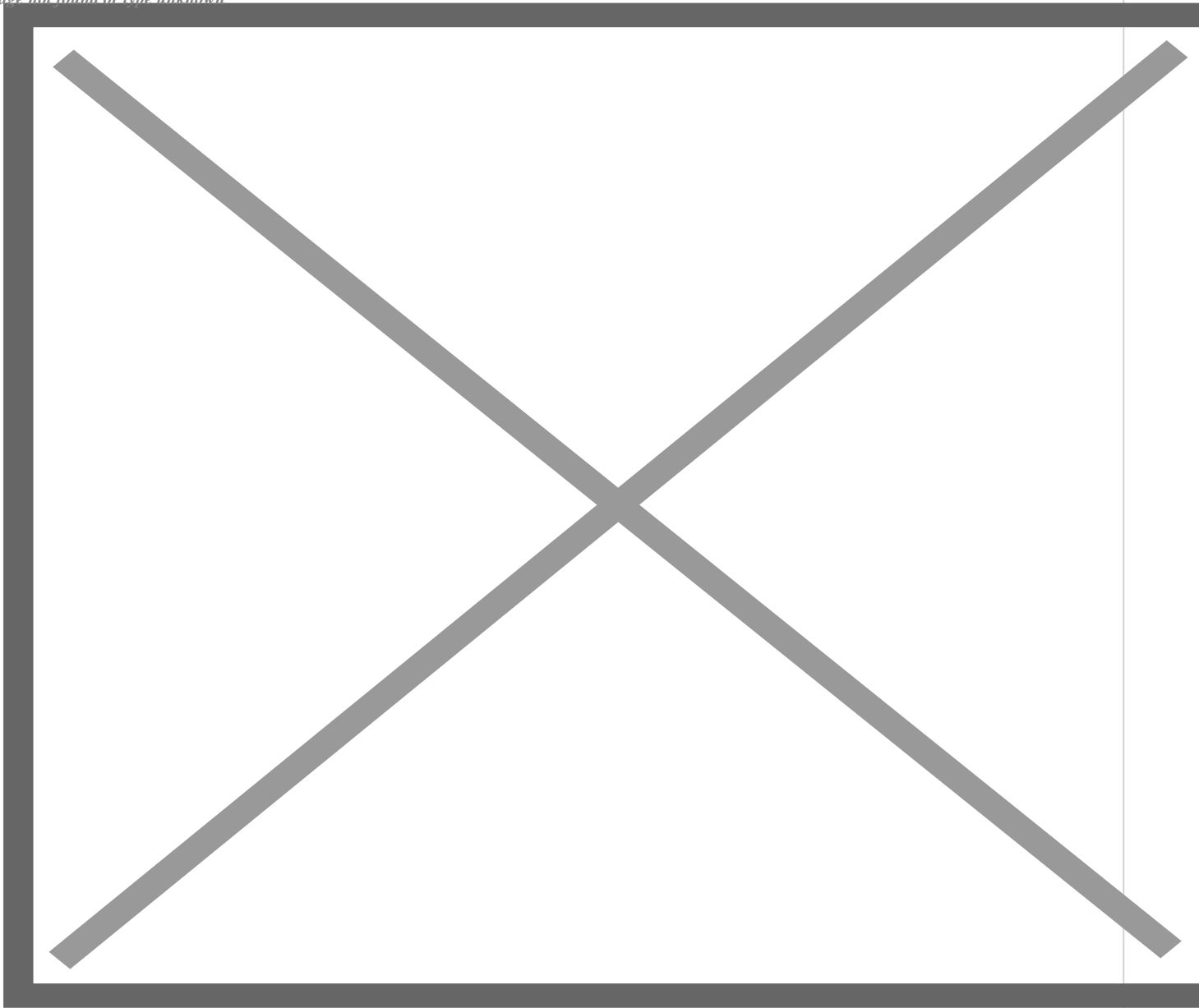


UK's plan to deport refugees to Rwanda faces final challenge

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Protesters hold up placards as they gather close to the Brook House immigration removal centre beside Gatwick Airport, south of London [File: Niklas Hallen/AFP]

London, June 13 (RHC)-- London's courts are set to hear two last-minute legal challenges to block the British government's controversial policy to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. The government is promising to push ahead with the planeload of 31 claimants on a chartered flight on Tuesday from an undisclosed airport.

Authorities have not provided details of those selected for deportation, but charities say they include people fleeing Afghanistan and Syria. It defeated an attempt to halt the plan on Friday in the High Court, brought by two refugee charities and a trade union which called it immoral, dangerous and counterproductive.

But the same groups have filed an emergency appeal for Monday, alongside a separate legal challenge, and have been heartened by Prince Charles reportedly dubbing the plan "appalling".

Alongside the Court of Appeal hearings, the High Court will separately hear arguments from Asylum Aid, a refugee charity, which launched a second legal challenge to stop the government from flying refugees to Rwanda.

The charity said the government's plan to give asylum seekers seven days to obtain legal advice and to present their case to avoid deportation is flawed and unfair. This case will be heard by the same judge who on Friday rejected the first request for an injunction.

The claimants include the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), whose members in the United Kingdom Border Force are tasked with executing the deportations. PCS chief Mark Serwotka noted that as part of its judgement on Friday, the High Court had scheduled a fuller hearing for next month on the legality of the plan overall.

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