Pax Christi Scotland and Pax Christi England and Wales deplore the UK Government’s policy to deport people seeking asylum offshore to Rwanda.

The decision of the courts on June 14 that prevented the first intended flight carrying people to Rwanda was welcome, but we are aware from the statements of the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, in the House of Commons on June 15 that the government has no intention of changing this policy.

Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles and Bishop President of the Scottish Catholic Bishops' Conference Interreligious Dialogue Committee says: "These people have fled violence, hunger, and poverty and only want to make a fresh start in life. They have much to offer our country. Nevertheless, they will be cruelly deported... May the Holy Family, who were themselves forced to seek asylum in Africa, move our hearts to discern that we are all brothers and sisters."

Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migration Issues for the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales has said, “The UK’s plans to forcibly deport to Rwanda some of those seeking refuge in our country is shamefully illustrative of what Pope Francis has called the 'loss of that sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters on which every civil society is based'.

"With greater force we insist that asylum seekers are not commodities for profit, nor are they problems to be rejected and deported by government. Instead we should be guided by the four verbs provided by Pope Francis in our approach to migrants and refugees, 'Welcome, protect, promote and integrate'."

The protest journey is just starting. The Home Office intends to push forward its Rwanda policy and to make it illegal to seek asylum in the UK, which goes against international law. We would encourage people to pray for those under threat of deportation, and to act by writing to their MPs, signing the petitions seeking a change of policy, and demonstrating non-violently in public arenas.

Our voices are their voices.

**Marian Pallister**, Pax Christi Scotland Chair

**Ann Farr**, Chair Pax Christi England and Wales

**Greet Vanaerschot**, Secretary General, Pax Christi International