



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From Joanna Cherry KC MP

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP

Leader of the House of Commons

22 January 2024

Dear Penny,

On 6 December 2023, the Government laid before Parliament a new asylum partnership treaty between the UK and Rwanda. I am writing to you to urge you to find time for a debate on this Treaty in the House of Commons before the end of this month.

My Committee agrees with the position set out by the Home Affairs Select Committee in its report of 12 January. The Committee note that,

Whatever view one may take of its merits or otherwise, the new UK-Rwanda treaty is clearly of significant legal and political importance. It is also closely connected with the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill which is currently before the House of Commons. The House of Commons should be able to debate and reach a view on a treaty of such significance. This is particularly important in this case, because the treaty could be ratified and have effect even in the absence of the Bill becoming an Act for any reason.

They go on to say:

We therefore recommend that the Government provide time for the UK-Rwanda treaty to be debated in the House of Commons, and for the House to be able to record its view as to whether the treaty should be ratified, before the expiry of the period of 21 sitting days provided for under Section 20 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

I also note that Lord Goldsmith, Chair of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee, has put forward a motion to debate the UK – Rwanda agreement, which is currently scheduled to take place on the 22 January 2024. We believe it is of pivotal importance that both Houses have the opportunity to debate this policy.

We would therefore encourage you to find time in the House of Commons to allow a debate on this important matter, before the 21 sitting day period elapses on 31 January.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Cherry KC MP

Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights