

Stop the dangerous and illegal deportation of African refugees/asylum seekers from Israel to third countries

Dear friends,

We urge you to read and sign this petition in order to prevent human misery.

The Israeli Government has, perilously, decided to deport or transfer refugees in its territory to African countries, such as Rwanda and Uganda. We are requesting the UK Government to use its diplomatic clout to persuade the Israeli Government to stop this scheme, and provide these unfortunate refugees and asylum seekers the protection that they deserve under the UN Convention, to which the Israeli government is a signatory member. Article 33 (1) of the Convention states that: *“No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”* The Israeli Government is clearly contravening this Article. The refugees and asylum seekers in Israel are predominantly Eritreans, with a smaller number of Sudanese. It is common knowledge that there are gross human rights abuses in Eritrea. Its citizens are subjected to extra judicial killings and incommunicado incarcerations. Its people are ruled by fear and not the rule of law. There are over 330 prisons and prisoners run into thousands. Some are held in extremely harsh and remote places, others in shipment containers and others are held in underground cells. The cruelty and destructiveness of the Eritrean dictatorial regime is unprecedented that it is widely described as 'the North Korea of Africa.' This is why many thousands of Eritreans are leaving their country and taking the perilous journey to exile.

Refugees who arrive in Israel have frequently suffered the most severe abuses including rape, torture and the removal of their organs. Those who make it to Israel believed that the Israeli Government would provide them safety and security and beyond that some form of pursuit of happiness. To their dismay the Israeli Government is not giving them security but is threatening to take them somewhere else, illegally, against their will. We all know that the Jewish people have – down the years - been subjected to the most harrowing abuses and genocidal killings. Their history gives them an insight into the plight of the Africans, and why they deserve the support of the Israeli government.

We are encouraged by the outcry from the Jewish population both inside Israel and around the world that these measures have provoked. Their objections to the Israeli government's plans of deportation gives us hope that the Israeli government will change its mind.

1. We therefore urge the Israeli Government:

- a. To change its decision and provide the refugees safety and security in its territory, and to stop all forms of deportation or transferring refugees to a third country.
- b. To recognise the refugees as such rather than brand them as economic migrants, and to provide them the necessary documentations so that they may live peacefully without fear [currently Israel has recognised only 1% of the claimants as refugees. In Europe up to 85% of Eritreans are recognised as refugees.]
- c. To stop cutting 20% of the refugees' salaries, and give them the liberty to spend their money in the way they choose. This policy has been putting undue pressure on all refugees in general and on families and children in particular.

2. We call on our Jewish friends across the world, and all friends of the Jewish people, to put pressure on the Israeli Government to stop this planned deportation of the poor refugees. These persons have been through so much difficulties and each of them have individual painful stories to tell.

3. We call upon the UN Higher Commissioner on Human Rights to do their utmost to ensure that these refugees receive the necessary protection in Israel, and the necessary provisions to address the trauma and all forms of scars they carry. We are particularly concerned about those victims of rape, torture, and other forms abuses.

4. We call upon the UK Government to persuade the Israeli Government to abandon its plan of forced deportation and to engage in legal and compassionate course instead.

5. We call upon all humanitarian organisations and persons of good will to see the plights of these refugees and do everything possible to alleviate their misery.

Thank you for your help

Committee of Eritrean Unity for Justice – UK.