

## PROTESTERS ACROSS UK DECRY 'HEINOUS' RWANDA DEPORTATION PLAN

Adapted from the Guardian, By Nadeem Badshah

July 16, 2022

Campaigners have rallied against the government's "heinous" policy to send some migrants to Rwanda in a series of protests across the UK.

John McDonnell, the Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington who spoke during the rally outside Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre, wrote on Twitter: "Joined the demonstration outside Harmondsworth Detention Centre in my constituency in opposition to the appalling government policy of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda & detention." "Let us make it clear asylum seekers are welcome here."

The demonstrations were called as part of the StopRwanda campaign, launched by the Trades Union Congress, Care4Calais and Stand Up To Racism. Clare Moseley, Care4Calais CEO, said: "We know that many people oppose the shockingly brutal Rwanda plan and we are delighted to see so many of them making their voices heard today. "We have seen up close the human cost of locking people up and telling them they will be sent to Rwanda. From suicide attempts to hunger strikes, it was harrowing. We now have six weeks to show the government that this cruel plan is not what the British public wants."

The campaign is backed by 11 trade unions, including the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) – which represents more than 80% of Border Force staff, refugee rights organisations and faith groups.

In April, home secretary Priti Patel signed what she branded a "world-first" agreement to send migrants deemed to have arrived in the UK illegally to Rwanda.

The first deportation flight – due to take off on 15 June – was cancelled with the plane on the runway in Salisbury after an intervention from the European court of human rights after a series of legal challenges by those on board.

A judicial review of the plan was due to be heard on 19 July, however charities including Care4Calais and Detention Action – which are bringing the case – said the hearing has been adjourned until September.

Weyman Bennett, co-convenor of Stand Up To Racism, said: "[Boris] Johnson, Patel and the government – and we know that every candidate in the Tory leadership race supports the heinous Rwanda detention policy – is hellbent, despite the incredible growth of an anti-racist movement in the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter movement and opposition to racism, to intensify their racist hostile environment for refugees and migrants and make people in the most desperate situations seeking safety into the scapegoats for a crisis and attacks on living standards that they did nothing to cause.

"We must keep up the pressure, we can stop offshore detention to Rwanda, and make the Nationality and Borders Act unworkable, but it will mean a mass campaign, it will mean escalating protests, and it is vital that the trade unions take this fight into workplaces everywhere and on to the streets.

"We are organising to prepare in every area for this kind of response to the Home Office and its attacks on our neighbours."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We remain committed to our world-leading migration partnership with Rwanda, which will see those arriving dangerously, illegally, or unnecessarily into the UK relocated to rebuild their lives there.

"This is vital to prevent loss of life in the Channel and break the business model of people smugglers.

"The government's new plan for immigration is the most comprehensive reform of the asylum system and the Nationality and Borders Act will speed up the removal of those who have no right to be here, preventing abuse and deterring illegal entry to the UK."

Further demonstrations are set to take place on Sunday.