

UK set to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda on June 14

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Britain's Home Office is pressing ahead with its brutal policy of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda. Exactly two months after announcing its Migration and Economic Development Partnership deal with the east Africa state—under which people arriving illegally in the UK are to be sent 4,500 miles to have their asylum claim “processed”—the first flight is scheduled to depart on June 14.

According to the agreement, anyone deemed to have arrived “irregularly” in the UK since January 1, 2022 may be relocated to Rwanda. Once in Rwanda, if an asylum application is deemed legitimate, the person will only be allowed to stay in Rwanda, not the UK. If not, they will be deported to a third country.

On June 1, a Home Office statement said that it had begun “issuing formal removal direction letters to those who are set to go to Rwanda.” Among “those being relocated there” were “People who have taken dangerous, unnecessary, and illegal journeys, including crossing the Channel...”

Under Home Secretary Priti Patel's New Plan for Immigration, it is expected that tens of thousands of people will be flown to Rwanda and eventually, other states the UK finalises outsourcing agreements with.

The flights are going ahead despite being condemned as illegal by human rights groups.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is due to release its latest report, two days after the UK-Rwanda flight leaves, on the number of people who have suffered forced displacement globally. It estimates that the total number of asylum seekers worldwide is already at 100 million. UNHCR leader Filippo Grandi said that the Nationality and Borders Act under which the Johnson government developed its Rwanda policy “undermines the ability of people in danger to seek refuge in the UK and weakens refugee protection

worldwide.”

None of this concerns the government. The Home Office statement quoted Patel threatening, “while we know attempts will now be made to frustrate the process and delay removals, I will not be deterred...” The *Guardian* noted that the first flight to Rwanda is set to align with a trip a week later by Prime Minister Boris Johnson to Kigali for the Commonwealth heads of government meeting. Patel's comments followed the deliberately incendiary comments of Johnson, who told the *Daily Mail* that he was prepared to “dig in for the fight... We've got a huge flowchart of things we have to do to deal with it, with the Leftie lawyers.”

Steven Galliver-Andrew, a barrister working in immigration law, told the BBC last week that the government has set June 14 as the deportation date but “The law which allows the government to do this doesn't appear to come into force until the 28th of June 2022.”

At least 100 people have been sent letters telling them they are being sent to Rwanda. The Care4Calais charity said this week it was “working with 80 out of 100 people in detention centres who have been sent ‘notices of intent’ to remove them to Rwanda. Seventeen have had notices to say their ‘deportation’, the term used by the group, is imminent, of which 10 have been given the date June 14. They are all in detention centres and they are all very scared.”

An article by Care4Calais notes, “Refugees will not be safe. Rwanda is a dictatorship that imprisons, tortures and murders people who speak out against the government. International human rights groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UNHCR have raised serious concerns. It would be impossible to ensure the safety of people the UK intends to send there.”

Such is the fear over being sent to Rwanda that a group of asylum seekers detained at Brook House, near London's Gatwick Airport, held a five-day hunger strike ending on June 3.

In their deportation letters, which are 20 pages long and only available in English, those selected for removal to Rwanda are told they have no right to appeal because of the way they arrived in Britain via a route not deemed legal. The *Guardian* listed the various nationalities of those being threatened with removal, including groups from war-torn countries Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq. The UK will assist in sending them back to the warzones they have fled from. The letter declares: "You have the option to leave the UK voluntarily. However, should you be removed it will be to Rwanda."

Patel, assisted by tabloids and other media spewing out filth for years about immigrants "invading" the UK via the English Channel, pledged that her Nationality and Borders Act would end the journeys, with Britain "taking control" of its borders. The reality is that her deportation system will be used against anyone the government wants kicked out. The *Guardian* noted, "A significant number of those in the first group of 100 who have been targeted for offshoring to Rwanda are from Sudan.

"Sudanese are not the largest nationality group to arrive in the UK on small boats in the first quarter of this year where they ranked seventh with 137 arrivals between January and March of this year. They have a 92% grant rate for asylum claims."

Signifying how brutal the Rwanda policy is, the Home Office's pledge that only single men would be deported to Rwanda is being exposed as a lie. According to Care4Calais, "Two of the boys [to be flown to Rwanda] say that they are just 16 years old. The Home Office say they are 23 and 26 so it is essential that proper age assessments are done before any deportation takes place. One 16 year old saw his brother killed in front of him when his village was raided in Sudan. He escaped and went back later to find the whole village gone."

The *Guardian* cited Daniel Sohege, campaigns manager for Love146 UK, who said, "We are seeing children as young as 14 being incorrectly age-assessed as 23. The number of children we have seen who have just had 1999 put down as their date of birth when they

are clearly under 18 is highly concerning and putting young people at risk."

For several weeks, and again after surviving a vote of confidence in his leadership on Monday, Johnson has insisted that the government now "move on" in order to enact its Brexit agenda. This is premised on an upscaling of the assault on the jobs, pay, conditions and pensions of the working class, to be enforced, as the immigration policy reveals, by tearing up democratic rights.

The Rwanda policy and overall anti-immigration agenda is supported by every faction of the Tory Party, including the backbenchers posing as born-again moral crusaders seeking Johnson's removal.

The defence of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers is being criminalised. Next month, three people are to be tried after they prevented last year, as part of a huge crowd, police in Glasgow from taking away two immigrants for deportation. The Crown Office, Scotland's public prosecution service, said they were due in court on August 3/4. In a petition, the "Kenmure Street Three" demand that public order offence charges against them are dropped: "While resisting this alongside thousands of others, we were brutalised, locked up, and are now facing a repressive and distressing court process. We should not have to go through this."

The disappearing of people thousands of miles away to a country which was the location of genocide on a vast scale less than three decades ago is only the latest salvo in the government's assault on democratic norms. The government announced its intention in May's Queen Speech to do away with the Human Right Act 1998, which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights. A new Bill of Rights is aimed at overhauling the Act, with Justice Secretary Dominic Raab stating in March that among the "problematic areas" it will address are "the challenges in deporting foreign national offenders."



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