

The International Organisation *Against* Migrants: the truth behind the IOM

A shadowy organisation calling itself the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** is launching its new Birmingham operation. We, Brummie refugees and activists, would like to tell them: You are not welcome here!

The IOM describes itself as “an intergovernmental body that acts to protect the interests of migrants.” The truth, however, is starkly different. The IOM is effectively a deportation mechanism for migrants who are pushed into poverty and destitution by the UK government’s immigration policies after their asylum or immigration claims are rejected. As such, it is part and parcel of the government’s efforts to increase the removal of unwanted migrants and refugees from the country. If forced removals are so costly and cause a lot of fuss, the logic goes, why not do it another way, while pretending to be compassionate and humane.

The IOM runs a so-called ‘voluntary return’ programme, offering refugees and asylum seekers some money to return to their home countries. In reality, though, this is nothing more than a thinly disguised deportation policy to ‘manage’ migration and asylum. For it is only when the immigration authorities withdraw all means of support (financial, accommodation, healthcare etc.) that people take up these bribes, having been left with no alternative but homelessness and destitution.

For example, the IOM is currently targeting ‘failed asylum seekers’ from Iraq, coinciding with a Home Office decision to deport more Iraqis, claiming their country is now ‘safe to return’, in a futile attempt to convince the British public that the US-UK disastrous adventure in Iraq has been ‘successful’. Several thousand Iraqis have already returned through IOM’s programme, while others have been forcibly and violently removed on special charter flights. This is despite the IOM’s own representative in Iraq admitting that **“the situation for those returning is grim... Many returnees are unemployed, while only a fraction have received any form of humanitarian assistance other than some food rations.”**

Of course, the IOM makes sure that it takes no responsibility for the returnees’ welfare after they arrive home. All participants in the scheme are asked to sign a waiver reading: “the IOM has no responsibility for me and my dependants once I return [to Iraqi territory] and I hereby release IOM from any liability in this respect.” Further, anyone participating in the so-called Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) is prohibited from returning to the UK for a minimum of five years. Those who pay their own airfare home and receive no assistance from the IOM are eligible to reapply in 12 months.

In short, while the International Organization for Migration claims to ‘assist migrants’, their policies are not concerned with the well-being of people but with the advancement of rich Western economies. The IOM’s primary function is help governments meet their deportation targets, regardless of the real dangers facing returning refugees and migrants. Hence, it will be more accurate to call it the International Organisation **against** Migrants (still IOM though!).

For further information about IOM see <http://www.noborder.org/iom>