



Created by  
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# Safe Countries, Unsafe People: How Powerful States Are Reordering Global Asylum Governance



**United States**

**European Union**

**United Kingdom**

**Germany**

**Italy**

**Greece**

**Spain**

**Canada**

**Australia**

**Pakistan**

**Iran**

## **5 Principles to “Reframe” to Global Approach to Asylum:**

- 1. Every nation has the “right” to control its borders.**
- 2. There is no right to immigrate or to receive asylum or refugee status in the country of an individual’s choice.**
- 3. Refugee status is temporary, not permanent.**
- 4. Sovereign states, not transnational bodies, make the determination whether the conditions in a country of origin permit return.**
- 5. Every country must agree to accept expeditiously the return of its nationals.**

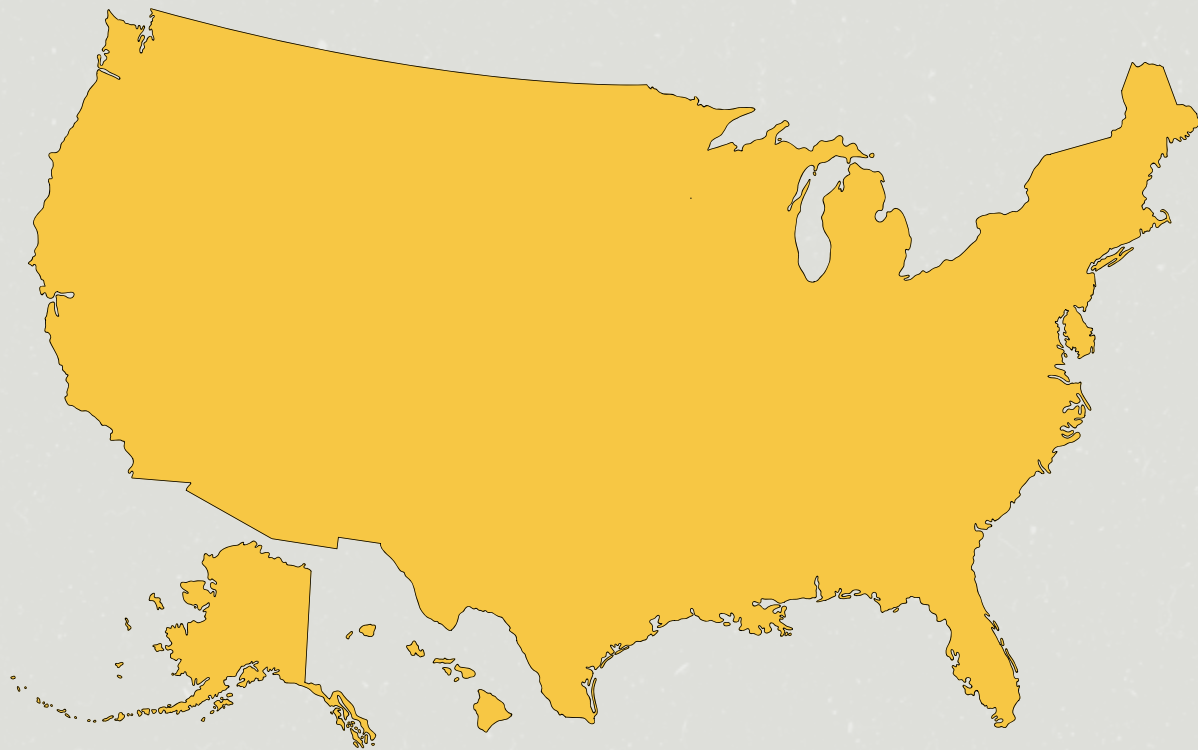
# United States

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **Presidential Proclamation 10888 - Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion (20 Jan 2025)**
  - Suspends the right to seek asylum at the southern border; no exceptions even for unaccompanied minors or trafficking survivors
- **Expansion of third-country deportations/ "reception" deals**
  - with states such as Belize, Ghana, Eswatini, South Sudan, Rwanda to receive deportees who are not their nationals

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Proclamation 10888 and the app regime frame border control as paramount, allowing the U.S. to shut down in-between-ports asylum almost entirely and tightly ration access at official crossings.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – People are told they cannot insist on the U.S.: if they crossed irregularly or lack an app slot, they may be sent to a "reception" country or pushed back to Mexico, regardless of their preference.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – Narrow, highly conditional forms of relief and the threat of transfer or removal make any form of protection fragile and easily revoked, reinforcing the idea that presence is temporary and contingent.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Washington unilaterally decides which countries are "safe" to receive deportees or host "reception" centres, with limited weight given to UN or NGO assessments of actual protection and safety on the ground.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – U.S. policy leans heavily on diplomatic pressure and deals to ensure origin and partner countries rapidly accept deportees, with the expansion of third-country arrangements making swift removal, not durable protection, the system's core output.



## Type of Shift:

- From a system that at least formally guaranteed access to asylum at the border into a **deterrence-first model** built on **near-total closure between ports of entry, digital gatekeeping at ports, and offloading people to third countries**, even where they have no prior connection.



# European Union

## Pact on Migration & Asylum + 2025 safe-third package



### Type of Shift:

- From a fragmented set of national practices to a **system-wide model of rapid triage at the border, broad use of safe-country and safe-third concepts,** and a solidarity system that **rewards returns infrastructure** as much as protection.

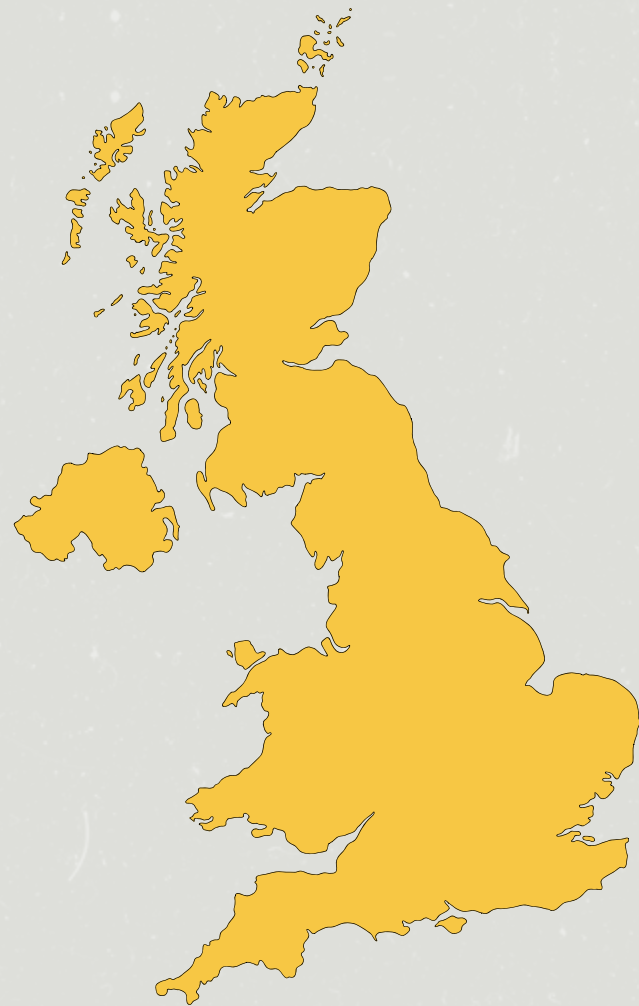
### Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum**
  - introduces mandatory border screening and border procedures; return-centred “solidarity” mechanism
- **Commission proposal on “safe third country” (20 May 2025)**
  - removes the requirement that an applicant have prior connection to the “safe” country; Transit or an EU-third country agreement is enough;
    - This means that if a person merely passes through a country or has a deal with the EU that their asylum should be filed there because it is considered a “safe third country”;
  - Appeals against inadmissibility of someone’s claim can no longer protect them from automatic removal
    - This means that If that asylum decision is challenged in court, the person can still be put on a plane and removed while their appeal is ongoing.

### Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Border screening and border procedures are explicitly designed to assert control at the external frontier, filtering and channelling people before they enter Schengen territory in a meaningful sense.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – Expanded safe-third-country rules and intra-EU allocation means applicants have little say over where their claim is examined—and can be sent to non-EU states they merely transited or with which the EU has struck a deal.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – Short border procedures, combined with increased use of “safe country of origin” presumptions and flexible statuses, produce more precarious forms of protection and quicker pathways to cessation or transfer.
- **P4 – Sovereign (and EU) control over return conditions** – The EU and member states jointly define which countries are “safe” and under what conditions people can be removed there, limiting the role of UNHCR or courts to constrain those safety assessments.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The Pact’s solidarity pillar puts returns and readmission at the centre of EU cooperation—financing, coordinating, and politically backing member states that increase deportations and secure readmission deals with origin and transit countries.

# United Kingdom



## Type of Shift:

- From a protection system that still offered a relatively clear route to settlement into one built on **temporary, repeatedly reviewable protection** and **bilateral externalisation**, using France as a key partner in managing and reversing irregular arrivals.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

### “Restoring Order and Control Package”

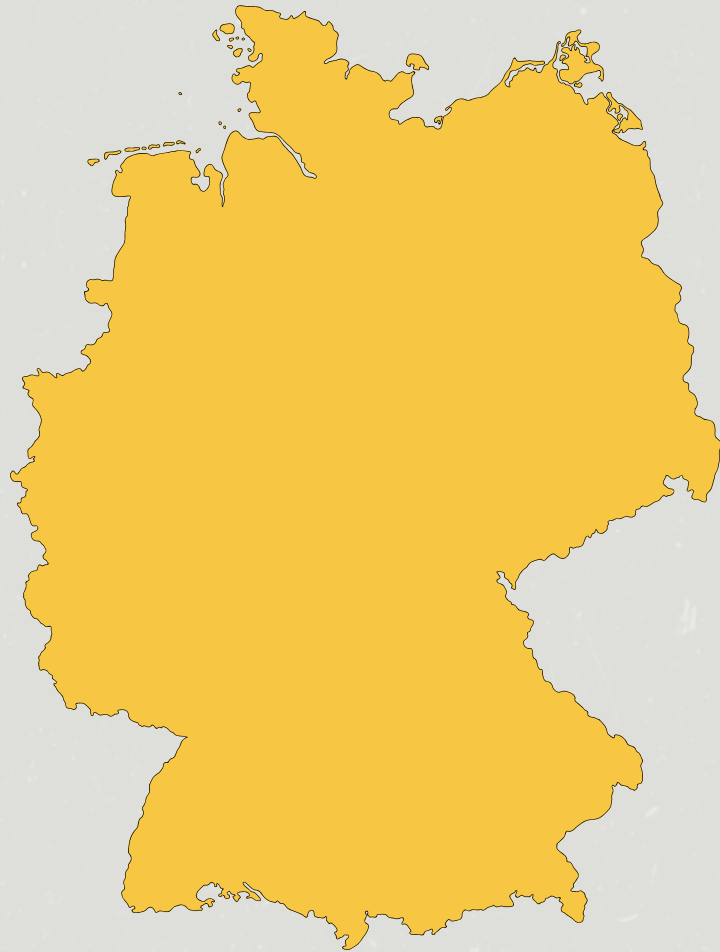
- A **new asylum overhaul** under Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood:
- Proposals for **temporary refugee status only**, with a **20-year horizon** before permanent residence for many irregular arrivals.
- Powers to **seize asylum seekers’ assets, tighten family reunification, and restrict support.**
- Continuation and expansion of the **“one-in, one-out” UK–France swap scheme** (returning some small-boat arrivals to France while taking pre-vetted asylum seekers from there).

### Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – The entire package is sold as “restoring order” in the Channel, tightening small-boat enforcement and deterring irregular entry.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – People arriving irregularly can be returned to France without a full UK asylum examination, while only pre-vetted cases are admitted from France, undercutting any claim to choose the UK as the protection state.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – Refugee status becomes time-limited and probationary, with long delays and strict conditions before settlement is possible, if at all.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – The UK retains broad discretion over who is granted only temporary leave, when status is reviewed or curtailed, and how “safe” France and other partners are treated in practice.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The UK–France scheme and similar deals are designed around quick readmission and removal, embedding rapid returns and swap-based transfers into the core of asylum management.



# Germany



## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **Adoption of BT-Drs 21/780**
  - Gives the **federal government power to declare “safe countries of origin”** by ordinance, instead of needing a full parliamentary + Bundesrat law each time.
  - Is explicitly meant to let Germany quickly **add countries with low recognition rates** – e.g. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, India, Nigeria, Mongolia – to the **safe-origin list**.
  - At the same time, **removes §62d Residence Act on mandatory appointment of a lawyer in deportation detention**, weakening procedural safeguards in removal cases.
  - The Interior Ministry is working on a **return agreement** with the new Syrian authorities, with a publicly stated plan to start with criminals and “Gefährder” and potentially move later to other Syrians without a right to stay.
  - Germany and Austria have jointly signalled they want to **step up deportations to Syria and Afghanistan**, and say test flights in 2024 showed this is possible.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Safe-country expansion and stricter handling of irregular stay are framed as restoring “order” and control over who can remain.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – Applicants from newly “safe” states—and increasingly Syrians—face rapid rejection on the ground that they can or should seek protection elsewhere, limiting Germany as an asylum destination.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – The Syrian “reassessment” treats protection as time-limited: once the conflict is deemed over, refugees are expected to return rather than integrate long term.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Berlin claims broad authority to decide which states are “safe” and when a country like Syria is fit for returns, even amid serious human-rights concerns.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The reforms and political narrative are oriented toward increasing removals, including to Syria once agreements are in place, so that people whose protection is withdrawn are returned “without delay.”

## Type of Shift:

- From a relatively high-protection model to a system of **fast triage for “safe” nationalities** and a clear political-legal **pivot toward ending Syrian protection and preparing returns**, backed by expanded executive discretion.

# Italy



## Type of Shift:

- Italy has moved towards a **high-detention, externalisation-heavy system, combining prolonged pre-removal detention on its own territory with an offshore detention and repatriation complex in Albania**, primarily targeting people from countries Italy deems “safe” and those whose claims have been rejected.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

### • Detention Regime + Italy-Albania Externalisation

- Continued use of **long immigration detention** (up to 18 months) for removals.
- **Italy-Albania protocol**: offshore centres at Shengjin and Gjader (up to 36,000 people) for **sea arrivals from “safe countries”, with automatic detention**;
- In March 2025, a decree repurposes at least one site into a **repatriation hub for failed asylum seekers**.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Long detention and offshore centres are framed as tools to “defend national borders” and stop “mass illegal immigration.”
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – People from “safe” countries and rejected asylum seekers are shifted out of Italy—held for return or sent via Albania—so Italy is effectively closed to them as an asylum venue.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – Fast-track procedures, long pre-removal detention and use of Albanian hubs create short, precarious stays, with priority on removal rather than durable solutions.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Italy claims broad discretion to label countries “safe” and to run detention/repatriation centres abroad, treating CJEU limits as interference with sovereign migration policy.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The Italy-Albania system functions as a return machine: failed asylum seekers are held in Italy or Albania until their countries of origin take them back, with the explicit aim of driving up deportation numbers.



# Greece



## Type of Shift:

- Moves Greece from de facto hard-line practice to **formalised suspension of asylum, criminalisation of stay after rejection**, and **very long detention** as core tools of migration control.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

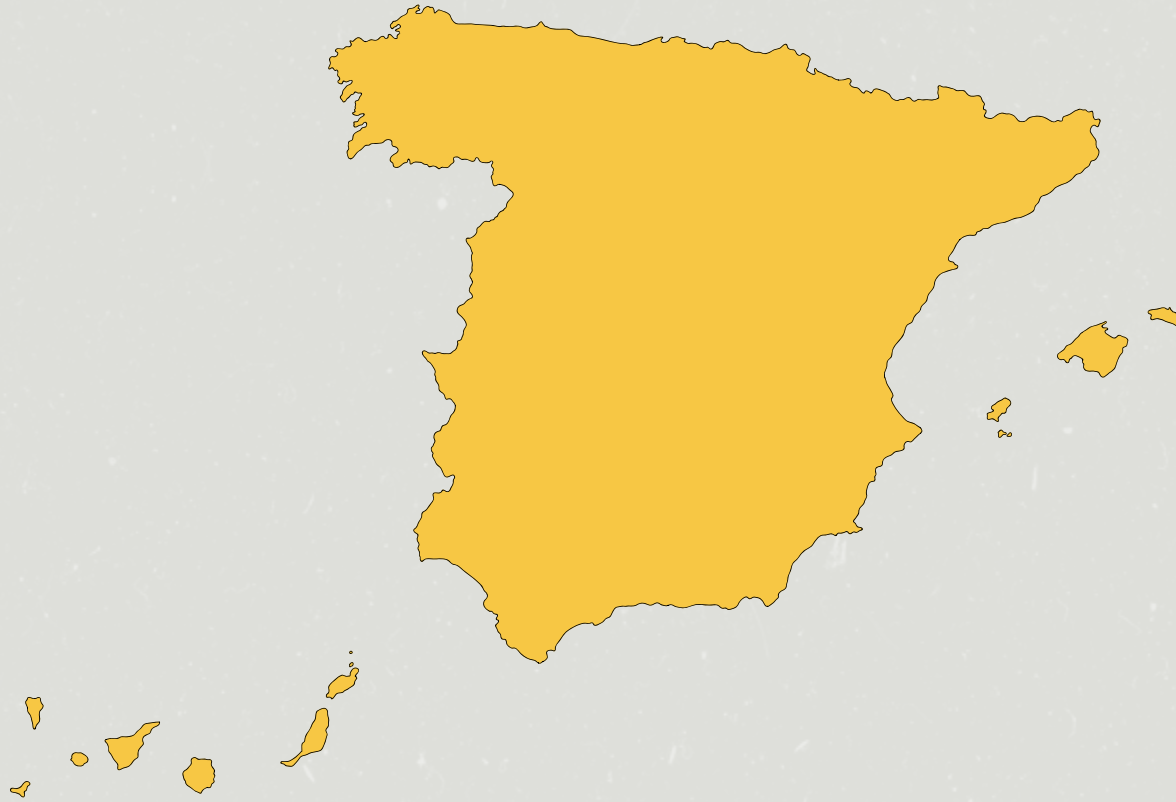
- **Article 79, Law 5218/2025 (July 2025):**
  - Imposes a three-month ban on lodging asylum claims for people arriving by sea from North Africa (mainly Crete and Gavdos).
  - Those arrivals are not registered as asylum seekers; they are placed directly into detention and return procedures.
- **Returns law “Reform of the framework and procedures for the return of third-country nationals – Other provisions of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum” (Sept 2025):**
  - Makes rejected asylum seekers and other undocumented migrants who do not leave within a short deadline criminally liable, with 2–5 years’ imprisonment and heavy fines.
  - Extends immigration detention from a maximum of 18 to 24 months.
  - Abolishes the seven-year regularisation route, removing the main path to status for long-term undocumented residents.
  - Introduces electronic ankle monitoring for people under deportation orders.
  - Upgrades certain forms of irregular entry to a felony, enabling earlier and longer detention.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1** – Border control: laws explicitly prioritise closing specific routes and enforcing removals.
- **P2** – No right to choose country: route-based bans and pushbacks effectively deny Greece as an asylum venue for some arrivals.
- **P3** – Temporary, precarious protection: even when protection exists, it is embedded in a system of detention, surveillance and easy loss of status.
- **P4** – Sovereign control over return: strong assertion that Athens decides who may seek asylum and who must leave, despite EU/UN criticism.
- **P5** – Expeditious return of nationals: the whole package is designed around rapid deportation, backed by prison and fines if people remain.



# Spain



## Type of Shift:

- From a system where asylum and irregular stay were often “relieved” by broad arraigo and humanitarian options, towards a **tighter, more managed menu of immigration statuses**, with clearer sorting between those who can be regularised inside Spain and those who are expected to leave.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **New Extranjería Regulation (in force 20 May 2025)**
  - **Royal Decree 1155/2024** overhauls Spain’s Immigration Regulations, restructuring **family, work, humanitarian and arraigo (social/roots) permits** and the conditions for renewing and upgrading residence.
  - Some people who might previously have turned to the **asylum system** are now steered toward **labour or social-regularisation routes**, while others face **stricter requirements and more fragile residence** if they cannot meet the new criteria.
  - Asylum law and procedure formally remain under EU and national asylum rules, but the **practical landscape of protection and status** shifts around them.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – The reform emphasises orderly, rule-bound entry and stay, tightening the management of permits and renewals rather than expanding protection by default.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – People without strong ties or eligibility under the reformed categories are more easily refused and channelled toward return, limiting Spain as a fallback protection venue for those who do not fit the new templates.
- **P3 – Refugee/status as temporary, not permanent** – Many permits become more conditional, time-limited and documentation-heavy, lengthening and complicating the path to secure, long-term residence for those on the margins.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – The new rules give Spanish authorities wide discretion over who can transition from precarious stay to durable status, and who remains removable once any temporary options are exhausted.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – While not a “returns law” as such, the clearer divide between those who can regularise and those who cannot underwrites Spain’s ability to justify and operationalise removals for the latter group.



# Canada



## Type of Shift:

- From a system that formally prioritised **individualised refugee determination toward a framework that centres border security and executive discretion**, with asylum increasingly treated as an exception that can be narrowed or bypassed.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

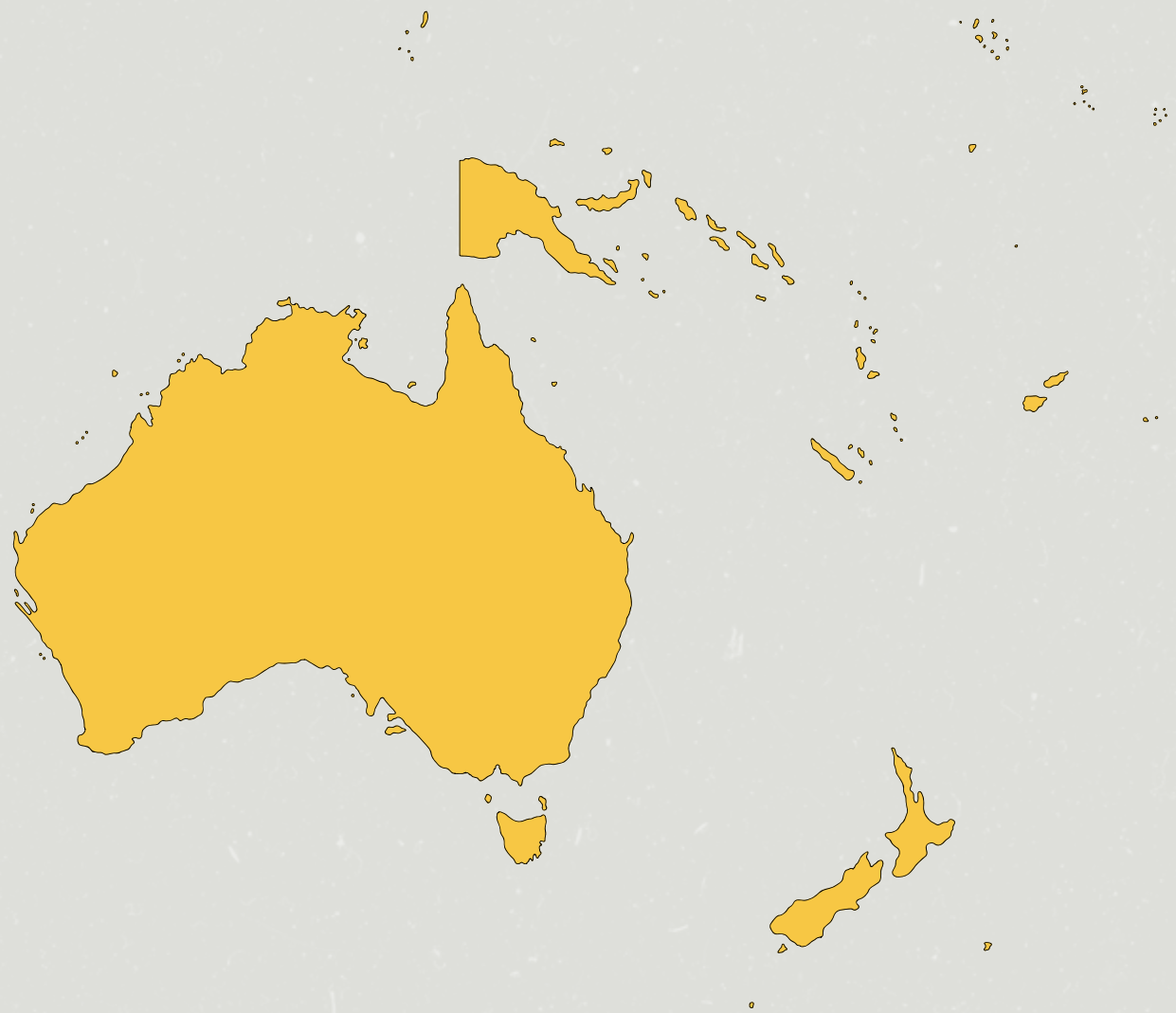
- **Bill C-2 – Strong Borders Act (tabled June 2025)**
  - Recasts the Canada–US land border as a security space and **expands powers to cancel or refuse permits and status for whole groups**, particularly those crossing irregularly from the United States.
  - Critics argue it effectively **broadens ineligibility for a full refugee hearing** and makes it **easier to detain and remove people** on security or public-order grounds.
- **Bill C-12 – Strengthening Canada’s Immigration System and Borders Act (tabled October 2025)**
  - An omnibus border and immigration bill that **widens ministerial discretion** to suspend or refuse applications, increase information-sharing with security agencies, and tighten controls at and within the border.
  - Human rights groups warn that, taken together, C-2 and C-12 **erode access to asylum, weaken procedural safeguards, and normalize a security-first approach** to people seeking protection inside Canada.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Both bills are explicitly framed as “strong borders” legislation, expanding tools to block, detain and remove people in the name of security and public order.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – Irregular entrants from the United States are more easily treated as ineligible or removable, reinforcing the idea that they should seek protection elsewhere rather than insist on Canada as their asylum destination.
- **P3 – Refugee/status as temporary, not permanent** – Wider cancellation and refusal powers make status more precarious and revocable, even after people have been in Canada for some time.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – C-2 and C-12 concentrate power in the hands of ministers and security agencies, giving Canada broad latitude to decide who gets a hearing, who keeps status, and when removal proceeds.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – While framed in Canadian terms, the overall package supports faster removals and closer coordination with the US and other states, aligning with a model where return of nationals and other migrants is expected to be swift and routine.



# Australia



## Type of Shift:

- Deepens an already hard-line regime by combining **externalisation** with a **legal downgrading of due process**, turning removal into an administrative act that is faster, less contestable, and more easily outsourced.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

### • Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill

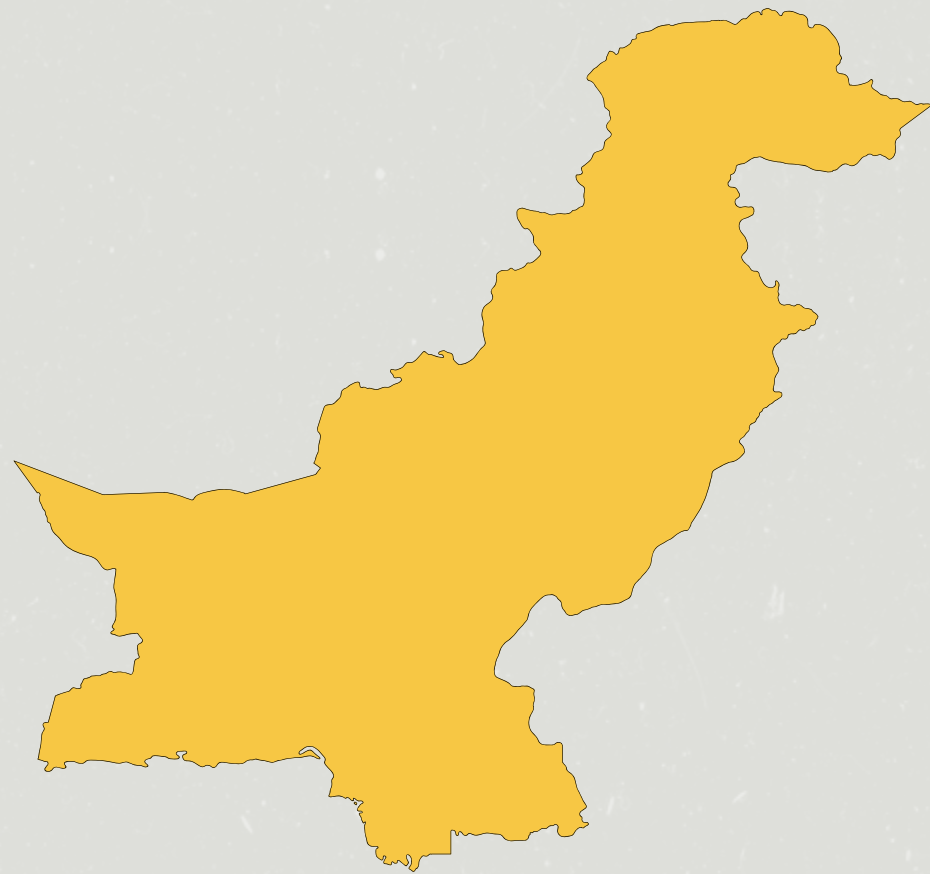
- Amends the Migration Act to **speed up removals** and make it easier to deport non-citizens, including people with protection histories.
- In certain removal decisions, it **disapplies procedural fairness (natural justice)**, meaning people can be **issued deportation directions without prior notice** or a chance to respond.
- Sits on top of an existing offshoring architecture, widening scope to **send people to third countries** under “reception” or similar arrangements, even when Australia remains responsible under international law.

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – The Bill is presented as necessary to enforce removals and uphold the integrity of the border, giving authorities stronger tools when people have “no right to stay.”
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – By expanding third-country options, it reinforces the idea that people can be sent to other states that agree to receive them, not necessarily the country where they asked for protection.
- **P3 – Refugee/status as temporary, not permanent** – Protection becomes highly precarious: even recognised refugees can face rapid removal if they fall within the broadened powers, undercutting any sense of permanence.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Explicitly stripping natural-justice guarantees in key decisions maximises sovereign discretion over who is removed, when, and to where.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The model assumes partner states will swiftly accept deportees (nationals or not), embedding fast, routine removal into the core of Australia’s migration system.



# Pakistan



## Type of Shift:

- From decades of **de facto long-term “host” status for Afghans** to a regime in which **both documented and undocumented Afghans are treated as removable “illegal foreigners”**, with time-limited documentation, mass forced returns, and the clear message that Pakistan is no longer a place of durable asylum.

## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **Resumption and expansion of the “Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan” (IFRP)**
  - Originally announced in October 2023 as a three-phase plan to remove Afghans from Pakistan (undocumented, then Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, then Proof of Registration (PoR) holders).
  - On 7 March 2025, the government restarted and widened the IFRP, ordering all ACC holders to leave by 31 March or face deportation from 1 April; thousands were expelled in April alone.
  - **By mid-2025, over 1 million Afghans had already been forced or pressured to return under the plan.**
- **Expiry and non-renewal of PoR cards (30 June 2025)**
  - PoR cards for around 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees, previously extended to 30 June 2025, were allowed to expire without renewal, despite UNHCR and Amnesty calls to extend them.
  - On 31 July 2025, the government confirmed that PoR holders would now also be repatriated under the IFRP; Interior Ministry notifications and provincial instructions treat them as “illegal foreigners” after card expiry.
  - From September 2025, authorities announced the formal start of deportations for ~1.3–1.4 million PoR holders, following the **June 30 expiry and a brief grace period.**

## Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – IFRP is framed as a security and sovereignty measure to reassert control over Pakistan’s territory and remove “illegal foreigners,” including long-settled Afghans.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – Afghans are told Pakistan is not a long-term refuge and must be returned to Afghanistan once documents lapse, regardless of how long they have lived in Pakistan or their wish to stay.
- **P3 – Refugee status as temporary, not permanent** – PoR and ACC schemes are recast as strictly temporary “permissions”: once expiry dates are reached, large-scale deportations follow, illustrating that protection can be revoked at any time.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Islamabad unilaterally decides that Afghanistan is “safe enough” for return and proceeds despite UN warnings about persecution and serious human-rights risks under Taliban rule.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – The entire plan is built on the expectation that Afghanistan must take back its nationals quickly, with deportation targets and timelines driving policy rather than individual protection needs.

# Iran



## Key instruments/ Measures 2025

- **Large-scale arrests and deportations of Afghans**
  - Throughout 2025, Iran conducts mass raids, checkpoints and sweeps targeting Afghans without valid papers, or whose temporary permits have lapsed.
  - UN and media reports estimate at least around one million Afghans forcibly returned over the year, with officials openly speaking of plans to expel several million in total.
- **Dismantling of temporary stay schemes**
  - Earlier “headcount” and temporary legalisation programmes that had allowed Afghans to register and stay with limited rights are scaled back or effectively nullified.
  - Afghans previously treated as “guests” or tolerated residents increasingly find their documents ignored, invalidated or not renewed, exposing them to arrest and deportation.
- **Security-based framing**
  - Authorities justify expulsions by portraying Afghans as a security, crime or economic threat, linking them to instability and insisting their presence is no longer acceptable inside Iran
  -

### Alignment with 5 principles:

- **P1 – Right to control borders** – Mass arrests and deportations are presented as Iran’s sovereign right to reassert control over its territory and population, targeting Afghans as unwanted foreigners.
- **P2 – No right to choose country of asylum** – The policy sends a clear message that Afghans cannot treat Iran as a place of long-term refuge, regardless of how long they have lived there or whether they have any ties elsewhere.
- **P3 – Refugee/status as temporary, not permanent** – Temporary registration and “guest” status are revealed as wholly conditional and revocable: once political patience runs out, people are stripped of protection and removed.
- **P4 – Sovereign control over return conditions** – Tehran unilaterally decides that Afghanistan is sufficiently “safe” or at least acceptable for return, proceeding with expulsions despite well-documented Taliban abuses and humanitarian concerns.
- **P5 – Duty to accept rapid return of nationals** – Iran’s approach assumes Afghanistan will take back large numbers of returnees quickly, and uses deportation pressure to reinforce the expectation that origin states must accept their nationals regardless of circumstances.

### Type of Shift:

- From **reluctant tolerance of a long-standing Afghan population** under ad hoc, temporary schemes to an **openly coercive removal regime**, in which **Afghans are systematically rounded up and pushed back across the border** despite ongoing risks in Afghanistan.



# Why the 2025 Asylum Turn Matters: Speed, Sovereignty and the Unmaking of Non-Refoulement

## Policy Pattern

- Rich countries are closing access, pushing people to third countries turning protection into temporary status
- This represents a system wide pivot focused on getting and keeping people out

## Rapidization

- Third country rules and origin lists have existed for decades; no inventions needed, just copy and paste existing tools
- Multiple crises overwhelmed the system; broken and reorder
- Strong ideologies among rich countries have shifted
- Global North becomes precedent and cover for others: If the “good” North can do this, why can’t everyone else?

## Against 1951 Convention

Non-refoulement (Art. 33) – no sending someone to a place where they face persecution or serious harm.	Access shut at the front door without real chance to ask for protection
No penalties for irregular entry (Art. 31) – recognising that refugees often must cross borders irregularly.	People are punished for what Article 31 protects
Protection against expulsion (Art. 32) – expulsion must be exceptional, individual, and procedurally fair.	Expulsion is becoming routine not exceptional
Towards integration and naturalisation (Art. 34) – long-term refugees should move towards stable status, not permanent precarity.	Durable solutions are replaced by permanent “maybe”

## Undoing of Non-Refoulement

- Stopping people before they can raise their claim
- Outsourcing responsibility to other states
- Pretending countries are “safe enough” when they are not
- Difficulty to enforce non-refoulement

## Shock to the System

- Undermines the basic moral logic of the system, removing rights, protections and access to safety
- Its happening in the system’s “core” states: US, EU, UK, CAD, AUS and other major hosts signals to everyone else “it is now an acceptable practice” – previously anchors to the UNHCR regime
- Creates a global “pass-the-refugee” game – bouncing refugees from border to border in safe third country regiments
- Normalises permanent precarity – prolonged temporary status and fear of removal
- Once norms have eroded they are difficult to rebuild
- Practice of protection is being hollowed out



# Want to do more?

Get in Touch

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**THE MOBILITY BRIEFING**

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