

Suicide attempts reported among asylum seekers in UK facing deportation to Rwanda

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UK Home Secretary Priti Patel (L) and Rwandan Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta (R) are seen after signing the “Migration and Economic Development Partnership Agreement” in Kigali, Rwanda, on April 14, 2022. (Photo by AFP)

London, June 2 (RHC)-- Suicide attempts have been reported among asylum seekers in the UK who face deportation to Rwanda under new plans.

The reports of suicide attempts are made as UK Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that the first group of the asylum seekers who had entered the country without authorization would be deported to Rwanda on June 14.

Formal notices by the Home Office have been sent to a group of asylum seekers, advising they will be relocated to the East African country, officials have said. But few details about the number of people expected to be sent to Rwanda in the first flight have been published.

Home Office officials said they were engaging with all individuals to ensure the process is fully understood and people are given the appropriate support ahead of departure.

“Once in Rwanda, there is a generous support package, including up to five years of training, accommodation, and healthcare on arrival in Rwanda. Under this partnership, the UK is also investing an initial £120m into the economic development and growth of Rwanda,” a statement from the department said.

A 40-year-old Yemeni asylum seeker made a video addressed to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Patel, stating that after he arrived in the UK on April 13 and found out about Rwanda offshoring plans, he had “no other choice but to kill myself.”

Campaigners have raised alarm about access to legal advice and mental health support for people who are told they may be subject to the Rwanda removal policy.

In a statement, Patel said: “Our world-leading partnership with Rwanda is a key part of our strategy to overhaul the broken asylum system and break the evil people-smugglers’ business model.”

“Today’s announcement is another critical step towards delivering that partnership and, while we know attempts will now be made to frustrate the process and delay removals, I will not be deterred and remain fully committed to delivering what the British public expect,” she said.

Some say the announcement of the new law is an attempt to divert attention from the partygate scandal involving Johnson.

Under the deal, signed off by Patel and praised by Johnson, the migrants and asylum-seekers illegally entering Britain would be sent thousands of miles away to Rwanda. Johnson has claimed that the deal would stop human smugglers from sending desperate migrants on treacherous journeys across the English Channel.

The UK has promised Rwanda an initial £120m as part of an “economic transformation and integration fund” but the UK will be paying for operational costs too. However, no further details have been released by the Home Office.

More than 4,850 people have reached the UK in small boats since April 14, when the Rwanda plans were unveiled. Also in the year 2021, the UK received 48,540 asylum applications from main applicants only. This is over two and a half times more than the previous year and the highest number in almost two decades.

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