

FLICK DRUMMOND MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Danny Chambers,
Winchester Liberal Democrats,
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Winchester SO23 9NP

11 December 2023

Dear Danny and Tom,

Thank you for writing to me about illegal migration. I think you have misunderstood the judgment delivered by the Supreme Court on November 15th. The court found no reason in principle why migrants cannot be removed to Rwanda as long as conditions on safety are met. The judgment hinged on the issue of refoulement - that if people were removed to Rwanda fifteen months ago, they might eventually have been at risk of return to the country they originally left by Rwanda. The government has consulted the Rwandan government and the Law Officers and quite rightly took time to study the judgement carefully before responding.

The Conservative Party in government has always been deeply concerned with stopping the misery caused by human traffickers. It is regrettable your party has repeatedly voted against stopping this abusive and exploitative trade. We must do everything we can to deter people trafficking and I hope you will encourage your leadership to recognise the harm that people trafficking does to innocent victims worldwide.

The government has agreed a new treaty with Rwanda which will safeguard the position of migrants arriving there. It reiterates the UK's and Rwanda's commitment to international law. The Supreme Court decision was based on the circumstances in Rwanda well over a year ago. Since that time the UK and Rwandan authorities have worked to strengthen Rwanda's frameworks and infrastructure. Having done that work, the purpose of the new Bill is to recognise in law the changed circumstances.

Every illegal migrant who comes here falsely claiming to be a refugee weakens our ability to look after genuine asylum seekers. People who abuse our asylum system use up resources which are desperately needed by people fleeing persecution. There is no automatic right for economic migrants to come to the UK and argue to be allowed to stay here. The Lib Dems previously accepted the UK's right to control its borders when you were in the Coalition government, but apparently now do not.

This policy of this government is to ensure that people genuinely fleeing persecution can claim asylum here. The UK has operated programmes to bring here people from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. We have supported refugees from the Balkan wars, the Iraqi Kurds, and we have given the right to come here to people from Hong Kong who were living under our protection before 1997.

Member of Parliament for Meon Valley



The UK can be very proud of its record in asylum policy and support for oppressed people around the world.

In our own communities around Winchester we have a number of people whom the UK government has helped through the schemes I mentioned above. In my work as a Member of Parliament I have worked with many of them and their hosts, as well as other people who have come to this country to seek safety from harm in the past. I welcome it that refugees can come to this country, settle, and acquire British nationality – I have met and helped several of them. The latest figures published by the Home Office show the Winchester City Council area is home to 528 people brought here on the "Homes for Ukraine" scheme, and 23 from the "Afghan resettlement" scheme.

What we do not have in Winchester are large numbers of people who have arrived here through the asylum system and who are awaiting a decision - the latest Home Office figures identify just one single case. In some parts of the country the situation is different, and there is a real burden on public services. Some of those places are not far away. Portsmouth hosts around a thousand asylum seekers and I recall the Lib Dem leader of the city council there not that long ago complaining to the Home Office about the strain the number was putting on resources.

I am a vocal supporter of genuine refugees and people in places like Yemen, where I was born, who face persecution and oppression. The UK has a proud record on asylum and humanitarian work, and I will ensure that continues.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,
Alicia