



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other UK faith leaders have urged the Government to develop a long-term strategy for tackling the refugee crisis and human trafficking, ahead of the final Report Stage debate on the Illegal Migration Bill in the House of Lords on Wednesday 5th July.

The faith leaders have given their support to the amendment tabled by the Archbishop of Canterbury calling on the government to develop long-term strategies to tackle the crisis, which if passed by the Lords this evening, will then be debated and voted on in the House of Commons.

In a joint letter in The Times today, the faith leaders write: “The Illegal Migration Bill falls short of our obligation towards the most vulnerable. It fails to meet the basic test of an evidence-based and workable policy. We need an alternative approach that reflects our country’s history, values and responsibility.”

They add: “The UK should take a lead in setting out a just, compassionate approach, ensuring that people seeking sanctuary are protected, claims decided quickly and justly, human traffickers are punished, and the root causes of mass migration are properly addressed.”

The intervention comes on the final day of the Report Stage of the Illegal Migration Bill in the House of Lords. The Archbishop of Canterbury will be speaking in the House of Lords this evening in the final debate, during which Peers will vote on amendments.

The Archbishop will speak in support of his amendment, which has been tabled with the support of Peers from the Government and Opposition benches.

Other Bishops in the Lords have been engaging with the breadth of issues within the Bill, including welfare of pregnant women and children in detention, age assessments, modern slavery and human trafficking, and safe and legal routes. Some of the amendments already passed in the Lords have been led on or co-sponsored by Bishops (Durham and Gloucester).

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said today:

“As faith leaders we hold different beliefs on many things, but we are united in our concern for people seeking sanctuary. Britain must have an asylum system based on justice and compassion. We are standing together to call on the Government to honour our obligations to the world’s most vulnerable people – and play our part in tackling a global crisis that is only set to worsen in the coming years, as millions more people around the world are forced to flee their homes. The amendment I have tabled to the Illegal Migration Bill is intended to focus our efforts on that goal.”

Read the text of the joint letter to The Times by the Archbishops and faith leaders in full:

As faith leaders, we represent people and communities whose belief, worship and action point us towards the kind of society we wish to build for the common good. The Illegal Migration Bill falls short of our obligation towards the most vulnerable. It fails to meet the basic test of an evidence-based and workable policy. We need an alternative approach that reflects our country's history, values and responsibility.

With more than 100 million people displaced around the world, this crisis will not be solved without significant collective endeavour. To improve the Bill, we support an amendment requiring the government to produce a ten-year strategy, collaborating internationally to stop the boats here and globally, and tackle refugee crises and human trafficking. The UK should take a lead in setting out a just, compassionate approach, ensuring that people seeking sanctuary are protected, claims decided quickly and justly, human traffickers are punished, and the root causes of mass migration are properly addressed.

The Most Rev Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

The Right Rev Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham

Commissioner Anthony Cotterill, Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army

Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy, CEOs of Progressive Judaism

Mrs Trupti Patel, president, Hindu Forum of Britain

Lord Singh of Wimbledon, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations UK

Imam Qari Asim, Senior Imam, Makkah Mosque, Leeds

Imam Dr. Sayed Razawi, Chief Imam (Scotland), Director-General of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society.

Notes:

Read the Archbishop's speech on the Illegal Migration Bill on 10th May: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/illegal-migration-bill-second-reading-house-lords-speech>

4 min read

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