



Home Office

Chris Philp MP
Minister for Immigration Compliance
and the Courts

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Meg Hillier MP
House of Commons
London
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HOCS Reference: M6589/11
Your Reference: MH61916

2 December 2020

Dear Meg,

Thank you for your email of 1 December to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about the charter flight to Jamaica on 2 December. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts.

Your constituents have raised concerns about the scheduled deportation of foreign national offenders to Jamaica by charter flight, stating that is not appropriate at this time. Your constituents have requested both that the flight on 2 December should be cancelled and that charter flight deportations should cease.

One of the Home Office's key objectives is to protect the public by removing foreign national offenders who commit criminal offences, where legislation permits. Those being detained for removal on this charter are foreign national offenders who have been convicted of serious offences including murder, rape, manslaughter, violent crime, firearms offences, and dealing or importing Class-A drugs. Crimes of this nature have a devastating impact on victims and their families, as well as the wider community.

Under the UK Borders Act 2007, which was passed by the last Labour Government, the Home Secretary is required by law to issue a deportation order for a foreign national who has received a custodial sentence of at least 12 months, unless an exception applies. Additionally, a foreign national who has been convicted of an offence that has caused serious harm, who is a persistent offender or who represents a threat to national security, may be considered for deportation under the Immigration Act 1971 where it is conducive to the public good.

It is wrong and offensive to conflate the Windrush scandal with the foreign criminals who are the subject of this enforcement activity. Each case has been carefully considered and individually reviewed by the Windrush Help Team. I can confirm that none of the individuals on the flight are British citizens or exempt from deportation. All those scheduled for removal on the flight are Jamaican nationals convicted of serious offences, which devastate the lives of their victims and have a lasting impact on the society in which we all live.

Our priority will always be to keep our communities safe for everyone. Since January 2019 we have returned 6,450 foreign criminals. In the year ending June 2020 there were 5,208 enforced returns, of which 2,630 were to EU countries and 33 were to Jamaica.

Each week, we remove foreign criminals from the UK to different countries who have no right to be here, and this flight is no different. There is no sense in which Jamaica is being singled out. Less than 1% of enforced returns in 2019 were to Jamaica.

I have carefully considered your constituents' concerns but remain satisfied all reasonable mitigating measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of the returnees on the charter flight, and therefore deportation proceeded as planned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chris Philp MP
Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts