

Refugee Week 2024: CSAN Statement

This Refugee Week 17-23 June 2024, as we prepare for a General Election on 04 July 2024, the issue of people seeking asylum in our country will undoubtedly feature as a debating point. Caritas Social Action Network will always be guided by the teaching of the Church which insists on the dignity of the human person and a preferential option for the poor. As Pope Francis reminded us in *Fratelli Tutti*, “our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarised by four words, welcome, protect, promote and integrate” (#129). In Refugee Week we celebrate those who have made the UK their home, we grieve for those who lost their lives trying to reach safety in the UK and we advocate for a more humane treatment of those who come to us seeking sanctuary.

As Catholics we believe ‘our response to migrants and refugees is rooted in the innate worth of each human person (*Love The Stranger*, Principle 1). Last year we called on the Government to uphold the dignity of the human person and our responsibility to the global common good, as outlined in the document [Love the Stranger: A Catholic Response to Migrants and Refugees](#), published by the Department for International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. Following the passing of the Safety of Rwanda Bill this year, we are deeply concerned at the continued cruelty and rise in hostility towards those seeking sanctuary. Collectively, we reiterate our call for a just and humane asylum system that upholds the human dignity of migrants, protects refugees, and defends their right to seek asylum.

Human dignity is the cornerstone of Catholic Social teaching and ‘underlies the primacy of the human person and the protection of human rights’ (*Dignitas Infinita*, 1). Faith leaders have noted with sadness and concern the rise in hostility towards those arriving in the UK seeking refuge, calling for a system that shows compassion, justice, transparency and speed in decision-making. (<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/after-rwanda-church-leaders-speak-out-over-hostility-to-refugees/>).

We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters seeking sanctuary and encourage the Catholic community across England & Wales as they consider who to vote for on 04 July to ensure that at the forefront of their thinking is the Biblical injunction to welcome the stranger. The CSAN statement on the General Election 2024 with further reflections on the principles of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching can be found at <https://www.csan.org.uk/guidance/csan-statement/>.

CSAN members are active in their support of refugees and provide a number of outreach services within communities across England and Wales. We encourage parishes to engage with their local Caritas agency to learn more, and to engage with our members active in this field: <https://www.csan.org.uk/map-of-members/>

Our members, led by Caritas Brentwood, have also produced resources to introduce the principles of Love The Stranger to both primary and secondary school students, encouraging them to reflect on scripture and consider what simple acts they may participate in to be more welcoming to those seeking sanctuary. Resources can be downloaded from our website: <https://www.csan.org.uk/news/love-the-stranger-school-resources-launched/>

CSAN is a member of the Together With Refugees coalition with whom we are calling on political leaders to commit to a new plan for refugees that is fair, that is kind and that ensures protection for all individuals fleeing war and persecution, allowing them to rebuild their lives through settling in a community. We support the **#FairBeginsHere** campaign, which advocates for a more humane asylum system, for more information please visit: <https://togetherwithrefugees.org.uk/>.

Refugees are amongst the first victims of multiple forms of poverty (*Dignitas Infinita*, 40), denied their dignity in their home countries, denied it throughout their journey to safety, and further denied upon arrival on our shores. We encourage the Catholic community to reflect on *Love The Stranger* and how we may fulfil our obligation in the way that God intends, whilst calling upon our political leaders to do the same: <https://www.csan.org.uk/love-the-stranger-call-to-action/>

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