# UK Expands Deportations to Rwanda for Refused Asylum Seekers



**UK Expands Scope of Deportations to Rwanda for Refused Asylum Seekers**

CROYDON, UK – Tens of thousands of refused asylum seekers in the UK now face the possibility of being relocated to Rwanda, as announced by the Home Office on May 15, 2024. This policy extension results from a new agreement between the UK and Rwandan governments to expand the criteria for deportations to include individuals whose asylum claims have been rejected.

The move targets individuals who were previously denied asylum and extends beyond the initial focus on those arriving via small boats between January 2022 and June 2023. Government data from 2023 indicates that there were 24,310 refusals and 24,027 withdrawals of asylum claims, all now potentially subject to forced removal to Rwanda.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated the policy aims to deter illegal Channel crossings. However, this policy marks a shift by including refused asylum seekers, some of whom arrived through other means and have established lives in the UK.

James Cleverly, the UK Home Secretary, emphasized the government's stance on rapid detentions and removals to ensure a continuous flow of relocation flights to Rwanda. In contrast, legal experts and advocacy groups have raised concerns about the policy's potential impact on asylum seekers' safety and mental well-being.

Operation Vector is underway, with some refused asylum seekers already detained for removal in the next seven to nine weeks. These individuals will receive a five-year residency package in Rwanda, though their asylum claims will not be processed in the African country.

This extension of the Rwanda deportation policy has faced criticism from various quarters, including legal practitioners and human rights organizations, who fear it may drive asylum seekers underground and create unnecessary panic.

* [Tolga Akmen/EPA]