



olence has been 'unjustly maligned by some for political reasons'

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and Bishop of Southwark have joined with leaders of other churches in England to renew their commitment to caring for the most vulnerable, as legislation to enable asylum seekers to be deported to Rwanda was approved by Parliament.

In a joint statement with leaders of the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches, they pay tribute to all those who “live out Jesus’s call to feed and clothe the poor, and to welcome the stranger, at times in the face of opposition and prejudice.

The statement voices concern that asylum seekers and refugees have been used as a “political football” and that the kindness of churches and charities towards people fleeing war, persecution and violence has been “unjustly maligned by some for political reasons.”

Read the full statement:

We retain deep misgivings about the Safety of Rwanda Bill, passed in Parliament last night, for the precedent it sets at home and for other countries in how we respond to the most vulnerable. This includes victims of modern slavery and children wrongly assessed as adults, whom we have a duty to protect.

As leaders in Christian churches we wish to express our profound gratitude to those who live out Jesus’s call to feed and clothe the poor, and to welcome the stranger, through their work with asylum seekers and refugees, at times in the face of opposition and prejudice.

We note with sadness and concern the rise in hostility towards those who come to these islands seeking refuge and the way in which the treatment of the refugee and asylum seeker has been used as a political football.

We are disappointed that the kindness and support offered by churches and charities to the people at the heart of this debate - those fleeing war, persecution and violence trying to find a place of safety - has been unjustly maligned by some for political reasons.

In their response to the tragic attack in Clapham earlier this year, some former Home Office ministers, MPs and other commentators sought to portray churches and clergy as deliberately facilitating false asylum claims. It was for this reason, at the request of Anglican leaders, that representatives of our Churches met the Home Secretary in February. When asked, neither he nor officials could provide evidence to support the allegations of widespread abuse. Home Office Ministers have since confirmed this in a written parliamentary answer, and on questioning by the Home Affairs Select Committee. Follow-up meetings have since been agreed to promote closer cooperation and co-working between the churches and the Home Office.

Like so many in this country, we seek to support a system that shows compassion, justice, transparency and speed in its decisions. We grieve the appalling loss of life in the Channel today.

There may be differences between our churches and Government on the means by which our asylum system can be fair, effective and respecting of human dignity, but we do agree that borders must be managed and that vulnerable people need protection from people smugglers. We have pledged to continue

to work with the Home Office, and we do so in good faith.

- Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby
- Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell
- Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
- Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun
- Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary, The Baptist Union of Great Britain
- Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, United Reformed Church General Assembly Moderator
- Revd Gill Newton, President of the Methodist Conference

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/after-rwanda-church-leaders-speak-out-over-hostility-refugees>