

Tighter visa regimes for sixteen new countries

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TIGHTER VISA REGIMES FOR SIXTEEN NEW COUNTRIES

From midnight tonight, nationals of sixteen new countries will need visas in order to travel through the UK, the Home Office announced today.

Those visiting the UK from these countries already need visas. The change announced means they will also need a visa in order to pass through the UK on their way to a third country.

The countries affected by this change are: Albania, Belarus, Burma, Burundi, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Nepal, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Vietnam.

Announcing the changes, Home Office Minister Beverley Hughes said:

“We are determined to take all necessary steps to ensure the integrity of our borders. Unacceptably high numbers of people are refused leave to enter the country when they arrive at our airports and some may go on to make unfounded asylum claims.

“The ability to travel to the UK without a visa when claiming to be on the way somewhere else is a relatively cheap and easy way to circumvent our immigration controls. We are tightening up our procedures to put a stop to this abuse.

“This move is part of our strategy to continue to strengthen the UK's borders and to make the best use of pre-entry controls, including new technology and the use of intelligence”.

Note for editors:

1. A grace period for those who have already made their travel plans will be put in place. Until 23.59 hours on 28 June, any transit passenger who bought their ticket on or before 23 June will not be refused entry solely on the basis of not holding a valid transit visa. In addition, any person on the return leg of a journey they commenced before 23 June and who passed through the UK on the outward leg of their journey will be allowed to transit the UK without a visa.