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UK GOVERNMENT SHOULD ABANDON PLANS TO PASS THE "ILLEGAL MIGRATION BILL"

The European Network on Religion & Belief (ENORB) is concerned about the UK Government's plans to pass the Illegal Migration Bill that bans the right of people to seek refuge in a safe country. Apart from breaching international agreements like Article 14 of the UN Human Rights Charter, the bill, if approved, will not stop boats from crossing the Channel and make such journeys any safer.

Last year, over 45,756 migrants crossed the Channel to the UK, a 60% rise from the previous year, according to UK government figures. Last April, the Rwanda-UK pact was signed, which aims to send people whose asylum application has been deemed inadmissible to the African country.

Adding to growing concerns from rights groups and NGOs, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) criticised the bill as a *de facto* asylum ban. The right to claim asylum is a human right. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, on the principle of non-refoulement, does not allow asylum seekers to be sent back to countries where their lives would be in danger. The UK Government and Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, admitted that the new bill cannot make a "definitive statement of compatibility" with human rights laws.

ENORB urges the UK Government to abandon its plans to pass the controversial bill since it constitutes a clear violation of human rights and leaves a dangerous precedent for others to follow. We ask the UK Government to reconsider its approach to asylum seekers and implement policies prioritising their safety and well-being.

The current new bill does nothing to lessen the danger faced by thousands of asylum seekers aiming to cross the Channel. It is inhumane and unfair to the most vulnerable people who cannot obtain a visa or complete the journey by safer means. Nothing good can arise by enforcing harsh and ineffective laws that feed public opinion and exacerbate the challenges faced by vulnerable people seeking refuge and asylum.

1. ENORB is a European-based NGO that seeks to rid Europe of discrimination by valuing the diversity of religions, beliefs, and convictions. We work closely with other action-oriented networks and faith-based civil society organisations.

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