

22 October 2019

Priti Patel,
Home Secretary
Home Office
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Dear Ms Patel

I am writing on behalf of the University and College Union (UCU) in relation to the case of Dr Furaha Asani, a Leicester-based researcher to whom the Home Office has refused leave to remain.

Furaha's case is deeply concerning for many reasons, the most urgent of which is that the government intends to deport her to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although she has a DRC passport, Furaha was born and raised in Nigeria before coming to the UK to study and work, and has provided multiple documents to evidence this.

Furaha has never visited DRC, she has no known relatives there and she does not speak the country's language. Despite this, the Home Office's refusal letter states there would be no obstacle to her integration into DRC. I am concerned that forcibly removing Furaha to a country where she has no support network and doesn't speak the language will place her in an extremely vulnerable position and I urge you to reconsider this as a matter of urgency.

More generally, I am deeply concerned that Furaha's case represents an aggressive approach to immigration policy that lacks compassion and nuance, and is divorced from the reality of many academics' lives. The government's 'hostile environment' immigration policy is creating significant hurdles for international staff who wish to work and study in UK universities; these include high salary thresholds, excessive visa-related costs, and restrictions on extended overseas travel for the purposes of research.

Our higher education sector is a global industry that is heavily reliant on international talent – almost of a third of academic staff (31%) and 11% of non-academic staff are from outside the UK. At a time when Brexit is causing significant uncertainty and leading many EU academics to quit the UK, it is imperative that we send a clear message that overseas talent is welcome here. That means taking a coordinated approach to tackling the many practical and

financial barriers that currently make it difficult for international staff to work, study and settle in the UK.

I would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss this matter in more detail. In the meantime, I call on you to urgently reconsider Furaha's case.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Grady'. The 'J' is large and stylized, and 'Grady' is written in a cursive script.

Dr Jo Grady
General Secretary