Windrush Saga – Britain's Crackdown on Immigrants

What is the issue?

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- The UK government has now started a crackdown on Windrush Britons (Caribbean Natives), in their campaign for tightening immigration.
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- This episode has again highlighted the fallout of xenophobic attitudes that is catching up across the 1st world.
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What are the Windrush Generation being subjected to?

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- About half a million people (Windrush Generation) were shipped from the Caribbean islands to the U.K. since late 1940s, to meet the labour shortfall.
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- The name "Windrush" has been coined after one the many vessels that ferried them to UK in the 1960s and 70s, to offset the shortage of labour in UK.
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- Under pressure from Brexit hardliners, the UK is now hard pressed to meet stringent annual net immigration curbs and deportation of illegal migrants.
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- The Windrush Caribbean Brits (and their children) have now fallen victims to this immigration curbs, and risk deportation despite have lived in UK for long.
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- Notably, the Windrush Caribbeans aren't illegal migrants but are now in the line of fire for lack of sufficient documentation indicating their legality.
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- They are asked to provide proof of residence in UK that predates 1971 (which is the cut-off), which isn't available with most of them.
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- Inability to furnish such evidence is leading to job losses, threat of

deportation, withdrawal of welfare benefits and even denial of critical medicare.
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- All these are proving to be enormously traumatic for the concerned families who are now being alienated in the country where they've lived for long.
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What are the implications for UK?

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- As the UK is exiting the EU, it currently is hoping to negotiate trade deals with the countries in the British Commonwealth to offset the loss of markets.
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- But the "Windrush Saga" has created discomfort within the commonwealth, as the Caribbean Countries are a part of it (as they were British Colonies).
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- While the current crackdown has targeted the Caribbeans, there is palpable fear that others across the commonwealth will follow suit.
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- Notably, there are considerable populations of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and West Africans in UK.
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- The anxiety is high as the UK government's approach doesn't seem to differentiate between systemic shortcoming and real frivolous immigrations.
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- British PM May's cautious apology for the same (claiming that Windrush Saga was a mere aberration) amounted to too little too late.
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What is the larger learning?

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- Windrush controversy has typified the inability of governments to manage the political fallout from the current phase of globalisation and liberalisation.
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- This is especially true of the EU, which has enshrined the free movement of people as a fundamental principle.
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- Notably, EU's 2004 expansion into the countries of the erstwhile Soviet

Union afforded nations in Western Europe cheap immigrant labour.
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- But the process gave a fillip to xenophobic parties of the extreme right across the region, threatening to halt immigration.
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- It is this factor that precipitated Brexit in 2016, which narrowly won the vote despite the mainstream parties largely opposing a breakaway from EU.
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Source: The Hindu

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