# TUV MLA warns Northern Ireland risks becoming a dumping ground for illegal migrants under new UK immigration Bill



In a recent address at the Northern Ireland Assembly, Timothy Gaston, the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) MLA for North Antrim, raised serious alarms about the implications of new UK immigration legislation, cautioning that Northern Ireland risks becoming a “dumping ground” for illegal migrants. His remarks, made during a discussion of the UK Government’s latest immigration Bill, illuminate the urgent complexities and controversies surrounding immigration policy in the aftermath of Brexit.

Gaston expressed support for the Second Reading of the immigration Bill in the House of Commons, considering it a necessary step towards rigorous border control. He stated, “The Bill that saw its Second Reading in the Commons yesterday was a welcome one; indeed, it has annoyed all the right people in this House this morning,” hinting at a perceived victory in addressing immigration issues that resonate with the electorate, especially as the electorate has increasingly turned towards alternative parties advocating for stronger immigration policies.

However, Gaston’s primary concern centers on Northern Ireland's unique position, especially given its open land border with the Republic of Ireland. He argued that while migrants may be intercepted when entering the Republic, the reverse journey into Northern Ireland is alarmingly inadequately regulated. “This issue needs to be addressed urgently,” he implored, highlighting the challenges posed by the current border arrangement, particularly as it relates to post-Brexit immigration enforcement.

Compounding these concerns are the legal challenges that have already surfaced regarding the Illegal Migration Act. In May 2024, the High Court in Belfast ruled that key provisions of this legislation infringe upon human rights protections and cannot be enacted in Northern Ireland. The court determined that the Act could significantly harm asylum seekers and vulnerable demographics, raising grave questions about the proposed deportation policies, such as sending asylum seekers to Rwanda. Despite the now-resigned Prime Minister's insistence that the ruling would not derail operational plans, legal analysts warn of increasing unease about the compatibility of such measures with human rights laws as framed within the Windsor Framework.

Political reactions following this ruling outline a widening rift in Northern Ireland's political landscape. Gavin Robinson, interim leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), urged for a cohesive immigration policy across the UK, echoing sentiments that Northern Ireland could become a 'magnet' for asylum seekers. This concern resonates with calls from right-leaning factions looking to prioritize effective and fair immigration controls.

The urgency of the situation is heightened by the fog surrounding how the new immigration Bill will specifically impact Northern Ireland amidst ongoing legal and ethical debates. The Assembly's discussions are sure to provoke strong reactions and intensify political tensions, as representatives wrestle with the ramifications of these legislative changes against the backdrop of cross-border movement and established human rights commitments.

Gaston concluded his address by urging the Labour Government to take immediate action to prevent a situation where Northern Ireland is left with ineffective immigration controls. His statements have sparked a critical discourse on immigration enforcement in the region, a debate that remains contentious in light of the new political landscape and echoes of discontent towards current government policies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.loveballymena.online/post/gaston-warns-northern-ireland-risks-becoming-dumping-ground-for-illegal-migrants> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/parts-uk-immigration-law-not-valid-northern-ireland-high-court-rules-2024-05-13/> - In May 2024, the High Court in Belfast ruled that certain provisions of the UK's Illegal Migration Act are not applicable in Northern Ireland due to conflicts with post-Brexit human rights protections. The court found that aspects of the law unlawfully affect asylum seekers, children, and trafficking victims in Northern Ireland. Despite the ruling, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated that it would not impact the UK's operational plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, with flights expected to commence in July.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/10295154-eabd-4e83-ba5a-5546f8d0e6e4> - In May 2024, the High Court in Northern Ireland ruled against key parts of the UK's Illegal Migration Act, impacting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. Justice Michael Humphreys found that the act's human rights provisions conflicted with the Windsor Framework and the European Convention on Human Rights, rendering the Rwanda asylum policy inapplicable in Northern Ireland. Despite Sunak's intention to appeal and start flights by July, legal experts noted the ruling further undermines the policy's credibility.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-69007979> - Following a High Court ruling that parts of the UK's Illegal Migration Act should not apply in Northern Ireland due to human rights concerns, the Democratic Unionist Party's interim leader, Gavin Robinson, called for a unified UK-wide immigration policy. He emphasized the need for the government to assert parliamentary sovereignty and prevent Northern Ireland from becoming a 'magnet' for asylum seekers. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated that the ruling would not change the government's plan to send illegal migrants to Rwanda and would take steps to defend that position, including appeal.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2024-05-13/uk-illegal-migration-act-undermine-human-rights-and-should-be-disapplied-in-ni> - In May 2024, the High Court in Northern Ireland ruled that several provisions of the UK's Illegal Migration Act are incompatible with human rights laws and should not apply in Northern Ireland. The court found that these provisions infringe upon rights protected under the Good Friday Agreement. The ruling raises significant questions about the long-term viability of the plan to refuse some asylum seekers a hearing and send them to Rwanda. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated that the ruling would not change the government's plan to send illegal migrants to Rwanda.
6. <https://www.lawcentreni.org/news/illegal-migration-act-what-is-in-force/> - The Illegal Migration Act became law on 20 July 2023. Although the Act paves the way for an entirely new – and wholly draconian – legal framework for processing asylum claims, many of its provisions have not yet been ‘commenced’. This means that many of the new powers and processes do not yet apply. This brief guide aims to help asylum seekers and refugee support organisations understand which parts of the legislation have been implemented.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-69001673> - In May 2024, a judge at Northern Ireland's High Court ruled that large parts of the UK's Illegal Migration Act should not apply in Northern Ireland because they breach human rights laws. The judge found that the law breaches the Windsor Framework, a post-Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU. The ruling raises significant questions about the long-term viability of the plan to refuse some asylum seekers a hearing and send them to Rwanda. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated that the ruling would not change the government's plan to send illegal migrants to Rwanda.