***Stopping the boats: On the U.K.’s new ‘Illegal Migration Law’***

The UN refugee agency, the [UNHCR, has come down strongly](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/un-rights-chief-says-deeply-concerned-over-uk-asylum-plan/article66595987.ece)on the U.K. Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak’s [plan to pass a new “Illegal Migration Law” that effectively stops the granting of asylum to migrants who reach the U.K. illegally](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0262/220262.pdf). Mr. Sunak, while standing at a dais marked “Stop the Boats”, said the government is worried about the numbers of those attempting to travel to the U.K. and applying for asylum while on British soil, at considerable cost to the exchequer. Instead, as Home Secretary Suella Braverman explained while introducing [the Bill](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-uks-controversial-asylum-plan-explained/article66595853.ece) this week, asylum seekers who try to enter illegally would either be returned to their own countries or a “third country”, presumably Rwanda, that has entered into an agreement to provide processing facilities for them. They also face a lifetime ban on citizenship and re-entry to the U.K. According to the UNHCR, the law would contravene international laws, including the 1951 Refugee Convention that Britain is a signatory to. To start with, those who flee their homes and countries often do so without proper paperwork, as they are forced to leave to save their lives. Many of the estimated 45,000 who came to the U.K. on “small boats” last year would have been economic refugees rather than political asylum seekers, and it is problematic that the British government does not make a distinction between the two. The Bill makes exceptions for those arriving directly from the countries they are fleeing, but those would be a small proportion given the short distances “small boats” could travel. The British government, much like the U.S.’s Trump administration that latched on to the equally catchy “Build That Wall” slogan, is long on political rhetoric, but short on the actual mechanics of making such a plan work, if it fails to be a deterrent to small boats bringing in migrants. In addition, the plan to transport asylum seekers to a third country, apart from sounding neo-colonial, will also come at considerable cost, one that the hapless migrants are unlikely to be able to afford.