



Bishop of Chelmsford

A Church of England Bishop is proposing legislation to provide a safe and legal route to the UK for those seeking asylum, as part of attempts to crack down on illegal people smuggling across the Channel in small boats.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, has published a Private Members' Bill in the House of Lords which would permit an annual number of humanitarian travel visas to the UK.

The visas would allow people to safely enter the UK where there is a high chance that their asylum claim will be granted. The nationalities currently most likely to travel to the UK on small boats and have their asylum claim granted are Afghan, Syrian, Iranian, Eritrean and Sudanese.

The Bill also proposes that their asylum claim would then be considered in the UK through an accelerated process.

Under the terms of the [Asylum Application \(Entry to the United Kingdom\) Bill](#), up to 10,000 asylum travel visas would be granted in the first year of its operation with subsequent limits set by the Home Secretary. Nationalities eligible to apply would be named by the Home Secretary.

Bishop Guli said: "I am pleased to bring forward this Private Members Bill on the introduction of a Humanitarian Visa Scheme, which will provide a much-needed opportunity to discuss safe routes into the UK for refugees fleeing conflict, persecution and disasters.

"Such a scheme can help to undercut the business model of people smugglers encouraging refugees to take dangerous journeys across the Channel and the Mediterranean, by providing a safe, accessible and controlled route.

"A humanitarian visa scheme is just one of many workable proposals to offer safety, welcome and community to those fleeing danger here in the UK."

The Bill had its first Reading today (Wednesday November 29) and will be timetabled for a Second Reading at a later date to be confirmed. The text of the Bill can be found [here](#).

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