

From: Simon Forrester Simon@tauntonwelcomesrefugees.co.uk
To: POW, Rebecca rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk
Subject: Rwandan Plan
Sent: 19 April 2022 16:53

Dear Rebecca Pow

On Thursday morning, the morning news announced that there was a plan to send certain refugees to Rwanda for 'processing' and apparently to spend the rest of their lives there. Subsequently it became clear that the Home Secretary has had to use a Ministerial Direction to force this through because there is apparently no clear case that this offers good value for money.

Taunton Welcomes Refugees (TWR) protests at this proposal in the strongest terms and asks you to intercede with the Home Secretary to get it withdrawn. It represents a cruel and potentially illegal way of treating some of the most vulnerable people in our society. They have already had to run for their lives and undertake the harshest and most difficult of journeys: enduring suffering and needing great bravery. As one of the countries that is a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, it seems to us unimaginable that the United Kingdom could put itself in such a position now.

We also take issue with the kind of language used. There is talk of 'processing' and of 'business models' as if we are talking about the importation of some dodgy merchandise. We are not: we are talking about people. People with families, people who are sons and daughters, brothers, cousins and sisters. People who have been through enormous adversity and need our charity and compassion.

It is sometimes claimed that the majority of those who arrive in small boats off the coast of Kent are economic migrants, but this is simply not backed by the evidence. The Refugee Council tells us that in the 18 months to June 2021, 61% of those arriving by boat to seek asylum, were granted it. They were from just ten countries where human rights abuses and persecution are common. Of those initially rejected, 59% of appeals are likely to be accepted. If the Government takes the view that these figures are wrong, could you please ask the Home Office for the source of the data it relies on?

There are asylum seekers in your constituency, and they have been worried, alarmed and deeply undermined by this policy which seems ill thought out and poorly expressed. I had thought at some point you might like to meet them, but they would not be willing to do so at the moment because they are now so frightened. However, the Board of TWR would very much like to invite you to meet some of the many hundreds of people from your constituency who volunteer and support us. When would you care to do that?

Along with the Refugee Council, we recognise and share concern about the risks that people crossing the channel in small boats are subjected to. We urge the government to look at creating more safe routes where people in need of asylum can reach the UK without taking dangerous journeys. We urge that when you intercede with the Home Secretary, you make this clear.

Yours sincerely

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