

Paper X3

Illegal Migration Bill

North Western Synod

Basic information

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Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 73 General Assembly expresses deep concern that the Illegal Migration Bill (2023) will change the law so that those who arrive in the UK illegally will not be able to apply for asylum here and will instead be detained and then promptly removed, either to their home country or a safe third country.</p> <p>Resolution 74 General Assembly strongly objects to the Illegal Migration Bill since it potentially breaches the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1953), of which the UK is a signatory.</p> <p>Resolution 75 General Assembly recognises the aim of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in maintaining a legal standard of human dignity that reflects the nature of God revealed in the Bible, and urges the UK government to uphold it.</p> <p>Resolution 76 General Assembly invites churches and members of the URC to write to their MPs expressing their opposition to the Illegal Migration Bill.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Challenge to government policy on migration.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

In critiquing the Illegal Migration Bill (2023), the political commentator Paul Mason described the government’s legislation with the following words: “What we are being subjected to in the Tory refugee policy is a deliberate theatre of cruelty.” (*The New European*, 13–19 April, 2023).

If Mason is correct in his analysis, what should be a measured Christian response to such cruelty?

The Creation story in Genesis 1 speaks of how God “created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them”. All humanity reflects the divine image. There is an essential connectedness between God and humanity.

This mystery is further expressed in the Incarnation, whereby Jesus became enfleshed in our human history.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes about the unity and diversity within the body of Christ. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit, we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body.”.

Building on the Creation story and the Incarnation, is it possible to extrapolate from Paul’s teaching that one sovereign country cannot cut itself off from the rest of the world and treat others with disdain?

Human history is full of the brokenness of relationships resulting in the violence of war. Following the devastation of World War Two, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in December 1948.

In 1949, the Council of Europe was formed to protect human rights and the rule of law and to promote democracy. Proposed by Sir Winston Churchill and drafted mainly by British lawyers, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was created. It was signed in Rome in 1950 and came into force in 1953, with all members of the Council of Europe, including the UK, being party to it. The primary aim of this legislation, which became known as the European Convention on Human Rights, was to secure basic rights for anyone within the borders of the Council of Europe, including their own citizens and people of other nationalities. The UK enshrined the rights in this document into UK law through the Human Rights Act 1998.

When introducing the Illegal Migration Bill to parliament, the Home Secretary had to make an unprecedented declaration that she could not state that the legislation was compatible with the human rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act.