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Britain

Rudd goes - oppose racist immigration regime

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The British Home Secretary Amber Rudd was forced to resign on the evening of 29 April 2018 after a tumultuous period in which she had made a number of statements to Parliament and to the media that were latter proved inaccurate. These concerned immigration policy and deportations and followed revelations in the mass media, spearheaded by the *Guardian* newspaper, of the scandalous treatment of long-term residents from the formerly British Caribbean. Rudd has been replaced by Sajid Javid, the first BAME (Black, Asian, Middle Eastern) politician to hold the post.

The “Windrush generation”, (the term comes from HMS Windrush which brought servicemen from Jamaica to Britain in 1948) is a term used to refer to people from the Caribbean who came to Britain between 1948 and 1971 to work notably in the British public services, transport and the health service. Although they arrived with the right to live and work in Britain as British and Commonwealth citizens they have been impacted by the “hostile environment” for immigrants current Prime Minister Theresa May created when she was Home Secretary. [*International Viewpoint*]

Amber Rudd's resignation as Home Secretary is perhaps the most significant ministerial departure for racism since Enoch Powell's. [1] She oversaw a racist deportation policy and denied knowing that it was happening. This has torn away the protective shield from her predecessor in the role and current Prime Minister, Theresa May.

This is a very significant victory for Diane Abbott, Rudd's Labour shadow minister and David Lammy. [2] And while many readers of *Socialist Resistance* will have frequently been furious with the *Guardian* since Corbyn's election as Labour leader, its journalist Amelia Gentleman has been absolutely tenacious in bringing this scandal to public attention.

More and more horror stories have emerged about the treatment of people from the “Windrush generation”. People have been arrested and held in detention camps, dismissed from jobs, been refused admission to the country when returning from family events abroad, denial to access to the NHS and had benefits withdrawn.

All of this has created a climate of fear for people who came here as British citizens. And it is a consequence of the regulations introduced with the 2014 Immigration Act, piloted by Theresa May, which introduced this new regime of documentation. The same Act removed protection from longstanding residents in Britain, who had not achieved “settled status”. This left groups like the Windrush migrants vulnerable, especially when the setting of targets for deportations led them to be seen as “easy pickings”.

And the Windrush migrants are far from the only group to have received inhuman and unacceptable treatment at the hands of the immigration regime. We reject the notion of “good migrants” and “bad migrants”, pointing for example to the horrors suffered by thousands, including children, in immigration detention.

The outrage that has been generated over the Windrush scandal, as well as the concerns about increasing racist attacks in the wake of the Brexit referendum and the ability of people from across the globe to continue to come to take up vital roles in our public service, should be used to challenge the racism at the heart of immigration controls in Britain.

May, who sent immigration enforcement vans onto the streets of Britain in the run up to 2015 General election, was the architect of the “hostile environment” approach. [3] In October 2017, the *Guardian* reported that “one in five stopped by immigration enforcement is a UK citizen.” [4] Lawyers and MPs raised concern that this was leading to “illegal racial profiling.” Nor was this the first expression of concern. Jeremy Corbyn, from the back benches, had raised the issue of immigration swoops at public transport hubs in 2013, following a letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to the Home Office. [5]

Corbyn, Shadow Home Secretary Dianne Abbott and other members of Labour’s front bench have a long record of taking up these issues – including when Labour itself was in office. And Tottenham MP David Lammy, one of Rudd’s most persistent critics, has proved himself a worthy successor to Bernie Grant, the first black MP for the constituency – something most on the left doubted when he was first selected.

It was no surprise that former Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett told the media that Amber Rudd should not resign. That’s why Dianne Abbott pointed out on the *Today* programme on 30 April that Labour was under new management. [6]

Lammy, Abbott and others have insistently pointed out that Rudd’s “promises” to the Windrush generation have been sorely lacking in detail. Newly appointed Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, will rightly be under pressure to spell out what compensation will be offered and how it will be ensured that access to benefits and services are swiftly reinstated. And demands that May address the House as soon as possible must be supported.

There are also other issues that need unpicking. For example, Labour’s Stephen Doughty pointed to the way that cuts in legal aid have impacted on people needing to challenge immigration decisions on the *Today programme* on 30 April.

Most significantly, Black Activists Rising Against the Cuts spokesperson Zita Holbourne, has been pointing out on social media that there is a charter flight scheduled to leave Britain for Jamaica any time after Thursday. Holbourne has seen the removal notice for one woman currently in Yarlswood detention centre.

Holbourne strongly cautions against falling into the divide and rule trap of “good migrants” and “bad migrants”. She puts it like this:

Those flights include people who have been criminalised by definition of their immigration status, people who if British would have been able to serve their time for minor crimes, be rehabilitated and get on with their lives, instead they face double punishment and banishment to countries they don't know, they also include young people, some in teens, who because of institutional racism have been stopped and searched disproportionately and by virtue of the number of stops are deemed to be criminals and likely to have committed an offence even though never been arrested, charged, gone to trial, found guilty of anything. So that could be your child so when you want to say 'only Windrush' bear in mind that the children and grandchildren also being forcibly removed would not be in the UK if their kin were not part of the generation who came from Commonwealth countries to the so-called 'mother country' many of whom were invited here to come and work to do essential jobs in post war Britain. Sign and share the petition now and follow @Barac on twitter for further up dates. [7]

Rudd’s resignation comes at the beginning of the week where there will be local elections in large parts of England [Thursday 3 May], elections in which Labour under Corbyn is expected to make significant gains. Last year, as May unexpectedly called a snap General election, the slogan for many campaigners was “Let June be the end of May”. Despite a huge effort and a positive showing that exceeded everyone’s expectations, Corbyn didn’t quite make it to Number 10.

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Eleven months later, the Tories are in even greater turmoil. The *Telegraph*, no friend of Corbyn, announces the appointment of Thatcherite and former banker Javid appointment thus: "Sajid Javid promises 'fair' immigration policy as new Home Secretary while pressure mounts on Theresa May."

May has insisted that Rudd's resignation was over giving Parliament information that was not correct – trying but failing to divert attention from the policy issues themselves. [8] Dianne Abbot is absolutely right to demand both that May takes responsibility and that the pernicious "hostile environment" policy ends.

Javid, whom May demoted to communities secretary from Business, Innovation and Skills, has clashed many times with the Prime Minister. While he supported Remain during the referendum, this was somewhat of a surprise as he had been seen as being hostile to the European Union. Now commentators predict that May is likely to have a further problem at this week's Cabinet meeting, as Javid's appointment and Rudd's departure is likely to see the blocking of her proposed hybrid customs arrangement.

All this means that the need to keep up the pressure on May and her fragile administration could not be greater.

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[1] Enoch Powell was a Tory politician who was sacked as Shadow Defence Secretary by Tory leader Edward Heath from his post on 21 April 1968, the day after he deepened his attack on migrants with a profoundly racist speech, referred to as the "Rivers of blood" speech.

[2] Lammy has been the Labour MP for Tottenham in North London since 2000. Born of Guayanese parents, the black MP nominated Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership in 2015 but is not seen as a Corbyn supporter.

[3] *The Guardian* 22 April 2018 "["If you create a hostile environment, you shouldn't be surprised that it's hostile"](#)".

[4] *The Guardian* 28 October 2017 "["One in five stopped by immigration enforcement is a UK citizen, figures show"](#)".

[5] *The Guardian* 3 August 2013 "["Immigration spot checks not racist, says Home Office"](#)".

[6] The *Today* programme is an influential news and opinion programme on for 3 hours every weekday morning on the main BBC Radio channel.

[7] Change.org "["Stop all charter flight deportations to Jamaica and other Commonwealth countries"](#)".

[8] *The Guardian* 30 April 2018 "["Theresa May rejects suggestion Rudd resigned over May's own policy decisions"](#)".