



Home Office

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Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11 January 2024

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for letter of 13 December on the reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention.

This Government's ratification of the Istanbul Convention sent a clear message not only within the UK, but also overseas, that Britain is committed to tackling violence against women and girls. To enable ratification, we took a reservation on Article 59 which requires countries to issue residence permits to all migrant victims of domestic abuse.

We are far from alone in making reservations. 25 other countries have made a reservation on ratification or indicated their intention to do so when signing. That is a majority of the countries who have signed the Convention. Nine of the countries ratified with a reservation on Article 59 as we have done.

The reservation does not mean that we are not committed to supporting migrant victims. We have considered the findings of the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot, alongside other assessments, and taken account of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's 'Safety before Status: The Solutions' report.

As a result, we will be allowing further cohorts of migrant victims a period of leave whilst they consider their future options. The intention is to put victims who are here as a partner of a student or worker in the position of having status independent of their abusive sponsor, with access to public funds, which aligns them with those who hold leave under the family route. This will be the widest expansion of the destitution

domestic violence concession since its introduction in 2012. Whilst having leave on this concessionary basis will not make the victim eligible for settlement under the domestic violence indefinite leave to remain provisions, I believe it to be a positive step for migrant victims of domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds.

Furthermore, we will widen the immediate settlement provisions for those who do have a legitimate expectation of settlement, but who find themselves a victim of domestic abuse in the form of transnational marriage abandonment, where they otherwise meet the current eligibility criteria. This will come via a bespoke Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse section in the Immigration Rules which were laid in Parliament on 7 December and updated guidance for the handling of all applications from migrant victims. We are also providing £1.4 million of funding per year until 2024-25 to continue to fund the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme.

The reservation to Article 59 will be kept under review as policies which address support for migrant victims of domestic abuse develop.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Home Secretary