NOT OUR PROBLEM

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The government's scheme to send refugees to Rwanda is not only unjust for the refugees, it is another example in the long history of rich countries exploiting poor ones.
Category: Observations

Over a decade ago, I wrote a few blog posts about a scandal in which toxic waste from Europe was dumped on the outskirts of Abidjan in CÃ´te d'Ivoire (here and here). I visited the city shortly after the incident and the stench from the dump was absolutely appalling. At the time, it was a fairly big scandal with an unpleasant firm of lawyers in London attempting to prevent the issue being raised in parliament. Of course, it's more or less forgotten now.

This incident came back to mind when I was musing on the British government's shameful decision to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. Let me very quickly insist that I am not comparing asylum seekers to toxic waste; that is not the analogy that I want to draw here.

What I want to highlight is the way in the Western world uses its money, power and influence to move its problems elsewhere. It's too expensive to deal with toxic waste, let's dump it on the outskirts of an African city. We have a problem with asylum seekers, let's send them to Africa.

If these asylum seekers are really as much of a problem as the government says they are and if there is a need to protect the British public from them; how come it's ok to send them elsewhere. Doesn't the population of Kigali also need some protection? Rwanda currently has an unemployment rate of over 20%, annual inflation is running at close to 10%, in 2018 the average income was under $2,000 a year putting it in the poorest 20 countries in the world and the country is heavily involved in a war just over its borders and has an appalling human rights record. Not only that, Rwanda already hosts 125,000 refugees for a population of 12 Million, compared to the UK's 135,000 refugees for a population over five times larger. So we are shipping people to a poor country with a per capita refugee population over four times our own.

If these asylum seekers are as big a problem as the government says they are, then it makes no sense to send them to a country who have less resources than us and who already have a far bigger refugee problem Yes, the Rwandan government will make some money, but there will be little, if any, benefit for the average person in the streets in Kigali.

Now, I realise that there are massive human rights and justice issues for the actual deportees themselves. These have been highlighted in plenty of other articles over the last few weeks and I don't want to repeat them here. I simply want to highlight the cynical way in which rich nations shift their problems to poorer ones. It's just another example of the way in which we exploit the developing world.

Oh, in passing, I wonder how much the government learned from previous attempts by a rich country to place its refugee problem on Rwandan shoulders?