

Statement on the Injustice of the United Kingdom's Ban on Sudanese Students

July 25, 2026

Education is not a privilege to be rationed by nationality. It is a right. And a right stripped from an entire people because of where they were born is not policy — it is punishment.

On 26 March 2026, the UK Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, [imposed a blanket suspension of study visas](#) on nationals of Sudan, Afghanistan, Cameroon and Myanmar — four countries bound together by nothing but catastrophe. The measure, dressed in the bureaucratic language of an "emergency brake," will run for at least eighteen months and strike an estimated 4,300 students. Among them are Sudanese women and men who survived the destruction of their cities and the atrocities committed by the Rapid Support Forces—a militia whose campaign of siege, starvation and mass killing, enabled by sustained support from the United Arab Emirates, has devastated the communities these students come from. Many saw their futures buried beneath the rubble. Yet they chose to rebuild them in lecture halls rather than on battlefields. They are now told the door is closed. Not because of anything they have done—but because of who they are.

The justification collapses on contact with the evidence. The Home Office alleged "widespread abuse" of the student visa route. [The record says otherwise](#). Students from the four banned nationalities accounted for roughly one percent of all asylum claims between 2020 and 2026 — and barely one-tenth of one percent across 2024 and 2025. Of every Sudanese asylum claim since 2021, fewer than two in a hundred came from students: a smaller share than sixty-six other countries, including the United States, China and Egypt, none of which face a ban. The [Russell Group has called](#) the government's own figures misleading and the policy disproportionate. The numbers do not support the ban. The ban was never really about the numbers. It was about political segregation.

Let us name what this is. It is collective punishment by nationality — the ancient, discredited logic that a whole people may be made to answer for a fiction invented about them.

And here lies the deeper hypocrisy. The United Kingdom presents itself as a friend of Sudan's civilians, as the penholder on Sudan at the Security Council, as a voice raised against the war

in their country. A government cannot claim solidarity with Sudanese civilians in the morning and bar them from its universities by nightfall. Solidarity that ends at the border of self-interest is not solidarity. It is performance.

We stand with the Sudanese students whose offers were withdrawn and whose ambitions were criminalized by association. We stand with the Sudanese people enduring a war they did not choose, inflicted by forces they did not invite. And we stand with the Sudanese students who have refused to accept this injustice in silence — who, with their legal representatives, have [taken the Home Secretary to court](#) to defend a principle that should never have required defending.

Their hearing begins on Monday, 27 July 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2A 2LL.

We call on every ally in the UK — students, academics, unions, lawyers, and people of conscience — to [be present](#). Fill the public gallery. Let the court see that Sudanese do not stand alone, and words about peace and mediation fool no one when they don't match actions.

A country is judged not by the speeches it makes about the suffering of others, but by whether it opens its doors when they knock. On Monday, Britain must choose which side of that judgment it wishes to stand on.

Presence is solidarity. Allies in the UK – please be there.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Board of
Advisors of *Initiative for Equality*

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