

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MPF PUBLIC MEETING**

#### **“Family Migration Rules: Divided Families- A Call for Change”**

London: Monday, 7 October 2013:

Today the Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) organised a public meeting on the impacts of new family migration rules introduced by the UK Government. The rules that came into force on 9 July 2012 set up the new minimum income requirement of £18,600 for British nationals and permanent residents (UK sponsors) seeking to sponsor a non-EEA spouse or partner, raising to £22,400 to sponsor a child in addition and a further £2,400 for each further child included in the application; and new rules on sponsorship of non-EEA adult/elderly dependants applying to come to the UK –which makes it almost impossible for the elderly parents or grandparent of a British citizen or settled person to join them in the UK.

Prominent guests speakers, including Jeremy Corbyn MP, Manjit Gill QC, Adrian Berry – Chair of Immigration Lawyers Practitioners’ Association, Habibur Rahman -Chief Executive of Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), Ruth Grove-White of Migrant Rights Network, Dilowar Hussain Khan –Director of London Muslim Centre, Md Shafiqur Rahman (Belal) – Chair of Society of Bangladeshi Solicitors, community activists Ataur Rahman and Nazir Ahmed - strongly criticise the unfairness of minimum income rules on family reunion cases, the damages this causes to family life and a child’s upbringing. MPF Chairperson Mohammed Khaled Noor presides over the meeting.

The speakers expressed their concerns at the whole tenor of the family migration rules, Government policy on bringing down the annual net migration to tens’ of thousands and Immigration debate. It is deeply disturbing that, David Cameron, the Prime Minister, has recently been advocating for even harsher measures than the restrictive family reunion Immigration Rules which his government introduced in 2012; and new ideas on empowering private landlords to check immigration status and restrictions of migrants’ access to NHS. All speakers were united that family union is a fundamental right enshrined in national and international laws and not a privilege.

Most of the speakers advocate that Government should immediately review of the minimum income requirements and implement the recommendations of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration (AAPG on Migration). The AAPG on Migration in their reports published in June 2013, recommended that the level of the income requirement should be reviewed with a view to minimising any particular impact on UK sponsors, the family migration rules should ensure that children are supported to live with their parents in the UK where their best interest requires this, and, prospective non-EEA partners earning should be considered for inclusion in the rules.

In his speech Jeremy Corbyn MP robustly criticises the new family migration rules, and says that new income rules on family reunion cases is unfair – which is causing damage to family life and children’s upbringing. He further says that “migrants to the UK make a huge contribution to our society and living standards and blaming them for the recession is simply wrong”.

He further says, it is deeply brutal to place an arbitrary figure. It (£18,600) seems a low figure for those who are currently earning £100,000 to £150,000. We have a right to family reunion as stated in the law. What would happen if this debate took place in the 60's and 70's? If it had not been for migration where would all our current professionals have come from? We would have been far poorer.

Habibur Rahman, the Chief Executive of JCWI, in his speech says, human rights laws, Conventions and treaties in which fundamental rights are enshrined, are not the worth the paper they are written on unless they are available by all people irrespective of their background. He further says, administration of the Coalition Government not just introducing unjust restrictive immigration laws they have combined migrants' access to justice. Together with these draconian legislative changes and legal aid cuts the Government also has developed a vicious public relation (PR) exercise to promote their multi-pronged attack on migrants' rights.

He further says, this reminds me of apartheid in South Africa. The government have made up their minds to bring in laws. We cannot rest and must campaign about these rules. We have great power, 15% of the votes come from us and we have members of parliament supporting us. He says, seeds of xenophobia being planted in our society. He invites all to work towards organising community based campaigns, rallies and demonstrations so that politician succumbed to our pressure and repeal these inhuman and notorious immigration laws.

Ruth Grove White of Migrant Rights Network, in her speech says, new rules introduced last July 2012 are a ruthless attack on family union. Workers and students already limited and now families are affected who are at the heart of our community. These new rules are affecting many different communities. We need to campaign and lobby because the MP's are listening and there are political parties who oppose these laws. Use the media to get our message across. Put ourselves in the spotlight. These events will help us find ways to fight together.

Barrister Adrian Berry, Chair of Immigration Lawyers Practitioners' Association, in his speech says family reunion has been tightened by this government. A further bill will consist of severe measures which will further tighten laws. A general attack for family rights of migrants in the UK. There is a moral aspect as well as a legal principal. Who is the government trying to impress? The challenge is to reach out to the government and say many affected are also voters and parts of the franchise.

Md. Shofiqur Rahman (Belal), Chairman of the Society of Bangladeshi Solicitors, in his speech questioned, why should one spouse have to earn £18,600 to earn the right to apply for the other spouses' to migrate? This is a genuine call for change during our times.

Community leader Ataur Rahman says, draconian laws being introduced by both parties. We are urging our community to come forward and meet local members of parliament. From 25th June this Government have erased visitor migrants' rights to appeal. I urge all to lobby the parliament to resist these new laws which limit the migrant community and violate human rights.

Writer and community activist Nazir Ahmed says, harsh immigration rules have left many families divided, especially due to high income thresholds. This has caused depression and affecting the young children's upbringing. Immigration issues are being considered as a political tool by politicians. Thresholds are set too high when there should be no threshold at all.

Large number of professionals from various professions including lawyer, academics, social workers, journalists, activists, community leaders all attended in this event.

Note:

The Muslim Professionals Forum, UK (MPF) is an independent and non- prof organisation for Professionals. Founded in 2008, we welcome professionals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and those who are willing to support the progression of the Muslim community through intellectual dialogue. We believe that effective discourse within communities, and engaging and sharing experience with others, is one of the best ways forward to address certain social and cultural challenges which we are facing in today's pluralist Britain. MPF aims to work against racial discrimination, islamophobic and racist attitudes, racial discrimination, crime and disorder, domestic violence and violation of human rights. We are committed to work in partnership with other professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

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