



JUSTICE AND PEACE SCOTLAND STATEMENT ON THE PASSAGE OF 'THE SAFETY OF RWANDA (ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION) BILL' – 24th APRIL 2024

Justice & Peace Scotland are dismayed at the passing of the Safety of Rwanda Bill. This marks a terrible day for the upholding of international law, respect for human rights, and the progression of UK politics. Refugees and all who come to our shores are made in the image and likeness of God and should be treated with the dignity they deserve, not cruelty and inhumanity.

The Rwanda scheme would enable the Government to forcibly expel people seeking asylum - including children, torture survivors, and victims of war – putting them at grave risk of further harm and human rights abuses. People will be removed to a country they have no connection to, despite the ruling of our own country's Supreme Court that it is unsafe for them.

It is a human right to seek asylum and those who come to the decision to leave their homes behind do not make the choice lightly. Human beings seeking asylum or migrating for a better life do so because of problems that other human beings create: they move because of violence, war, torture, oppression, persecution, political instability, poverty, hunger, and ultimately because they have no alternative. The passing of this morally questionable act, that serves to only further traumatise some of the most vulnerable members of society, betrays who we are as a nation that has historically provided refuge to those in need, and undermines long-standing UK values of hospitality, welcome, friendship, and compassion.

The Rwanda scheme evidences a blatant disregard for international law as it violates the UK's international legal obligations as a state party to the Refugee Convention. Protecting refugees requires cooperation and responsibility sharing from all countries, not just those adjacent to crisis zones, as clearly defined in the Convention and its associated legal instruments. The UK government, instead of continuing to sow seeds of division and hostility, should be pursuing practical measures to address irregular flows of refugees and migrants, based on international cooperation and respect for international human rights law.

In place of this inhumane and cruel policy, we echo calls for a new plan for supporting refugees and an approach to asylum in the UK that is fair, kind, and gets the system working again for everyone. Specifically, we call for hospitable alternatives to the Rwanda plan that will safeguard refugees and their rights such as provision of a humanitarian visa scheme, allowing people to travel easily and access protection quickly; the expansion and better management of country resettlement schemes, such as those implemented for Syrians and Ukrainians; and the opportunity for those in need to apply for asylum before arriving in the UK, all of which would eliminate the need for people to travel here via irregular means.

