

UK set to deport first group of asylum seekers to Rwanda despite warnings



Protestors demonstrate outside the Home Office against the British Governments plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, in London, Britain, June 13, 2022. (Photo by Reuters)

London, June 14 (RHC)-- The British government is set to send the first plane of asylum seekers to Rwanda, a plan the UN refugee chief has described as "catastrophic."

Rejecting calls by human rights groups to stop the government from carrying out its "inhumane" plan, a high court judge on Friday ruled that the first planned flight could take place.

The court of appeal in London on Monday upheld the high court's controversial decision to deny an injunction to block the first flight of failed asylum-seekers.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on Tuesday that Britain expects the first flight of asylum seekers to depart for Rwanda on Tuesday. She said any person who avoids that flight due to legal proceedings will be put on a later one.

Announced in April, the British government's controversial plan is part of an initial £120 million deal with the landlocked central African country, whose own human rights record has been under scrutiny. Human rights groups say the policy is inhumane and will put vulnerable asylum seekers at greater risk.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has warned that Rwanda does not have the capacity and infrastructure to handle the process, and there is a risk some migrants could be deported to their home countries.

Filippo Grandi condemned the British government's plan during a press conference in Geneva on Monday, calling it "all wrong" and saying it should not be "exporting its responsibility to another country".

"The precedent that this creates is catastrophic for a concept that needs to be shared like asylum," he said. "To export that responsibility to another country runs contrary to any notion of responsibility-sharing of international responsibility."

Grandi said there are many countries in Africa and elsewhere that are far poorer than Britain but are hosting hundreds of thousands and even millions of refugees.

He stressed that the UK had made the job of his agency "very difficult" and raised the alarm that other countries might follow the British footsteps.

The UK government justifies his policy saying that the deportation strategy will stop smugglers from flowing migrants across the English Channel. "It's very important that the criminal gangs who are putting people's lives at risk in the Channel understand that their business model is going to be broken and is being broken by this government," Prime Minister Boris Johnson told LBC radio, promising that the government will push ahead with the policy.

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