

## **'History Will Judge this Shabby Government' and its Weaponisation of Refugee Lives, says Lord Alf Dubs – Byline Times**

*Byline Times* <[info@bylinetimes.com](mailto:info@bylinetimes.com)> (<https://bylinetimes.com/>)

### **The Labour peer – who fled Nazi Germany and came to Britain as a child refugee in 1939 – told *Byline Times* that Priti Patel's plans "to penalise people for the way they reach safety is absolutely unheard of in the history of refugees"**

Playing politics with refugees' lives is "one of the worst things" the Government has done, according to Lord Alf Dubs – who believes Priti Patel is helping traffickers by refusing to provide safe routes for people in need of asylum.

The Labour peer, who came to Britain as a child refugee on the Kindertransport, fleeing Nazi Germany, told *Byline Times* that this week's tragedy in the Channel – in which 31 people died after their boat capsized – is "made worse by the fact that it was foreseeable".

"The things we could be doing, we're not doing," he said. "This is a problem which can be dealt with humanely and with respect to the rights of individuals."

Taking into account the context that the UK accepts fewer refugees than its neighbours in Europe, including France and Germany, "we are arguing here about a handful" of people in need, Lord Dubs told *Byline Times* – the reaction to which "is totally out of proportion and lacking in understanding".

He believes that the Home Secretary's "awful" hardline approach to those crossing the Channel on boats "disregards human rights, tramples on the rights of refugees and develops conflicts within our community – because she makes people feel that 'others' are somehow not acceptable".

"When leading members of the Government – that is to say the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister – signal to people that these people shouldn't be coming here, they shouldn't be here, then there is hostility in our communities," he said. "It has an adverse effect on the country as a whole."

Last year, the Government voted down the so-called 'Dubs Amendment' to the Brexit Bill, which would have ensured that the UK continued to allow unaccompanied child refugees in Europe to join family members in Britain after Brexit. For Lord Dubs, it is just one example of what is causing the problem.

*Hardeep Matharu explores Priti Patel's hardline approach to refugees on Byline TV*

Recent events are merely a continuation of this approach, Lord Dubs told *Byline Times*, with the focus on refugees and boats by Priti Patel a "cynical attempt to get support by being hard on incomers, the 'other', people from elsewhere".

"It's unworthy of the Government, but then there are so many things unworthy of the Government," he said. "But this is one of the worst things that they're doing."

Far from advancing the 'British values' they are always referencing, the likes of Johnson and Patel are actually debasing those values, according to the peer, who believes that "history will judge this Government as being shabby and letting down the values of this country" and "deliberately trying to distort and undermine them".

"The Government is acting as if it is still an imperial power – 'we don't need other countries, we don't need Europe' – and forgetting that we're a medium-sized island off the north shore of Europe," he said. "We still have ideas quite beyond our status. Britain was a very powerful country, thanks to the Empire, and somehow they still hanker back to that and a lot of the Brexit argument was that 'our links are with the rest of the world, they're not with Europe' – on the other hand, if some of the rest of the world's people want to come in, then we keep them out. It's a total distortion.

"I don't think they have any sense of real values. I don't know what the Government believes in. Even Margaret Thatcher at least had firm beliefs. I disagreed with most of them and spent a lot of my time arguing against them but at least she had honesty, she had personal integrity and she did believe in something. I'm afraid our present Prime Minister does not have personal integrity and I don't think he believes in anything except to further his own political ambitions, and the rest of the Cabinet seem to take their cue from him."

Lord Dubs said that he has long felt that, ultimately, the public themselves have to be engaged on the question of immigration and refugees.

"If the argument about refugees is put to the British public and it is explained what happened to them and why they're fleeing, then the British public, particularly with regards to child refugees, become quite sympathetic," he said. "It's public opinion we better get on-side, because it is only public opinion which in the end will influence our Government."

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