

# Defending Women's Rights Across the Globe

Women's rights worldwide are under increasing attack. The rise of authoritarianism, combined with the retreat of the UK and US from global leadership – especially through deep cuts to development funding – is rolling back hard-won progress.

Access to education, sexual health services, and protection from violence are all being undermined. This is not just a crisis for women and girls; it is a crisis for justice, equality, and global stability.

Yet both Labour and the Conservatives have weakened the UK's ability to make a positive difference. Their dramatic cuts to the Official Development Assistance budget have slashed resources for vital programmes supporting women's rights.

**Liberal Democrats believe the Government must urgently recommit to championing gender equality worldwide.** To do this, we must develop a roadmap for restoring the UK's aid spending to 0.7% of gross national income and ensure at least 20% of that is dedicated to gender equality initiatives.

**Today, our members have passed new policy which sets out a plan to defend women's rights across the globe:**

- Champion **women's economic empowerment** by recognising unpaid care work, promoting equal economic rights, and supporting women's access to finance and resources.
- Hold **social media companies to account** for misogyny online by pressuring them to improve content moderation and fix algorithms that promote harmful gendered content.
- Promote **women's political participation**, using diplomatic influence and working to remove barriers like online harassment and lack of access to campaign funding.
- Lead globally in **ending violence against women and girls**, increasing ODA spending on prevention and survivor support.

Read our new policy in full

**These reforms are critical.**

They will restore the UK's role as a global defender of women's rights,

tackle online misogyny, empower women economically and politically, and help end violence that affects millions.

We cannot allow progress to be rolled back or abandoned. The UK must step up and act boldly on the world stage.

Women's rights are being eroded – and defending them must be a top priority.

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## [Towards a Ceasefire and Political Resolution in Sudan](#)

Two years of brutal civil war have turned Sudan into one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes. Over 30 million Sudanese people urgently need humanitarian aid – more than half the population. Yet, despite this scale of suffering, Sudan has received far too little attention here in the UK.

The conflict has shattered communities, forced millions from their homes, and exposed countless civilians to violence, including horrific war crimes. Children have been disproportionately affected, with many denied access to education, healthcare, and safety.

Meanwhile, UK governments have failed to meet the moment. Like the Conservatives before them, Labour has cut international aid budgets. Even where funding for Sudan has been 'ringfenced', it is under severe threat. This damaging retreat from global leadership undermines the UK's ability to help resolve the crisis.

As Liberal Democrats, we believe the UK must lead urgent international action to push for a ceasefire and a lasting political resolution in Sudan – and to provide real support for civilians caught in the conflict.

**Today, members have passed new policy calling on the Government to:**

- Lead efforts to establish a **Sudan-wide arms embargo** to stop the flow of weapons fueling the war.
- Build international consensus to **resist legitimising warring parties** and ensure that those responsible for war crimes are held to account.
- Reverse its cut to the **UK's aid budget**, and outline a clear timeline for returning to 0.7% of GNI.

Provide targeted support for **Sudanese children**, who have suffered

disproportionately and need urgent access to education, healthcare, and trauma-informed services.

Read our new policy in full

**These steps are vital – they could save millions of lives and bring hope for a peaceful future in Sudan.**

The UK must reclaim its role as a global leader in humanitarian action and conflict resolution.

We must stand with the Sudanese people, demand justice, and work tirelessly to end this conflict once and for all.

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*Image: Gregório Cunha/UNMISS*

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## [A New Hope for the Space Industry](#)

Space is no longer the stuff of science fiction. It is a vital part of our economy, our security, and our daily lives. From satellite navigation to weather forecasting, from communications to climate monitoring, the space sector underpins industries worth billions and shapes how we live and work.

The UK has world-class talent, research, and potential. Figures like Tim Peake have inspired a generation, sparking enthusiasm for science and technology in schools and universities across the country. Our spaceports in Scotland and Cornwall, alongside hubs like Harwell in Oxfordshire, show the breadth of UK ambition.

But while our potential is vast, our progress is at risk.

The US, China, Russia, and European partners are pressing ahead, investing heavily in space capabilities. Meanwhile, the UK's 2021 National Space Strategy is already out of date, leaving us in danger of falling behind. Without a clearer plan, we risk not only losing global leadership but also missing out on the jobs, innovation, and investment that flow from this fast-growing sector.

Liberal Democrats believe space should be a cornerstone of the UK's future – an industry that drives growth, secures our independence, and inspires the next generation.

**Today, our members have passed new policy to put the UK space sector back on track:**

- **Renew the National Space Strategy**, focusing on attracting international investment, fostering growth, and ensuring people-centred, efficient regulation.
- **Review and support UK spaceports and hubs** to cement our place as a global space hub.
- **Designate space as a strategic industry** under the National Wealth Fund, opening the door for productive investment in:
  - A UK satellite navigation system to ensure resilience after Brexit.
  - Cutting-edge technologies including quantum communications, satellites, advanced materials, optical infrastructure, and computing.

**Champion diversity and inclusion in the space workforce**, with schemes to support underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.

Read our new policy in full

The UK space industry already brings in nearly £19 billion a year and employs over 50,000 people. But revenues are slipping, with income falling slightly since 2021, and global competitors racing ahead.

Without urgent action, we risk seeing opportunities and investment go elsewhere.

A renewed space strategy would provide the direction and smart investment to unlock the sector's potential. By supporting spaceports, championing innovation, and making sure the industry is open to everyone, the UK can once again be at the forefront of one of the most exciting frontiers of science and technology.

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# [Building a Fair Asylum System](#)

The UK asylum system is in crisis – and people fleeing war and persecution are paying the price.

For years, the Conservatives trashed the system, letting backlogs spiral out of control and leaving thousands of vulnerable people stuck in expensive hotels. Now, rather than fixing the mess, Labour has doubled down with counterproductive measures like the immediate suspension of family reunion pathways and reducing the move-on period for new refugees.

This is dividing communities, costing billions, and undermining the UK's proud history of offering sanctuary to those in need.

As liberals, we believe in compassion, fairness and efficiency. That means ending the chaos, restoring dignity, and building an asylum system that works for everyone.

Today, members passed a new Liberal Democrat policy to do this by:

- **Ending the use of asylum hotels by clearing the backlog**, speeding up application decisions, and allowing people with valid claims to work, integrate and contribute while swiftly returning those who do not have a right to remain.
- **Lifting the ban on employment for asylum seekers** who have waited more than three months for a decision.
- **Restoring family reunion pathways** so refugees can rebuild their lives with their loved ones.
- **Tackling dangerous crossings** at their source by stepping up cross-border cooperation and giving the UK a leadership role in Europol to take on the criminal gangs.
- **Reaffirming the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)** and rejecting any attempt to undermine the rights and protections it guarantees.

Read our new policy in full

Protests over asylum hotels have already put police forces under 'chronic pressure'. Refugees are left in limbo, unable to work and forced into

poverty. Families are kept apart. And meanwhile, the toxic rhetoric of Reform and the Conservatives is dragging politics further away from compassion and common sense.

The UK has a proud tradition of standing up for those fleeing oppression – Liberal Democrats will make sure we live up to it.

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## [A Liberal Vision for Digital Rights](#)

The internet is one of the most powerful tools for freedom in human history. It connects communities, spreads knowledge, and gives people a voice. But it also carries risks – from the spread of child sexual abuse material to harassment, deepfakes, and the promotion of suicide and self-harm.

**The Online Safety Act was meant to tackle these harms. Its aim, protecting children and vulnerable people, is one we all share. But the way the law is being implemented has been disproportionate and ineffective.**

Already, political content, educational resources, and wellbeing forums have been caught up in inappropriate age-gating. Age-assurance systems pose real risks to privacy and data protection. And the Act threatens end-to-end encryption, a cornerstone of secure communication, especially for vulnerable groups like LGBT+ communities who depend on online networks for support.

**Protecting young people and vulnerable groups online is vital.** But it must be done in a way that is effective, proportionate, and rooted in liberal values.

That's why Liberal Democrats have today passed a new policy, put forward by the Young Liberals, calling for a new approach – one that puts people, rights, and safety first:

- **A full Parliamentary review within six months** to examine whether the Online Safety Act is meeting its stated aims, whether it is fit for purpose, and what reforms including further legislation are needed.
- **Stronger scrutiny of Ofcom's implementation** to ensure regulations focus on tackling real online harms, not blocking access to politics, education, or wellbeing resources.

**A new Digital Bill of Rights** to safeguard privacy, free expression, and protection against online harms – ensuring online regulation works for people, not against them.

Read our new policy in full

**Liberal Democrats believe safety and freedom must go hand in hand.**

We will hold the Government to account, push for smarter regulation, and fight for a digital future where children are safe, communities are free to thrive, and privacy and rights are protected.

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