



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

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The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP,
Home Secretary,
The Home Office,
2 Marsham Street,
London,
SW1P 4DF

Monday 18 April, 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

In this Easter season I am writing to you, both as Home Secretary and as one of the MPs in the Diocese of Chelmsford which I serve, regarding your latest proposals to process asylum cases in Rwanda. You will be aware of the very serious reservations expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Easter sermon. I stand full square behind his comments, and my own lived experience as an asylum seeker makes me extremely anxious about this scheme and its implications.

This policy treats the most vulnerable in our midst in a cruel and inhumane way and it is for this reason that I am compelled to appeal to you, even at this late stage, to listen to the voices that are being raised from a cross section of public opinion. Those who find their way to this country, often through treacherous means, deserve to have their cases considered and processed here. To do otherwise is, as the Archbishop says, “sub-contracting out our responsibilities ... the opposite of the nature of God, who himself took responsibility for our failures”.

In your Times article of the 18th April you suggest that “those institutions that criticise the plans fail to offer their own solutions”. This is to misunderstand the important role of the Church of England, particularly through the national leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the parliamentary responsibilities of the Lords Spiritual. We are not tasked with providing worked out political solutions – that is the job of Government and politicians. But it is our responsibility to point out where there are serious ethical and moral



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implications arising from Government proposals. I would also want to say that it is disingenuous of your Cabinet colleague, Mr Rees-Mogg, to suggest that the Archbishop “misunderstands what the policy is trying to achieve”. Thoughtful criticism should not be dismissed in this off hand manner.

Finally, I want to thank you for your recent tweet with its traditional Easter Greeting. The Christian message of new life in all its fullness which we celebrate at Easter cannot be separated from the reality of lived experience and is exemplified in the way we treat the most vulnerable in our society.

In the words of Jesus himself, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Bishop of Chelmsford
Member of the Lords Spiritual

CC The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby



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