sr. Marie Cigrand	Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia	United States
117	Stefania Reale	LILA - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
118	Dr Suresh Nesaratnam	The Open University	UK
119	Tom Kucharz	Ecologistas en Acción	España
120	Tom McCaney	Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia	United States
121	Tom Witney	The Open University	UK

122	Umut Erel	The Open University	UK
123	Valentina Mascia	LILA Cagliari - Italian League for the Fight against AIDS	Italia
124	Vanessa López	Salud por Derecho	España
125	Dr Zerbib	CFE-CGC - Confédération Française de l'Encadrement - Confédération Générale des Cadres	France

### Individuals

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127	Colleen Daniels	Individual	UK
128	Jennifer Purser	Individual	UK
129	Luke Kwamya	Individual	UK
130	Maria Greca	Individual	Italia
131	Maria Greca	Individual	Italia
132	Paul Clift	Individual	UK
133	Trond Furenes	Individual	Norway