



Petition against Government's plan to increase visa fees reaches 10,000 signatures

Alex Bulat, Co-Director
Migrant Democracy Project
E: info@migrantdemos.org.uk
T: 07745 908661

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 1 August 2023

The Government's recent announcement to increase the fees immigrants need to pay in visas and NHS surcharge sparked outrage and protest amongst migrants, [organisations, and trade unions](#). [A petition launched by an affected migrant has now reached 10,000 signatures](#).

Brazilian resident in the UK, Juliana Lobo, who will be affected by the increase in the immigration fees, started a Parliament petition advocating against the policy. The petition has now reached 10,000 signatures which will trigger a response from the Government.

Migrant Democracy Project has been supporting Juliana and others affected by the announcement to advocate for themselves. Many migrants who are about to be affected by the petition have no right to vote in the UK at all, limiting their chances to oppose the Government's plan.

Migrant Democracy Project's campaign Our Home Our Vote advocates for the extension of the right to vote to all residents, no matter where they are from. Currently, EU and Commonwealth citizens have the right to vote in the UK, at least in local elections. Many migrants from other nationalities have no right to vote at all. Migrants like Juliana, who are disenfranchised from UK politics, are doubly affected by announcements, suffering the financial consequences and not having their interests taken into account in the political sphere. Migrant Democracy Project believes that if all residents in the UK had the right to vote, migrants' interests would not so easily be ignored in politics.

[As work visas will rise by 15% and student visas, citizenship, entry clearance and leave to remain applications by at least 20%](#), migrants like Juliana will be double-taxed and will face exorbitant fees to stay in the UK with her family. For her family of four, she will have to pay over £10,000 to stay in her home. Although excluded from the ballot box, migrants like her are fighting back through statements, petitions, and contact with their representatives.

The Government's announcement to increase visa fees comes as a proposed solution to fund the pay increase for workers in the public sector. Whilst workers should undoubtedly receive a pay increase, this should not come at the expense of migrants, many of whom are workers in public sector jobs as well and are subject to the same income and other types of tax in the UK.

The petition will continue gathering signatures with the aim of 100,000 so it can be considered for a Parliament debate.

Lara Parizotto, Co-Director of Migrant Democracy Project said:

“It is profoundly unfair that migrants are once again being scapegoated for a problem they did not create. Of course, we all support public sector workers being paid fairly. But migrants are workers too and should not be made to fund a policy devised to divide. It is hard to imagine this and many other anti-immigrant policies happening if all residents in the UK had the right to vote. Governments would need to take the interest of all voters into account and create policies in the interest of all their constituents. We need voting rights for all and remove the profit made over immigration applications.”

Juliana Lobo, Brazilian worker who will be affected by the policy said:

“This policy the Government announced will have an enormous impact on me and my family. We already have to work extremely hard to save money to renew our visas but as a family of four, we will now need to find over £10,000 to simply stay in our home in the UK. I don’t think this is fair. Of course, I support the pay increase for all workers, including my children’s teachers and doctors, but migrants like myself are workers too and pay all taxes like everybody else. All I want is to have the right to live here peacefully but policies like this make me feel ever more excluded. I started the petition because there are so few options available for me to speak up against this. As a Brazilian in the UK, I don’t even have the right to vote, which is also unfair. There is so much that needs to change and I want to do my part to defend our rights.”

Notes for editors

Migrant Democracy Project is a not for profit organisation encouraging migrants to actively participate in UK democracy. We encourage voter registration and campaign for residence-based voting rights.

The petition against the Government’s announcement on visa fee and NHS surcharge increases can be found here: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/641140>

Over 60 trade unions and migrant organisations, including Migrant Democracy Project, signed the statement against the Government’s plan to fund a public sector pay rise through higher NHS and visa fees for migrants.

Further information can be found on our website - <https://www.migrantdemos.org.uk/> and on Twitter - @MigrantDemos