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The Rwanda ruling

Group president James Cox reflects on the 29th June Rwanda ruling and what this means for PCS.

Immigration and asylum are never out of the news. That's especially true under the current government, who are clearly intent on using the issue for electoral gain - to scapegoat the vulnerable rather than accept the damage that austerity has caused.

The passage of the Illegal Migration Act is the latest piece of legislation attempting to deal with the issue. This legislation seeks to make asylum applications inadmissible if individuals have been deemed to have entered the UK illegally. This is an effective ban on claiming asylum in the UK. However, this is all predicated on sending asylum seekers to a third country which will consider applications.

That's where Rwanda comes in. PCS took part in a judicial review against this process alongside several individuals who were personally affected. Our part of the challenge, regarding the legality of outsourcing asylum claims to another country, was unsuccessful. However, the individual claimants were successful in their challenge, specifically around the suitability of Rwanda.

The government are now appealing this ruling to the Supreme Court and that case will have massive implications for the work we do in the department. We now have 2,500 decision makers working through the backlog, but at the same time a new one of potentially inadmissible claims is building.

Our members are proud of the role they play in ensuring the UK's moral obligation to provide sanctuary to those fleeing persecution.

But our members also recognise that these very same people are being exploited by traffickers and subject to dangerous channel crossings. However, demonising them and preventing them from claiming asylum in the UK because they made these journeys is not the answer. A lot has been said about illegal entry, but there are no legal routes to get to the UK! That's why PCS is backing development of policy proposals about safe passage to get to the UK.

All of us want to build a department that is staffed properly, where members are fully trained and have all the tools they need to provide a fair and empathetic asylum system.

James Cox, group president