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Britain

The British "Rwanda plan": a government caught in its own racist trap

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The British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and his Home Secretary, James Cleverly, are trying to save the "Rwanda Plan" announced by Boris Johnson in April 2022.

This was a deterrent measure against would-be Channel crossers in makeshift boats: those intercepted would be deported to Rwanda. Faced with numerous legal challenges, the programme has never been operational since.

The Supreme Court rejects the government's plan

On 15 November, the UK's highest court, the Supreme Court, ruled against the government's plan, finding that Rwanda did not provide the necessary guarantees of compliance with international law: people deported there would risk ultimate refoulement to the country they had fled, where their lives could be in danger.

British leaders, praising the reliability of the authorities in Kigali, have chosen to circumvent the Supreme Court's decision by attempting to pass emergency legislation to override existing provisions that could prevent expulsions to Rwanda.

The British Parliament is due to vote on the matter at the time of writing. [1] Whatever the outcome of the vote, it should be noted that the UK is not the first state with which Rwanda has negotiated this kind of arrangement. Denmark has a comparable agreement, but has not activated it. More unofficially, Israel did the same between 2014 and 2017 for the expulsion of thousands of Sudanese and Eritrean refugees who were, however, in many cases quickly expelled, after racketeering, once they arrived at their destination. The reservations expressed by British judges are hardly surprising.

An increasingly racist and cruel policy

We should also note the enormity of the failure of ten years of anti-immigration policy, which has been set up as a major government priority, and which is becoming ever more outrageously racist and cruel: the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, the 2019 Act on the end of post-Brexit freedom of movement, the 2021 Nationality and Borders Act, and the 2023 Illegal Migration Act. In 2022, however, net immigration was 745,000 and the number of people crossing the Channel reached 45,700, making 2022 a record year in both cases.

In trying to put into practice the anti-immigration rhetoric heard since the 2016 referendum campaign, the Tory government is now torn between its extreme right, which is determined to push ever more violent measures, and its pro-business wing, which is aware of the imperative need for the British labour market to welcome the workforce that is in short supply in entire sectors of the economy.

Beyond these contradictions, the coherences remain clear: the brutality increasingly asserted both here and abroad, through the issue of immigration, against the world of work and the working classes; and the calmness with which the Tories accept their own infringements of a right deemed increasingly cumbersome and dispensable. Both here and abroad, the labour movement must oppose these brutal and inhumane laws.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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[1] The bill was approved. France24, 12 December 2023 ["British MPs advance bill on deporting migrants to Rwanda"](#). It will then go into committee (discussion) stage and for a third reading before going to the House of Lords.