

About

The Department of African Studies has launched an initiative called "**Scholars on Africa**" with the primary objective of promoting the research ideas of scholars and faculty members on current happenings and contemporary issues related to the African continent. This initiative serves a dual purpose, as it not only facilitates academic exploration but also provides valuable insights to the policymakers of India on matters concerning Africa. By actively engaging with scholars and faculty members, the initiative aims to foster a better understanding and relationship between India and Africa, bridging the gap between the two worlds

Under the "Scholars on Africa" initiative, Scholars of the Department of African Studies are encouraged to contribute write-ups on various African issues, not exceeding 1000 words in length. It is noteworthy that these write-ups will be forwarded by any faculty members of the Department. These write-ups serve as a platform for scholars to express their personal views and insights on a diverse range of topics, including History, Politics, economics, culture, and social issues prevalent in Africa.

UNITED KINGDOM APPROVES RWANDA BILL

The United Kingdom approved controversial legislation on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, that allows the government to send some asylum-seekers to Rwanda, with deportation flights expected to start this summer. Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson initially proposed the Rwanda bill in 2022, and it has since been continued by two more prime ministers and as many Home Secretaries. The bill is part of the UK's strict approach to irregular immigration since its departure from the European Union (EU), commonly referred to as Brexit. The Rwanda proposal was expanded upon by the current prime minister, Rishi Sunak, into his "Stop the Boats" strategy, which aims to reduce the number of irregular migrants arriving on British soil from the north of France and Belgium.

What is the Rwanda asylum plan?

The government announced in April 2022 that any person seeking asylum who entered the UK "illegally" after January 1, 2022, from a safe country like France, could be sent to Rwanda. They would have their asylum claims processed there, rather than in the UK. Should their claims be successful, they would be granted refugee status and allowed to remain in the landlocked east-central African country. If they cannot, individuals may seek asylum in another "safe third country" or request to live in Rwanda for other reasons. No one seeking refuge could apply to go back to the UK. According to ministers, the strategy will

discourage migrants from travelling across the English Channel in small boats to reach the UK. 8,278 persons have crossed the Channel as of May 1st, 2024—more than the figure for the corresponding period in either 2023 or 2022.

What is the situation like for refugees in Rwanda?

Approximately 135,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, are hosted by Rwanda. Unlike many other countries, where they are to reside in camps, they are allowed to travel freely, work, own property, register businesses, and open bank accounts. According to a 2023 assessment by Refugees International, Rwanda's "economic inclusion" refugee policies "stand out as a model with lessons learned for East Africa and beyond."

Under a UNHCR collaboration, Rwanda has taken in refugees on many occasions in recent years who were evacuated from the notorious detention camps in Libya. Additionally, the nation participated in the controversial practice of accepting Israeli refugee claimants who had been rejected. According to local news outlet KT Press, the spokesperson for the Rwandan government, Yolande Makolo, the country has maintained an open stance toward refugees because its citizens know "what it is to be on the move, or to be displaced, just because of the history of our country."

The new legislation is the third in a line of more stringent UK regulations that have reduced access to refugee protection in the nation since 2022. These laws include a restriction on people who arrive in the UK illegally through other countries from obtaining asylum or other types of authorization to stay in the country. If implemented, it would allow asylum seekers—including families with children—to be sent to Rwanda without any chance of being allowed to return to the United Kingdom.

The fact that the Act specifically permits the Government to reject any protective interim remedies from the European Court of Human Rights makes this scenario much more concerning. However according to Filippo Grandi, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, "The new legislation marks a further step away from the U.K.'s long tradition of providing refuge to those in need, in breach of the Refugee Convention,". "Protecting refugees requires all countries – not just those neighbouring crisis zones – to uphold their obligations. This arrangement seeks to shift responsibility for refugee protection, undermining international cooperation and setting a worrying global precedent." U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak declared that the measure was "landmark legislation," and in 10 to 12 weeks the first aircraft carrying illegal migrants would go for Rwanda, where their asylum requests would be processed.

***Views are personal**



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