

UK to expand refugee sponsorship schemes

AFP | Washington

The UK interior ministry has announced it will create new legal routes for asylum seekers, including allowing community organisations to sponsor refugees based on a similar system in Canada.

The system will come into place later this year, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said late Friday, with organisations and some "trusted" universities able to sponsor refugees and first arrivals expected in autumn 2027.

A route for employers to sponsor refugees is also expected to open next year, the Home Office said in a press release.

Immigration and asylum are thorny issues in the UK, where the hard-right Reform UK party has rapidly grown in popularity, riding a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Keir Starmer, who stepped down as prime minister this week but will remain in power until his successor is chosen, has tried to appear tough on immigration since coming into power two years ago.

Trump foe Bolton pleads guilty in classified files case

AFP | Washington

John Bolton, who served as Donald Trump's national security advisor before becoming an outspoken critic of the US president, pleaded guilty Friday to one count of retaining classified documents.

Asked by federal Judge Theodore Chuang if he was guilty, the 77-year-old veteran diplomat replied: "I am, Your Honor, and I'm sorry for it."

Bolton, who faces a maximum prison sentence of five years, must also pay a \$2.25 million fine and forfeit his federal pension as part of a plea agreement, the Department of Justice said.

Sentencing was set for October 28.

"As Mr Bolton admitted, he shared more than 1,000 pages of information about his day-to-day activities as the National Security Advisor, including information related to national defense with two individuals who neither had the security clearances nor the need to know that information," prosecutor Kelly Hayes said after the hearing.



This aerial view shows collapsed buildings in Catia La Mar, La Guaira state, Venezuela

UN estimates nearly 6.8 mn people affected by Venezuela quakes

Satellite data reveals extensive structural destruction across major towns near the capital city

● Almost one thousand people died

● More than fifty thousand remain missing

● Buildings heavily damaged

AFP | Geneva

Close to seven million people may have been impacted by the twin earthquakes in Venezuela, which have killed nearly 1,000 people and left tens of thousands missing, the United Nations estimated yesterday.

The UN migration agency said it had examined available population and damage data and had determined that "up to 6.76 million people could be affected

by the devastating earthquakes that struck Venezuela on 24th June".

The projections, which include up to two million people in Caracas alone, "highlight the potentially vast humanitarian impact of the disaster", the International Organization for Migration (IOM) warned in a statement.

Entire buildings have crumbled in La Guaira, located to the north of Caracas, following devastating twin tremors of magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 on Wednesday.

The national death toll stands at 920, while people remain trapped under the rubble in the coastal city and elsewhere.

And UN aid chief Tom Fletcher told AFP Friday that more than 50,000 people were missing.

IOM said it had worked with Microsoft AI for Good Lab on initial satellite mapping analysis, which showed that 31.5 percent

Newborn baby rescued from rubble

AFP | Venezuela

A newborn baby has been rescued from a fallen building 32 hours after the twin earthquakes that devastated a Venezuelan coastal city.

Video shared on social media Friday shows rescuers working under a floodlight atop collapsed masonry and bringing the infant out to applause late Friday in the hardest-hit city of La Guaira, north of the capital Caracas.

They carefully pass the baby, wrapped in a quilt, from person to person before cleaning the child gently with tissues, the video shows.

In a follow-up video later on Friday, Quintero showed the mother in a hospital bed, with a medical worker telling her that the baby did not appear to have injuries.



Such assessments, it said, were helping humanitarian responders identify the communities most affected and to prioritise where to deliver life-saving aid, even as ground assessments continue.

"The first hours and days after a disaster are decisive. They shape everything that follows," IOM chief Amy Pope said in the statement.

"IOM is scaling up rapidly: prepositioned relief items are already being deployed, and we are working with the Government and partners to deliver emergency shelter, essential supplies, and protection," she added.

Warning that displacement was sure to rise in the country, which was already facing a humanitarian crisis before the quakes hit, Pope stressed that "a swift response is essential as we deliver life-saving assistance and support the people of Venezuela through the difficult days and months ahead".

Trump unveils new US passport -- with picture of himself

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump on Friday unveiled a rendering of a new limited-edition US passport to mark the country's 250th anniversary of independence -- featuring his stern-faced likeness.

"The U.S.A.'s New Passport, which says, 'Welcome, but be good!'" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform featuring the passport mock-up.

The image features a glowing Trump leaning on his desk and his signature, with the text of the Declaration of Independence in the background. It appears to be based on a portrait



The new limited-edition US passport to mark the country's 250th anniversary of independence featuring President Donald Trump

taken by White House photographer Daniel Torok.

The opposite page shows a painting depicting the declaration's signing in 1776, with the words "United States of America 250."

The White House posted the same passport rendering, with the words "PATRIOT PASSPORT."

The State Department -- which had previously announced that a commemorative passport with "custom artwork" would be available from July 6 -- did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In April, a department official said the Trump-themed passports would only be available

at in-person appointments in Washington "for as long as there is availability."

Trump has aggressively put his personal stamp on government institutions, with banners of the president flying outside several government buildings, and the Treasury Department saying his signature will soon appear on the one-dollar bill.

Trump also added his name to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts -- until a court ruled that it should be removed.

He will be the first sitting US president featured in Americans' travel documents.