

Deportation: Zimbabwe

Tony Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Zimbabwean nationals in detention pending deportation were detained because they were found to be working illegally; [196538]

(2) how many Zimbabwean nationals were in detention centres pending deportation at the most recent date for which figures are available. [196539]

Mr. Byrne: National statistics on persons detained solely under Immigration Act powers as at the last Saturday of each quarter are available from the Library of the House and the Home Office's Research, Development and Statistics website at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html>

The decision to detain is made on a case by case basis and may be appropriate in one or more of the follow circumstances: to effect removal; to establish a person's identity and claim; where a person presents a risk of abscond or where the application is capable of being considered quickly.

31 Mar 2008 : Column 607W

Information specifically on the number of those who are detained for the purpose of removal from the UK is not centrally collated and could be obtained through examination of individual records only at disproportionate cost.

Tony Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she expects to be able to deport Zimbabwean nationals in detention centres pending deportation. [196537]

Mr. Byrne: On 29 November 2007 the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) promulgated the determination that Zimbabweans who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom (UK) and who return to Zimbabwe, voluntarily or otherwise, are not at risk of mistreatment just because they have claimed asylum in the UK or otherwise been in the UK for an extended period. The Border and Immigration Agency will continue to defer enforced returns until the application for permission to appeal the AIT's determination is disposed of.

The Earl of Sandwich: My Lords, the Minister rightly mentioned Zimbabweans in this country. We should pay tribute to the thousands who sought asylum here; they have made a real contribution. Unfortunately, a group of asylum seekers is due to be removed from this country. Will he confirm that the Government are considering this quite seriously at the moment, pending a court case? Will he urge his colleagues in the Home Office and the Foreign Office, who have made mistakes before—at considerable human cost—not to remove Zimbabweans forcibly at this time?

Lord Malloch-Brown: As the noble Earl knows, the UK has believed that many Zimbabweans completely deserve and need asylum but that a small group perhaps did not meet those conditions. The enforced removal of failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers was suspended, pending the outcome of the so-called AIT litigation. That position will be maintained until any and all applications for permission to appeal the

3 Apr 2008 : Column 1191

determination are dealt with. In light of those current circumstances, we are of course looking at this whole issue with great care.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum: Deportation

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which countries there is currently no safe route of return for failed asylum seekers. [201000]

Mr. Byrne: There are no countries to which the United Kingdom does not remove failed asylum seekers on the basis of the safety of the route. Officials consider not only the merits of the individual case but also the most effective means of achieving a safe and successful return. While there is no policy not to return to any

28 Apr 2008 : Column 73W

country or territory, our ability to return may of course from time to time temporarily be affected by legal challenge. This is currently the case with Zimbabwe, where we have undertaken to the High Court that we will not enforce the return of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe until the current country guidance litigation is resolved, and that remains the case.

Asylum: Zimbabwe

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many failed asylum seekers have been returned to Zimbabwe (a) voluntarily and (b) compulsorily during the last 12 months; and if she will make a statement. [201011]

Mr. Byrne: The latest published information showing removals of asylum seekers by destination can be found in Table 11.2 of the Asylum Statistics: United Kingdom 2006 bulletin.

We undertook to the High Court on 26 September 2006 that we would not enforce the return of asylum seekers to Zimbabwe until the current country guidance litigation is finally resolved, and that remains the case.

Copies of the aforementioned publication are available from the Library of the House and on the Home Office's Research Development and Statistics website at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html>

Zimbabwe

3.22 pm

Lord Blaker asked Her Majesty's Government:

What new policies they have towards Zimbabwe.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown): My Lords, the Zimbabwe crisis must be resolved quickly and in accordance with the will of the Zimbabwean people. We are engaging with leaders in the region and the international community to promote a resolution, including the deployment of sufficient international observers if a second round takes place. We are pressing for a UN mission to investigate state-sponsored violence and intimidation. We are also supporting the call for a temporary arms moratorium until democracy is restored.

Lord Blaker: My Lords, is not the choice of the observers, and the question whether they serve both before the election and during the election, absolutely vital? Is it not doubtful whether SADC observers only should be recruited? They are likely to be biased in favour of Mugabe, as they have been, and they are briefed by the SADC Secretary-General, who is very strongly in favour of Mugabe. Do we not have a good opportunity, now that we are this month in the chair of the Security Council, to go wider in the appointment of members of the monitoring group? Should we not also think of the African Union as a suitable reservoir of people to act as observers? Lastly, should we not be having a debate on Zimbabwe in the present situation?

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, the noble Lord's points are very well taken. We want to internationalise the observer pool as much as possible within the constraints of time—one could, after all, face a second round as soon as 21 days from now. There were non-SADC observers in the first round; there were certain observers from the Caribbean. There are also other possibilities to broaden the pool and sharply increase the numbers. As I have also said, we are pressing the UN Secretary-General to send an envoy of some kind to look into both the human rights situation and the intimidation. The previous Secretary-General's envoy played a critical role in stopping the violence around slum clearances.

Lord Lea of Crondall: My Lords, does my noble friend recognise the concern about South Africa's silence on this question? Does he agree that the statements made in London last week by Mr Zuma, the newly elected ANC chairman, and the action of the stevedores and COSATU members in Durban, who, in solidarity with Morgan Tsvangirai, would not unload the small arms shipment, so that the ship had to go back to China, are very encouraging new voices in the southern Africa scene?

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, I certainly would agree. There has been a lively debate in South Africa, less about the need for change in Zimbabwe and more

7 May 2008 : Column 561

about the means to achieve it, with voices more openly calling for more robust action. That is widely to be welcomed.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, no doubt the Minister will have noticed that the African Union currently has a mission in Harare reviewing the whole electoral process, and he will have seen the comment by Dumisani Muleya in this morning's *Business Day* that the regime has neither the money nor the logistical capacity to run a second round. In these circumstances, does not the international community have some leverage to provide not only the management of the second round, if it takes place, but the protection needed in the form of security for the members of the opposition who have been subject to repeated violence so far?

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, this is a critical moment where it appears that the regime is indeed considering its options and whether it can either afford a second round or win a second round. When we talk about observers, it is clear that it is not enough to protect just the sanctity of the ballot; human lives must be protected as well. I should add that those who seem most at risk are the ordinary party members and election observers. Therefore, there will need to be peace in the country at large. This is not an issue of supporting just a handful of the leaders; we must try to secure peaceful conditions across the country. The noble Lord is right to say that an African Union mission is in Zimbabwe, led by the new head of the AU, Jean Ping, who is looking at the election situation. I think that the AU will play a critical role between SADC at one end and the UN at the other.

Baroness Park of Monmouth: My Lords, what is the position on the arms shipment from China? Is there any truth in the claims being made by ZANU-PF that the arms have actually entered the country? If that is so, it is deeply important in the context of what the noble Lord has been saying. I know that the trade federation workers in Angola said that nothing had been landed and I am sure they meant it; they are very reliable. But it would be helpful to know the Government's view on this. Have those arms entered Zimbabwe? They would only make the situation far more dangerous.

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, the noble Baroness is right to be concerned. We have absolutely no evidence to suggest that the arms have entered the country. We believe that the boat is being refuelled and will return from Luanda to China, based on assurances given to us by the different Governments involved.

Lord Dubs: My Lords, does my noble friend agree that in the present situation it would be quite wrong to return Zimbabwean asylum seekers to that country? Will he confirm that none is being sent back? Moreover, in the mean time, would it not be humane to allow them to work while they are here?

7 May 2008 : Column 562

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, the noble Lord is right. Several cases are currently going through an appeals process, but it has always been the case that the British Government would not want to return people to a country where conditions like this prevail.

The Lord Bishop of Norwich: My Lords, will the Minister join me in recognising that in the present crisis, the leaders of the churches in Zimbabwe have come together in a quite new way to express a moral lead and a spiritual voice on behalf of the Zimbabwean people? When riot police begin to break up prayer meetings of the Mothers' Union, you realise that a dictatorship has discovered where real power actually lies. As well as the solidarity and prayer so notably led by the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of York, I wonder whether there are other ways in which the international community could enhance the resolution of the leadership of the churches in Zimbabwe in the present crisis.

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, the right reverend Prelate might be able to suggest ways in which that could be done. We all applaud the stand of the churches in Zimbabwe, as we do its civil society more broadly. If this situation is resolved, it will be because the churches, civil society and ordinary Zimbabweans have acted with tremendous courage, as have the rest of the southern African civil society and religious community.

Lord Acton: My Lords, following my noble friend's comments on SADC observers, is it British policy to back as strongly as possible the diplomatic efforts of the more positive SADC countries?

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, what has got lost in this is that a growing group of SADC countries is playing a real leadership role. The leaders of Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia and other countries are all pressing for a resolution of the situation in the same direction as I think the House would wish to see.

Mr. Nick Clegg (Sheffield, Hallam) (LD): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for advance sight of his statement.

Compared with other six-monthly European Union summits, last week's was not a hugely significant one. In truth, it was more about catching up with fast-moving developments than about setting the pace for the future. Rather than being their master, the summit was in many ways a slave to events, whether the aftermath of the Irish vote on the Lisbon treaty or the unscheduled spat between the French President and the Prime Minister's good friend, the EU Trade Commissioner.

On the Lisbon treaty, the Prime Minister is right, of course, that we need to respect the need for the Irish Government to consider their next steps before October. However, as a supporter of the treaty, I none the less worry that we might soon make the best the enemy of the good. Uncertainty beyond October would genuinely raise the spectre of a paralysed European Union, unable to deliver concrete benefits to European citizens. So will he give some assurance that the treaty's fate, whatever one thinks about it, will be sealed one way or another in October and that we will not be pitched into months of further uncertainty about the treaty?

On the issue of Zimbabwe, I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to working in the European Union and the United Nations. I hope that the international community will consider all the options available, including the case for stopping foreign currency remittances into Zimbabwe, restricting electricity supplies from South Africa and Mozambique, and encouraging the Southern African Development Community to take more action. However, does the Prime Minister agree that there are more things that he could do now, here? Will he, for instance, consider allowing asylum seekers who are fleeing Mugabe's brutal regime to live and work temporarily in the United Kingdom, until such time as Zimbabwe is more stable and they can return home?

I also welcome the summit conclusions in favour of carbon capture and storage technology. However, how does the Prime Minister square that approach and the summit's unambiguous conclusion with the strong indications that his Government will go ahead with a new generation of dirty coal power stations that are CCS ready, but not CCS functional, such as the one at Kingsnorth?

Finally, it is good to see the European Union grappling with the issue of food and fuel prices. However, the Prime Minister's summit-hopping, from Europe to Jeddah, is not enough. We need him to take practical steps here

23 Jun 2008 : Column 31

at home, too. So will he emulate the example of other European Union countries, such as Spain, whose Government have clawed back some of the massive subsidies that energy-generating companies have been handed on a plate through the European emissions trading scheme, to compel energy companies to help the fuel poor and to promote energy efficiency in our homes on the scale that is now urgently needed?

The Prime Minister: I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman said about Zimbabwe. All of us are appalled by the violence taking place, and all of us are looking for a way forward. Each asylum case is dealt with on an individual basis, but I will consider what he has said about that. However, he must agree that the priority is to see an end to the violence in Zimbabwe and a way forward that allows democracy to be properly in existence there, and then, once democracy is restored, to see how we can help with the reconstruction of that country.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned carbon capture. We are leading the rest of the European Union in seeking to have the first demonstration plant, and then the first commercial plant, for carbon capture. We want the EU to provide a mechanism by which that will be possible, because it is an expensive thing to do. We are urging the Council—I hope that he would support this—to ensure that, from the budget of the European Union, there is a means by which carbon capture can be given some support.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned food and oil. I agree with him that they are the major problems that many households up and down the country face, with the cost of food in the supermarket and the cost of petrol at the petrol pumps, as well as gas and electricity bills being higher as a result of the oil price. However, he underestimates the extent to which we have raised the winter allowance. We have provided additional help for insulation, which was billions of pounds in previous years and will be billions of pounds in the years to come, to help people insulate and draught-proof their houses, and to make energy-efficient and environmentally sensitive adjustments. When the right hon. Gentleman talks about the utility companies, I think that he has forgotten that we have just negotiated a deal that gives us £150 million a year after next year—the deal will go for many years—to provide extra money to give help to low-income households.

The right hon. Gentleman's first point was about the report on Ireland. We have said to the Irish Government that it is for them to come forward with their proposals. It is for them to suggest, as they have done, that they need time to look at this. They will then submit a report to the Council in October. At a time when we have 26 other countries moving towards ratification, the Irish will come to us with their views about what can be done, and we will look at the matter in October. It is fair to give the Irish Government the time to assess the situation and then bring their proposals forward to us.

30 Jun 2008 : Column 1

House of Lords

Monday, 30 June 2008.

The House met at half-past two: the LORD SPEAKER on the Woolsack.

Prayers—Read by the Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham.

Zimbabwe

Lord Blaker asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is their assessment of the incoming Government of Zimbabwe.

Lord Bach: My Lords, it is clear to the world that the so-called election last Friday was a complete sham and that, as African observers have already said, it did not reflect the will of the people. It is not surprising that Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC felt that they had to withdraw, given the horrendous levels of violence and intimidation. We will continue to press for a resolution that reflects the political choice of the people as they voted on 29 March.

Lord Blaker: My Lords, there are so many threads in this picture that it is difficult to know which ones to pick up but I shall briefly mention three. The first is that support is flowing away from Mugabe. He has been criticised by Mandela, two archbishops, the Secretary-General of the Security Council, the G8, the EU, SADC observers, which is significant, and the African Union, which is also significant. Therefore, it is a case of Mugabe against the world. The second is the position of Mugabe's military, which played a very big role in the terror over the past weeks in return for Mugabe giving up his idea of retiring. Finally—

Noble Lords: Question!

Lord Blaker: My Lords, does the noble Lord agree that it is important that we should not play too big a role in this scene and that it is for the Africans to deal with?

Lord Bach: My Lords, I agree with everything that the noble Lord said. We should not play too big a role, and it is important that the Security Council, the African Union and SADC work together on this. However, we do have a role and a strong view on this, and anything that we can do to help to resolve this outrageous position, we will do.

Lord Elystan-Morgan: My Lords, in the light of the fact that the second presidential election in Zimbabwe was held beyond the 21-day limit legislated for in the constitution and that it appears that the MDC and its allies have an overall majority of about nine in the Zimbabwean Parliament, is there any possibility of the Parliament being able to exercise any practical pressure on Mugabe and his henchmen, who usurp power in that country?

Lord Bach: My Lords, the noble Lord's points are good ones. There is no doubt that in the legitimate elections held in March the MDC won a majority in Parliament and the opposition candidate for president certainly got more votes than President Mugabe. I pay tribute to the bravery shown by MDC opposition politicians over a long period and to those who voted for them last week. Whether the politicians who make up a majority in the Parliament will feel able to take a stand is very much a matter for them, but we need to understand the appalling situation that exists in that country in terms of the number of people who have already died and the violence and threats that made up the election that was supposed to take place last Friday.

Lord Trimble: My Lords, in view of the point made in the previous question that the run-off election was outside the due time under the Zimbabwean constitution and that in the legitimate elections Mugabe was beaten

30 Jun 2008 : Column 3

both in the presidential election and in the parliamentary election, why do the Government not just simply withdraw recognition of the regime?

Lord Bach: My Lords, it is extremely tempting to do so, but we have to think very carefully whether that is sensible at this time. All options are possible. We recognise states, not governments, and Mugabe is not a legitimate president. However, 14,000 or so British citizens live in Zimbabwe. At present, we believe that it would be wrong not to have some representation for those people, especially given the very difficult circumstances that I have tried to outline.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, are we ready to tighten the screws on the ZANU-PF elite, for example, by halting the three-times a week flights by Air Zimbabwe from Zimbabwe into Gatwick and by persuading the Germans to halt the printing of bank notes, which have fuelled the 9 million per cent inflation? As it will be impossible to send Zimbabwean asylum seekers back there in the near future, will the noble Lord answer the question which has been put to him by my noble friend Lady Williams about allowing Zimbabwean refugees in this country to work, particularly in activities that will contribute to the rebuilding of their

country when they are able to go home?

Lord Bach: My Lords, on asylum, I make it clear that we have no current plans to enforce returns to Zimbabwe and will not do so until the current political situation is resolved. On the work position, as my noble friend Lord Malloch-Brown, who, as we speak, is at the AU meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, said last week:

"We are looking at the support that we may need to give Zimbabweans in this country, particularly at the ban on refugees taking up work".—[*Official Report*, 23/6/08; col. 1258.]

Lord St John of Bletso: My Lords—

Lord Morris of Handsworth: My Lords—

The Lord President of the Council (Baroness Ashton of Upholland): My Lords, it is the turn of the Labour Benches.

Lord Morris of Handsworth: My Lords, I declare an interest as a member of the England and Wales Cricket Board. I welcome the decision to stop Zimbabwe's cricket team playing bilateral matches with England. Are there any plans to stop the Zimbabwean cricket team visiting England for the Twenty20 World Cup next year? If not, what will the position be if England meets Zimbabwe in the finals?

Lord Bach: My Lords, there are no sporting sanctions as such on Zimbabwe. However, international sport should never be a way for dictators to publicise their misrule. As my noble friend says—I am grateful for his comments—we have made it clear that we do not want the bilateral tour to go ahead and that we will do all in our power to prevent it from going ahead. We have

30 Jun 2008 : Column 4

also—I hope this answers the question—asked the ECB to represent to the International Cricket Council our serious concerns about the situation in Zimbabwe and ask the ICC to reconsider its inclusion in the Twenty20 World Cup.

Lord St John of Bletso: My Lords, can the Minister please elaborate on what measures can be taken to allow duly elected MDC Members of Parliament to take their seats?

Lord Bach: My Lords, I wish I could. Given the state of government in Zimbabwe at present, anything I said on that would have every prospect of not being accurate. One hopes that those properly elected Members of Parliament will be allowed to take their seats and to exercise their powers in the proper way. We hope for so much for that country, and so far we have seen so little.

Lord Roberts of Llandudno: My Lords—

Baroness Ashton of Upholland: My Lords, we are in the ninth minute. The noble Lord must sit down.

The Prime Minister: Let me start with Zimbabwe where I believe that, as on some of the other issues raised, there is common ground. It was a major breakthrough at the G8 that the Russians and other countries agreed we should impose sanctions on Zimbabwe and that a UN envoy should go to Zimbabwe. The Secretary-General was at the G8 and wants to do that immediately. It was a major breakthrough that people agreed that the sanctions should start with the major figures in the Mugabe regime. I do not deny that the European Union has a wider list, but internationally agreed sanctions right across the world to deal with

10 July 2008 : Column 1553

assets held by members of the Mugabe regime in Africa, and assets that we know are held in Asia and perhaps in parts of Europe outside the EU, will be a major prize.

I accept that the United Nations resolution goes further in two major respects, and detailed negotiations are taking place in New York at the moment, but I hope that the whole international community, having seen the statement of the G8 and the statement of the African Union about the illegitimacy of election process, will agree that they should take together the action we propose—sanctions, with the embargo that would happen on arms, and the envoy to Zimbabwe. It is a delicate situation: violence is being practised against members not just of the community in Zimbabwe but of the Opposition party which has a legitimate claim to having won elections to Parliament. It is important that we support the mediation efforts that are taking place, but it is also important that the whole weight of the international community is behind the efforts to secure transition in Zimbabwe. I believe that time is short for that, so it is important that the UN pass its resolution as soon as possible, and I hope that all countries and all continents will get behind it.

The second issue that the right hon. Gentleman raised was climate change. I have to disagree with him: it is major progress that the major countries, including America and the rest of the EU and Japan, have signed up to an international agreement that, if accepted, would mean a cut of 50 per cent. in carbon emissions by 2050. That did not happen a year ago and it has obviously not been possible for many years in our discussions on climate change. For it to happen at the summit is an important step forward.

I do not think the right hon. Gentleman properly appreciated that agreement that there would be a need for interim targets in 2020 and 2025 was also an important step forward. There was a suggestion that countries should provide their national plans to do so. We are not just putting forward proposals that there be targets set that have to be met by our children's generation, but that there are targets that have to be met by this generation as well.

The developing countries are now readier to sign up to mitigation efforts and to their own standards for meeting the climate change agenda. That will be part of the talks that are about to take place, including all the different summits in the run-up to Copenhagen, as well as a full discussion of climate change issues at the next G8 meeting with the major economies that I have just listed. What makes it possible for developing countries and emerging markets to sign up to targets has not yet been properly recognised as an outcome of the summit—the \$150 billion or so being made available through the World Bank as part of public-private partnerships to enable those countries to invest in alternatives to coal-fired power stations and deforestation—so that they can invest long-term in sources of energy that are more environmentally efficient. I believe we have made major progress on the climate change agenda. The right hon. Gentleman raised this, and it is very important that we recognise that Europe is leading the debate; but we can lead the debate only as part of Europe, playing a full part as a member of the European Union, and I hope at some point that at least the sensible voices in the Conservative party will wake up to that.

10 July 2008 : Column 1554

On food prices, the right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We have put forward major changes to the common agricultural policy, which is up for review this year. It is part of the budget settlements of the last few years, and I hope that other members of the European community can be persuaded of the need for major reform of the common agricultural policy.

We need to act on famine now, which is why additional money is being provided by all G8 member countries to deal with the famines in Africa and elsewhere as a result of rising food prices. We need to invest in the equivalent of a green revolution in Africa to complement what happened in Asia, so that Africa ceases to be a net importer of food but, with a population mostly dependent on the land, starts to become a net exporter of food. That will be to their benefit by raising their earnings, and also to that of the rest of the world by reducing food shortages. More and more, the development agenda, the environmental agenda and the economic agenda are coming together and, as I have said to other countries that are looking at their development aid budgets at the moment, it would make no sense for them to cut development aid because it is needed to help Africa with both the agricultural agenda and the environmental agenda.

I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman when he says that we did not do enough on millennium development goals at the summit. It is true that there is legitimate debate among countries about the level of development aid— [*Interruption.*] The right hon. Gentleman said that countries were not meeting their commitments to the 2010 target. We in Britain are meeting our commitments, and it is right to tell other countries that they, too, should meet their commitments. That is why we try to turn the abstract promises of the past into concrete commitments—what was being said on health, malaria, education and agriculture and dealing with the problems of food.

I come now to the world economy. I hope the right hon. Gentleman has understood the message from the G8 summit: although we can do a great deal in our own countries—we have raised the winter fuel allowance and frozen fuel duty—we have responsibilities to the environmental agenda, as he used to recognise, which is why we are dealing with pollution from cars. There are global problems that require global solutions. Conservative blindness to the need for co-operation in the European Union means the Conservatives do not recognise the need for global action in the way we do. We will continue to work for global co-operation to deal with food, to deal with oil, to deal with commodities and to make for a smoother functioning global economy. I hope all parties will come to recognise that global co-operation and global leadership are now more necessary, not less relevant than before.

Mr. Nick Clegg (Sheffield, Hallam) (LD): I thank the Prime Minister for the advance notice of his statement.

If words could transform the world, the summit would be revolutionary. No one can disagree with the stirring rhetoric about the needs of the developing world, about Zimbabwe and about the urgency of the ongoing trade talks. However, G8 summit words count only if they are translated into action, which is why although of course I welcome the strong language on Zimbabwe and the initiative being taken in the United Nations, I wonder why the Prime Minister has not

10 July 2008 : Column 1555

taken more active steps in practice at home and abroad. For example, nearly three weeks ago I asked him to allow Zimbabwean asylum seekers to have the right to stay in the UK and to work to support themselves before they return home. He said he would think about it. What has he actually decided? What is he actually going to do?

Today, the Prime Minister said—stirringly—that

“our aim is that there will be no safe haven and no hiding place for the criminal cabal that surrounds...Mugabe”.

Of course. Will he go further than the United Nations? As he knows, Zimbabweans cannot be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court at present because they are not signatories to it. However, if the UN Security Council were so to decide, the Prime Minister could tell Mugabe and his henchmen that if they did not give up power within the next six months or so, one step outside Zimbabwe would mean they would be detained and prosecuted by the International Criminal Court. Will the Prime Minister take that step?

I am equally concerned that the Prime Minister is not honouring with action at home the rhetoric on the sharp increase in household gas prices. The G8 has rightly expressed concern—a concern that is particularly acute in the UK, with predictions that household gas prices will increase by 40 per cent. by the winter. As I have asked the Prime Minister several times, why is he not doing what other EU countries have done to recoup the subsidy given to energy-generating companies through the emissions trading scheme to install smart meters and energy-efficient measures in our households, and give real meaningful help to the most vulnerable families struggling to pay their fuel bills? He says that one of the major conclusions of the G8 summit was “radical measures to improve energy efficiency”. Taking steps to revolutionise the energy efficiency of our housing stock would do precisely that, but he seems to refuse to do it on the scale that is needed.

Finally, is it not true that the G8 is struggling to have any real influence over some of the world’s major emerging powers? Much has changed since the 1980s, when the G8 was seen as the boardroom of the world where all the big decisions were taken and everyone else followed. Today, emerging powers such as China and India are a bit like large shareholders, demanding change that the board cannot deliver, and since today is the day for Tory jokes about Heathcliff, I hope that the Prime Minister will agree that the G8 should not die a death like Heathcliff—a man ranting and raving at a world he can no longer understand, control or change. [*Interruption.*] It is indeed. Does the Prime Minister agree that the G8 should expand to include India and China?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman’s remarks about Zimbabwe, and I shall deal with one of the issues that he has raised. We all agree about the need for sanctions, the need for a UN envoy and the need to report on the human rights situation so that the whole world can see what is happening in Zimbabwe. As the right hon. Gentleman acknowledges, Zimbabwe is not a signatory to the International Criminal Court, but under the sanctions proposals that we have put forward, anybody who tries to leave Zimbabwe will be denied travel access, and that will be clear in the resolution at the United Nations.

10 July 2008 : Column 1556

The right hon. Gentleman did raise with me the question of people seeking asylum from Zimbabwe, and I did say that we dealt on a case-by-case basis with the right to asylum, and that is still the policy. However, I can confirm that no one is being forced to return to Zimbabwe from the United Kingdom at this time—no one. I can confirm also that we are actively looking at what we can do to support in this country Zimbabweans who are failed asylum seekers, who cannot work and who are prevented from leaving the UK through no fault of their own. They are provided with accommodation and vouchers to ensure that they are not destitute, but we are looking at what we can do to support Zimbabweans in that situation, and we will report back to the House in due course. However, I repeat to the right hon. Gentleman that no one is being forced to return to Zimbabwe at the present time.

The right hon. Gentleman also raised the question of fuel efficiency. The G8 accepted 25 recommendations for greater energy efficiency, and I must say that probably the most controversial one relates to cars and the future of vehicles, with the promotion of electric technology, plug-in vehicles and hybrid cars. I believe that all countries—Japan, the European Union countries and America—can make huge progress on that immediately, and we are putting, I think, £100 million into research to encourage companies to move forward on the issue.

The right hon. Gentleman asked what we are doing to ensure that people have access to cheap energy efficiency measures, such as loft insulation. No Government have done more than this Government to tackle those problems. Three million people are about to benefit from the measures on loft insulation and on draughtproofing, and he seems to forget that we have also signed with the utility companies an agreement that they will provide £100 million next year and £150 million in future years to help low-income households to do exactly what he says should happen. So we have the winter allowance, we have the £150 million that will come from the utility companies, we have our own programme for fuel efficiency and we are doing everything we can to tackle fuel poverty. I accept that in difficult economic times, which every country in the world is experiencing, as we have explained, it is our responsibility to do everything we can to help people in this country.

The reason I think the right hon. Gentleman underestimates the importance of the G8 is that, for the first time, I see a recognition that, when facing an oil shock, food price rises and the credit crunch, we need joint international action to solve such global problems. There will have to be a major reform of the international institutions, the necessity for which we have been promoting for some time anyway—even before the financial shocks. Over the next few months, there will be increasingly co-ordinated action by, and collaboration between, the major economies to do what we can to reduce our dependence on oil, to stabilise the energy market, to deal with the problems of financial instability, to help with the difficulties of food prices and to keep the world economy moving forward. I hope that all parties in the House will support that.