June 2022

Thank you for contacting me about processing asylum claims in Rwanda.

I share the Home Secretary’s disappointment that the first flight to Rwanda was cancelled immediately prior to take off due to a last-minute legal ruling from the European Court of Human Rights, which subsequently triggered a series of legal challenges in London courts. It is welcome that the Home Office is reviewing every decision made on the flight and preparations for the next departure are now taking place.

The UK has a proud record of providing support to those in need of protection; our resettlement programmes have provided safe and legal routes to better futures for hundreds of thousands of people from across the globe. Since 2015, over 185,000 adults and children seeking refuge have been offered a place in this country, more than any other similar resettlement scheme in Europe. This includes almost 100,000 British Nationals Overseas in Hong Kong; 20,000 Syrians; 13,000 from Afghanistan; and 50,000 Ukrainians. However, it is clear that the global asylum system is broken. Some 80 million people are on the move around the world, uprooted by conflict and instability. Many more are on the move to seek better prospects, driven by a desire for a better life. The result is increased illegal migration flows, including into Europe and onto the UK, with the asylum systems collapsing under the strain of real humanitarian crises and the work of people smuggling gangs.

As a result of the UK’s Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, people who enter the UK illegally may have their asylum claim considered in Rwanda (not in the UK), with a view to receiving the protection they need there if their claim is successful.

The UK is investing £120 million into Rwandan economic development and growth, with funding also provided to help deliver asylum operations, similar to the costs incurred in the UK. Furthermore, Rwanda has one of the fast-growing economies and enterprise cultures, with growing trade links with the UK, which this scheme will complement as part of our Global Britain agenda.

Rwanda is a fundamentally safe and secure country with respect for the rule of law.  Under this agreement, Rwanda will process claims in accordance with the UN Refugee Convention, national and international human rights laws, and will ensure their protection from inhuman and degrading treatment or being returned to the place they originally fled.

Rwanda has a credible track record of hosting refugees and working constructively with the UN Refugee Agency to provide food, healthcare and jobs with over 130,000 refugees recently resettled in the country.

Combined with asylum reforms and legal changes through the Nationality and Borders Act, these new measures will deter illegal entry into the UK. In doing so they will help break up criminal smuggling gangs, protect the lives of those they endanger, ensure continued support for the truly vulnerable, and enhance our ability to remove those with no right to be in the UK.

Rwanda is a fundamentally safe and secure country with respect for the rule of law. Rwanda has no laws against homosexuality, and its constitution also prohibits all forms of discrimination based on identity.

Ministers have been clear that the Government's 'Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda' fully complies with international and national law and the Home Office has stated that it will defend any legal challenge robustly. As I am sure you can appreciate, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific legal proceedings.

I would, however, hope, more generally, that the courts are able to swiftly deal with any individuals who seek to frustrate the process and delay removals. I am also encouraged that the Home Secretary has reiterated that she will not be deterred from acting to deliver on the changes the British people voted for to take back control of our money, laws and borders.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**