

All of the current Lords Spiritual have signed a letter to The Times voicing alarm about the Government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda as early as today.

They wrote:

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Sir,

Whether or not the first deportation flight leaves Britain today for Rwanda, this policy should shame us as a nation. Rwanda is a brave country recovering from catastrophic genocide. The shame is our own, because our Christian heritage should inspire us to treat asylum seekers with compassion, fairness and justice, as we have for centuries. Those to be deported to Rwanda have had no chance to appeal, or reunite with family in Britain. They have had no consideration of their asylum claim, recognition of their medical or other needs, or any attempt to understand their predicament.

Many are desperate people fleeing unspeakable horrors. Many are Iranians, Eritreans and Sudanese citizens, who have an asylum grant rate of at least 88 per cent. These are people Jesus had in mind as he said when we offer hospitality to a stranger, we do it for him. They are the vulnerable that the Old Testament calls us to value. We cannot offer asylum to everyone, but we must not outsource our ethical responsibilities, or discard international law which protects the right to claim asylum.

We must end the evil trafficking; many churches are involved in fighting this evil. This needs global co-operation across every level of society. To reduce dangerous journeys to the UK we need safe routes: the church will continue to advocate for them. But deportations and the potential forced return of asylum seekers to their home countries are not the way. This immoral policy shames Britain.Â

The Most Rev Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury; the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York; the Right Rev Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London; the Right Rev Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham; the Right Rev David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham; the Right Rev John Inge, Bishop of Worcester; the Right Rev Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry; the Right Rev Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford; the Right Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle; the Right Rev Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans; the Right Rev Donald Allister, Bishop of Peterborough; the Right Rev Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely; the Right Rev Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark; the Right Rev Nicholas Baines, Bishop of Leeds; the Right Rev Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester; the Right Rev Martin Warner, Bishop of Chichester; the Right Rev Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol; the Right Rev Libby Lane, Bishop of Derby; the Right Rev Julian Henderson, Bishop of Blackburn; the Right Rev David Walker, Bishop of Manchester; the Right Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford; the Right Rev Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter; the Right Rev Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford; the Right Rev Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich; the Right Rev Paul Williams, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham

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