



Migration issues in the UK

A Statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

In his 2014 message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees Pope Francis wrote, 'We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees... are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved'.

1. This plea of Pope Francis is as urgent as ever. Given the events of recent weeks it is of particular relevance for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Our appeal for refugees and asylum seekers to be welcomed and respected is based on the fundamental principle of the dignity of every person, created in the image and likeness of God. Every nation should recognise this dignity and the rights which flow from it.
2. We appreciate the complexity and magnitude of the challenges being faced in the ongoing migration crisis. With over 80 million people across the world displaced by war, poverty, persecution and the effects of global warming, this challenge requires collaborative international action. Although resources are limited and there are many competing demands, wealthy countries, including the UK should give leadership in this endeavour.
3. The value we attach to each person and the compassion which the afflicted deserve demands that we welcome asylum seekers, treating them justly and honouring their dignity as human persons.
4. The Nationality and Borders Act fails to do this. Those seeking refuge in the UK should be provided with safe routes for travelling, have the opportunity to tell their story, be listened to and have their cases assessed justly. We keep in mind that there is no illegal asylum seeker; to claim asylum is a human right.
5. People smugglers and modern-day human traffickers profit from the desperation and misery of refugees. We fully support their prosecution. It is imperative however to make a clear distinction between victims and those who exploit them. Crime is defeated by confronting the perpetrators not by punishing the victims.
6. Many British people have given witness to justice through hospitality, providing a compassionate welcome and campaigning on behalf of refugees. We applaud their efforts and kindness. Our Christian faith demands that we respond generously to asylum seekers whose dignity must be protected and upheld. Jesus taught us, "I was a stranger and you made me welcome." (Matt 25:35) so we will continue to advocate their cause.

Approved by the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops' Conference

Friday 6th May 2022