

LORD BLUNKETT
THE LORD BISHOP OF ST EDMUNDSBURY AND IPSWICH
THE LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL
LORD KERR OF KINLOCHARD

8

Clause 1, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“(g) those granted refugee status are automatically presumed to have the option of returning to the United Kingdom, and that on the individual being granted refugee status, they are facilitated in relocating to the United Kingdom.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment, along with another amendment in Lord Blunkett's name, seeks to ensure that those granted refugee status are automatically presumed to have the option of returning to the United Kingdom, and that on being granted refugee status, they are facilitated in relocating to the United Kingdom.

LORD BLUNKETT
LORD KERR OF KINLOCHARD
THE LORD BISHOP OF ST EDMUNDSBURY AND IPSWICH
THE LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL

72

After Clause 5, insert the following new Clause—

“Right to return to the United Kingdom for those granted refugee status

(1) Those granted refugee status are automatically presumed to have the option of returning to the United Kingdom and, on the individual being granted refugee status, they must be facilitated in relocating to the United Kingdom.

(2) Section 2 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 is disapplied for the purposes of this section.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment, along with another amendment in Lord Blunkett's name, seeks to ensure that those granted refugee status are automatically presumed to have the option of returning to the United Kingdom, and that on being granted refugee status, they are facilitated in relocating to the United Kingdom.

Presumed Purpose

To turn the Rwanda scheme into an off-shore processing scheme, under which the United Kingdom will ultimately remain responsible for providing asylum to people transported to Rwanda who are then found to be refugees.

Briefing

Amendments 8 and 72 constitute the only policy alternative that is specifically advanced by any amendments currently tabled to the Bill.

As probing amendments, these are welcome insofar as they provide at least some opportunity to require ministers to explain and take responsibility for the policy – pursued ever since 31

December 2020, with increasing abandon – of simply refusing to process the claims to asylum of tens of thousands of people in the UK.

The Government's policy is to refuse any responsibility for these people and their claims – even while demanding other countries should take responsibility for people seeking asylum on their territory. That policy requires the Government to either continue hosting a growing number of people stuck in limbo, many of whom entitled to asylum, or persuade some other country to add the UK's asylum responsibilities to their own by receiving these people and their claims from the UK. It may require both of these outcomes if the Government cannot identify a country or countries that are willing to do so in large enough number.

Amendments 8 and 72 seek instead to pass some, but ultimately not all, responsibility elsewhere. While these would permit the transfer to Rwanda of responsibility for hosting people seeking asylum – possibly even for deciding their claims – they would not permit the transfer of ultimate responsibility for providing asylum to each and every person found to be a refugee.

Amnesty does not support off-shore processing. It has had severely inhuman consequences when pursued by Australia; and is a dreadful example, in its own right, of refusing to truly share responsibility.¹

Rich countries cannot continue to expect poor ones to take on by far the greater share of that including by demanding that poorer countries – such as Rwanda – host their asylum system and take on all responsibility for people determined not to be refugees. Rather than heaping more responsibility onto poor countries, rich countries ought to be doing far more to relieve the latter of their already disproportionate responsibilities and support them to deliver on the rights of people already seeking or receiving asylum on their territories.

¹ Amnesty has published several reports on Australia's off-shoring system, including *This is breaking people* (2013), *An island of despair* (2016) and *Punishment not Protection* (2018). Our recent submission to the International Agreements Committee briefing addressed the distinction between off-shore processing and the Government's policy:
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/127193/pdf/>