



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

The Archbishop spoke in the House of Lords today in debates on the EU Bilateral Agreements for Asylum Seekers, Grenfell Tower: Demolition and the Environment Bill. The extracts from Hansard follow in full.

EU Bilateral Agreements for Asylum Seekers - full debate available on [Hansard](#)

The Archbishop of York

My Lords, care and justice for asylum seekers is obviously a matter very close to the heart of the Church, Jesus himself being a refugee. Last week, the Church of England published a toolkit for the many churches that have asked us what they can do to support Afghan refugees. The Minister will know that the Church and other faith communities are among the main support works for asylum seekers. There are more than 3,000 Afghan nationals with existing asylum claims waiting for a decision, some of whom have been waiting a long time. What steps are the Government taking to expedite procedures for dealing with existing or new asylum claims by Afghan nationals, given the very changed situation and the particular stress and trauma felt by these people?

Response - Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con)

I say to the most reverend Primate that I thank the Church of England in particular for everything it has done to support asylum seekers; the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury has been the first person to take part in community sponsorship. The work of the Church has been incredibly important. Clearly, we will be trying to expedite asylum claims as quickly as possible. We have suspended returns to Afghanistan—understandably so—and I hope that the claims of all those who are waiting in the queue will be seen to as quickly as possible.

Grenfell Tower: Demolition - full debate available on [Hansard](#)

The Archbishop of York

My Lords, as I am sure many noble Lords know, my colleague, the Bishop of Kensington, and other community, Christian and faith leaders, have been hugely involved with survivors' and victims' groups in Grenfell, where there is, of course, much pain and anxiety caused by the newspaper reports over the weekend. Although it is good to hear the Minister say that there will be discussions with those community groups, I urge him to consider working with the Church and other community leaders to have these discussions as a matter of urgency, because there is such concern raised at the moment and people feel as though—whether the feeling is correct or not—they are not being consulted.

Lord Greenhalgh

(Con)

I thank the most reverend Primate for making those points. It is important to engage with faith communities and local residents as well as the bereaved and survivors. I assure the House that there have been weekly meetings with particular groups, fortnightly meetings, monthly meetings, online sessions and face-to-face meetings throughout the pandemic. We will continue to do our best to engage with the community, the bereaved and survivors.

The Environment Bill - full debate available on [Hansard](#)

The Archbishop of York

My Lords, in the Book of Common Prayer, the Lord's Prayer says:

"Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

in earth as in heaven."

I repeat, "in earth". It was not the work of some liberal conspiracy in the Church or the Liturgical Commission but, somewhere in the last 300 or 400 years in the popular saying of the Lord's Prayer, it somehow changed from "in earth" to "on earth". This tiny change encompasses for me all that is wrong in our relationship with the earth of which we are a part. We used to understand that we live in it, we are part of it, we depend on it and that, as good stewards of the earth, the earth depends on us. Then, somehow, we decided that we did not live in it any more but on it; it was ours and we could do with it as we wanted.

Therein lies the whole challenge to the human race. What I want to hear from the Government on this crucial amendment is a clear signal that we have recognised—as a human race, as a nation and as the Government of this land—that there is an emergency, and that what is happening to our climate and to biodiversity is completely connected. At the same time there must be recognition of the terrible responsibility that we bear for having imagined that we lived on the earth rather than in it. By giving that signal, everything else could follow.

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