



**THE UN VS HOME OFFICE
RESPONSE
CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

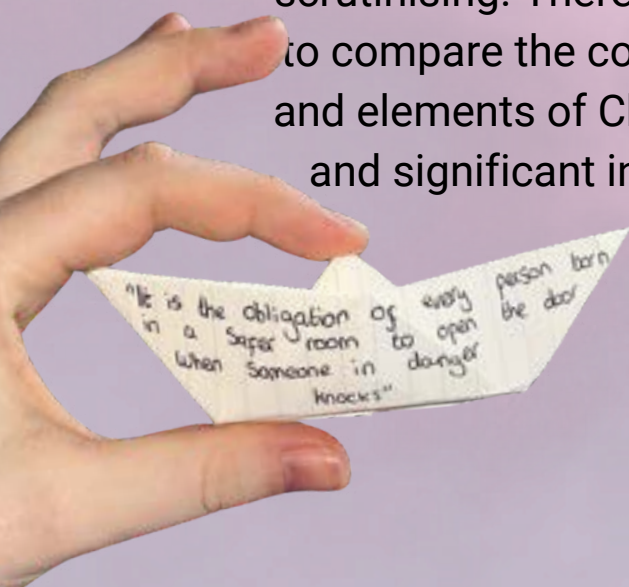


INTRODUCTION



At the end of 2023, SCM members and friends joined together in a craftivism campaign to send over 150 origami boats to the new Home Secretary, James Cliverly. This was in response to the Government's 'Stop the Boats' campaign, which we believe is driven by a narrative rooted in trying to keep refugees and asylum seekers outside of the country, and aiding in the building of a general hostile environment for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The 'Stop the Boats' campaign in particular focuses on the boats that carry refugees across the channel, rather than the people seeking refuge. We hoped that in writing messages of welcome and generosity on origami boats, we could shift the focus onto the humanity of those arriving onto our shores.

A few months later we got a response from the Home Office, which can be found on pages 3-4. However, although we were happy to get a response at all, there were elements of the letter we felt needed further scrutinising. Therefore, we have created this resource to compare the content of the letter to a fact checker and elements of Christian tradition deemed important and significant in the fight for justice for refugees.



LETTER FROM THE HOME OFFICE TO SCM



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DECS Reference: TRO/1085694/24

20th February 2024

Dear Ms. Edmonds,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 January 2024 regarding the 'Stop the Boats' campaign and the 153 origami boats made by students and friends of the Student Christian Movement.

Firstly, I would like to assure you that your comments have been noted and we apologise for the delay in response.

The Government is clear that no one should be risking their lives by crossing the Channel. This is a hugely dangerous journey through one of the world's busiest shipping lanes which has already claimed lives, and so our primary responsibility is to do all we can to prevent any further loss of life at sea.

These crossings are unnecessary: France, where these crossings originate, is a safe country with its own asylum system, and it is an established principle that asylum should be sought in the first available safe country. It is unacceptable that, instead, criminal gangs entice migrants to make this perilous journey for their own profit. We must therefore act to prevent these crossings in the first place.

The effort to preserve Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is led by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and Border Force plays a lead role in preventing the kind of tragedies that we have seen all too often in the Channel in the last few years as a result of these crossing attempts.

Persons rescued are required to be taken to a 'place of safety' so that lifesaving medical assistance can be provided at the earliest opportunity and in all cases the priority is always the preservation of human life.

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The Government takes its international obligations, including under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), very seriously; the 'Stop the Boats' campaign is ambitious and novel, delivering the changes necessary to reduce the incentives for people to risk their lives through illegal crossings and allowing us to achieve the necessary reform of our immigration system while remaining party to the ECHR.

Evil criminal gangs are putting profit over people by arranging dangerous and illegal small boat crossings. We have a duty to warn people of the risks of these journeys, and expose the lies being sold to vulnerable people by inhumane smugglers. It is essential people have accurate information and know there are safe alternatives.

To conclude, our priority is the safety and welfare of those that have arrived by small boat and staff deployed to oversee them.

Thank you for taking the time to write and I trust this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

P.Thomas

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LETTER SAYS	FACT CHECK	CHRISTIAN TRADITION
<p>“our primary responsibility is to do all we can to prevent any further loss of life at sea.”</p>	<p>Sunak has stated "We will pass new laws to stop small boats, making sure that if you come to this country illegally, you are detained and swiftly removed." (1)</p> <p>If they have already arrived safely then the worry is not about them making the crossing, but staying in the country afterwards.</p> <p>There was a young girl killed last month (3/3/2024) making a crossing to the UK and our research has found no response or address from the UK government.</p>	<p>Leviticus 19:34: The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself.</p>
<p>“our primary responsibility is to do all we can to prevent any further loss of life at sea.”</p>	<p>Article 14 Right to asylum (2)</p> <p>If you are persecuted at home, you have the right to seek protection in another country.</p> <p>Article 14 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights says: Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.</p>	<p>We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke in to the wheel itself” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer</p>

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<p>“These crossings are unnecessary: France, where these crossings originate, is a safe country with its own asylum system, and it is an established principle that asylum should be sought in the first available safe country.”</p>	<p>The 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Geneva convention) (3), states clearly that there is no obligation for an asylum seeker to only seek asylum in the first safe country they arrive in.</p>	<p>It is an honour to appear on the side of the afflicted -Elizabeth Fry</p>
<p>“These crossings are unnecessary: France, where these crossings originate, is a safe country with its own asylum system, and it is an established principle that asylum should be sought in the first available safe country.”</p>	<p>As Amnesty International explains (4): The Convention requires all countries to share in the responsibility of providing asylum to refugees – not just countries that border conflict or repressive regimes.</p>	<p>But we do need to take a lead: how we shape our policies must look into the faces, and we must listen to the voices. -Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, speech in Lords debate on UK asylum policy</p>
<p>“These crossings are unnecessary: France, where these crossings originate, is a safe country with its own asylum system, and it is an established principle that asylum should be sought in the first available safe country.”</p>	<p>Article 13 Freedom of movement You have the right to leave or move within your own country and you should be able to return. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.</p>	<p>Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of their humanity. -Mother Teresa</p>

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<p>It is unacceptable that, instead, criminal gangs entice migrants to make this perilous journey for their own profit. We must therefore act to prevent these crossings in the first place.</p>	<p>The 'safe and legal routes' are unclear and unfair (4). They often take the form of resettlement schemes, such as the ones brought in in response to the war in Ukraine, which made it easier for Ukrainian refugees to flee to the UK... a response which was not afforded to victims of other conflicts.</p> <p>There is still a backlog of 4,500 (5) cases in the UK Home Office, although this is a significant drop from the end of last year, it is still not a promising sight that those who do make it to the country will not be left in a limbo.</p>	<p>Hebrews 13:1-3: Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.</p>

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<p>The Government takes its international obligations, including under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), very seriously.</p>	<p>Rishi Sunak has repeatedly tried to ignore and by-pass the orders of the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the Rwanda plan. After the court declared that to carry out the plan would be to break international law, Sunak's response was; "crystal clear repeatedly, that I won't let a foreign court stop us from getting flights off". (6) That doesn't sound like a government taking the ECHR 'very seriously'. James Cleverly's predecessor, Suella Braverman, declared on multiple occasions in 2023 that her personal opinion was that the UK should leave the European Convention of Human Rights (7).</p>	<p>Micah 6:8: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.</p>
<p>The Government takes its international obligations, including under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), very seriously.</p>	<p>An analysis of UN figures (8) shows more than half of the people counted by the UN as refugees, are from places that have been ruled by Britain in living memory, however considerably less than one per cent of the total population of refugees currently live in the UK. This shows a general shirking of responsibility.</p>	<p>Quaker Advices and Queries 31: We are called to live 'in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars'. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.</p>

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<p>The 'Stop the Boats' campaign is ambitious and novel, delivering the changes necessary to reduce the incentives for people to risk their lives through illegal crossings</p>	<p>There has been no significant fall in the number of refugees and asylum seekers making the crossing since the 'Stop the Boats' campaign and the Rwanda plan. Last week 401 people attempted to cross the channel in small boats (W/C 4/3/2024) (9).</p>	<p>Mark 12:30-31: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.</p>
<p>The 'Stop the Boats' campaign is ambitious and novel, delivering the changes necessary to reduce the incentives for people to risk their lives through illegal crossings</p>	<p>There is no such thing as an 'illegal route' and claiming asylum is a human right. Article 14: Right to asylum- If you are persecuted at home, you have the right to seek protection in another country. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.</p>	<p>Quaker Advices and Queries 22: Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.</p>
<p>We have a duty to warn people of the risks of these journeys, and expose the lies being sold to vulnerable people by inhumane smugglers. It is essential people have accurate information and know there are safe alternatives.</p>	<p>Amnesty states (4): There is no requirement in international law that a claim for asylum be made in any particular country and a refugee may legitimately cross multiple borders in order to reach the place where they seek asylum. Resettlement constitutes a very modest contribution to provision of refugee protection globally and resettled refugees constitute a minority of people provided refugee protection in the UK.</p>	<p>But if someone comes asking for bread, we cannot say, sorry we are too busy discovering our own riches; when we have found them, we'll offer you a few. Our riches are precisely our sharing. And the world is very, very hungry. -Harvey Gillman, 1993, Quaker Faith and Practise</p>

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<p>We have a duty to warn people of the risks of these journeys, and expose the lies being sold to vulnerable people by inhumane smugglers. It is essential people have accurate information and know there are safe alternatives.</p>	<p>There are no safe and legal routes for people seeking asylum. The immigration rules make no provision for any person to come (or apply to come) to the UK for the purpose of making an asylum claim.(4) A journey under other circumstances is not by a safe and legal route. This does not mean the journey is necessarily either unsafe or unlawful. Nor for that matter, is a journey by a safe and legal route necessarily safe – though certainly it will normally be safer than an alternative.</p>	<p>Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another. -Rev. Demond Tutu</p>
<p>We have a duty to warn people of the risks of these journeys, and expose the lies being sold to vulnerable people by inhumane smugglers. It is essential people have accurate information and know there are safe alternatives.</p>	<p>The Government allows nobody to make a claim for asylum in the UK unless they are physically present in the UK, but make it increasingly more difficult to do this by denying asylum to those who don't arrive in the specific way the government specify. It is impossible to come to the UK for the purpose of seeking asylum in any way permitted by the Government's immigration rules.</p>	<p>Quaker advices and Queries 32: Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?</p>

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<p>To conclude, our priority is the safety and welfare of those that have arrived by small boat and staff deployed to oversee them.</p>	<p>The concerns of Human Right’s charities in relation to the Rwanda plan (10), is very worrying- however the government have just passed the bill (11). If their priority was safety and welfare, it would be difficult to go against the European Court of Human Rights by passing the bill (12). Furthermore, the argument that refugees must settle in the first country they reach is one which has been used several times, not just in this letter, but in general rhetoric. However, the Geneva Convention clearly states this is not correct. It is hard to believe a country with safety and welfare as its priority would keep using this excuse.</p>	<p>Matthew 25:40: The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’</p>

RESOURCES:

- 1) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64164339>
- 2) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/illustrated-universal-declaration-human-rights>
- 3) <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>
- 4) <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/truth-about-safe-and-legal-routes>
- 5) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67863380>
- 6) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/25/rwanda-flights-britain-reminded-of-obligation-to-obey-echr-orders>
- 7) <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/suella-braverman-home-secretary-government-policy-government-channel-b2195625.html>
- 8) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/timothy-gee/most-of-worlds-refugees-are-from-countries-invaded-by-britain>
- 9) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats>
- 10) <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/over-260-charities-and-expert-organisations-call-on-house-of-lords-to-reject-shameful-rwanda-bill/>
- 11) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68840441>
- 12) <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/jun/15/what-is-the-echr-and-how-did-it-intervene-in-uk-rwanda-flight-plans>

***“PAINSTAKING SERVICE
TO HUMANKIND’S
MOST MATERIAL NEEDS
IS THE ESSENCE OF
CHRISTIAN
SPIRITUALITY.”***

-GEORGE MACLEOD