

Frequently Asked Questions: Safe Routes and Refugee Protection

A Jewish Community Perspective

Why is René Cassin advocating for safe and legal routes?

We believe that people fleeing persecution, conflict and serious human rights abuse should have a safe way to seek protection. Without safe and legal routes, many people are left with impossible choices: remain in danger, or risk exploitation, trafficking and dangerous journeys. Safe routes allow protection to be provided in a planned, orderly, safe and humane manner. As a Jewish human rights organisation, we see support for those seeking safety as rooted both in international human rights principles and in Jewish experience.

Does supporting safe routes mean supporting open borders?

No. Safe routes are not open borders. They are structured and managed pathways established by governments. Governments retain control over eligibility criteria, security checks, identity verification, numbers admitted and integration arrangements.

What about security concerns?

Security concerns are legitimate and should be taken seriously. Supporting safe routes does not mean abandoning security screening. On the contrary, safe routes provide opportunities for identity checks, vetting and safeguarding procedures before people arrive in the UK. Robust security procedures and refugee protection are not competing goals.

Why are some proposed schemes focused on particular nationalities?

Refugee protection programmes are often designed in response to specific humanitarian crises or groups facing particular vulnerabilities. This does not mean that one group's suffering matters more than another's. It reflects the reality that different crises require different responses.

Historically, the UK has created specific pathways for a range of populations, including Ukrainians, Hong Kong residents, Afghans and others facing particular risks.

Did Jews benefit from safe routes in the past?

Yes. Many Jews who escaped Nazi persecution survived because safe and legal pathways existed. The Kindertransport is perhaps the best-known example. History reminds us that access to refuge can be lifesaving.

Is René Cassin comparing today's refugee situations to the Holocaust?

No. Every historical situation is unique. René Cassin does not suggest that contemporary crises are identical to the Holocaust. Rather, Jewish history teaches enduring lessons about human dignity and the importance of providing refuge to people facing serious harm.

Many British Jews are worried about rising antisemitism. Shouldn't that affect how we think about refugee policy?

The rise in anti-Jewish hatred is real and deeply concerning and should be challenged consistently. At the same time, refugee protection decisions should be based on an individual's need for protection rather than assumptions about people because of their nationality, ethnicity or background. It is possible to advocate strongly against antisemitism while also supporting refugee protection.

Jewish communities cannot be secure when human rights protections are weakened. The safeguards that protect minorities are interconnected: a society that tolerates antisemitism, racism or the dehumanisation of any group erodes the foundations of safety and dignity for everyone.

Does supporting Palestinian refugees mean taking a position on the Israel-Palestine conflict?

No. Supporting the protection of civilians is not the same as taking a political position on a conflict. René Cassin's concern is with the rights and protection needs of vulnerable individuals. Human rights protections apply regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or political context.

What is René Cassin's case for supporting safe routes?

Different Jews and Jewish organisations will reach different conclusions about particular refugee policies. For René Cassin, the case rests on several principles:

- Every person possesses inherent dignity.
- Those facing persecution deserve protection.
- Security and compassion are both necessary.
- People should be judged as individuals rather than stereotypes.

Jewish history reminds us of the consequences when avenues to safety are closed