



## CHURCHES' REFUGEE NETWORK

(An informal network of the  
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland)



No. 1 (10/04)

### **NATIONAL** **URGENT! URGENT! URGENT!**

#### December deadline draws near

The deadline is looming for families wishing to apply for indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Government's one-off concession. The concession applies to some 15,000 families who made a first application for asylum before 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2000 and was first announced last year by the Home Secretary. Des Browne, Immigration Minister, has now written to MPs warning that the deadline for outstanding applications under the concession is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

### **Asylum Statistics UK 2003**

#### Main Points

- Applications for asylum, excluding dependents, fell by 41% in 2003 to 49,405. The nationalities accounting for the most applicants were Somali, Iraqi, Chinese, Zimbabwean and Iranian.
- Including dependents, applications to the EU 15 fell by 19%, compared with a 42% fall for the UK and increases for France and Italy.
- 64,940 initial decisions were made on asylum applications in 2003, a fifth less than in 2002 but significantly higher than applications; hence the number of cases awaiting initial decision fell to 23,900, the lowest level for more than a decade.
- IAA Adjudicators determined a record 81,725 asylum appeals in 2003 – 20% were allowed and 78% dismissed.
- Overall, an estimated 28% of the applications in 2003 resulted in grants of asylum (5%) or of exceptional leave to remain, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave (11%), or in allowed appeals (12%).
- Asylum removals (including assisted returns and some voluntary departures) rose by 21% in 2003 to a record 13,005, excluding dependants. Including dependants, a record 17,895 failed asylum seekers were removed, 29% more than in 2002 (13,910).

### **UK organisations set out principles for new asylum system**

Eleven refugee, human rights and legal organisations have published a new working paper, "*Refugees – Renewing the Vision*", which sets out fundamental principles for a new asylum system. The report is a joint effort of Refugee Council, Amnesty International, Immigration Advisory Service, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Justice, Medical Foundation for the Care of the Victims of Torture, Oxfam GB, Refugee Action, Refugee Legal Centre and the Scottish Refugee Council.

The working paper outlines an approach to the asylum system based on ensuring protection to those who need it. This includes a fast-track recognition scheme for asylum-seekers who are clearly refugees and a more independent decision-making process. It also examines the global cause of refugee movement. The paper can be got from Refugee Council on 020 7820 3042 or read the online version at: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

### **House of Commons International Development Committee Report on Migration – Migration and Development: How to make migration work for poverty reduction**

This powerful report dispels myths about "floods" and "swamps" of migrants heading for the developed countries. In fact, the Committee argues, like refugees, most migrants move within and between developing countries.

The Committee also argues that legal migration would benefit both sending and receiving countries and that "*well managed migration*" is important for both economic and political reasons. The report points out that, remittances by international migrants originally from developing countries, amount to almost \$300 billion. Such funds if invested wisely could play a major role in reducing poverty in developing countries.



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Developed countries are criticised for “*providing aid to help developing countries while helping themselves to the nurses, doctors and teachers who prop up services in developed countries.*” The report appreciates the UK Government’s attempts to open up channels for legal migration, but calls for greater protection for migrants through legislation and enforcement.

CRN agrees with the Committee’s conclusion that if public confidence in the government’s migration policy is to be maintained, then asylum claims must be examined fairly and quickly. If not, public support for economic migration would wane. *CRN is organising a Round Table on the Report with Church leaders, MPs, academics and activists.*

## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **Rocco Buttiglione Commissioner-designated for Justice, Freedom and Security**

Italian European Affairs Minister Rocco Buttiglione has been appointed Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. On 27<sup>th</sup> September, all the new Commissioner-designates will start a two-week long hearing session before the relevant European Parliament committees. Then the European Parliament will vote on the whole body. After a vote of approval in the European Parliament, the President and the other members of the Commission will be appointed by the Council. The new Commission is due to take office on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

### **Number of asylum seekers in industrialised countries at lowest level for seventeen years**

In 20 countries of the European Union for which date is available, the decrease in demand was on average 7% compared to the first half of 2004 and a fall of 16% compared to the first half of 2003, a figure which hides important differences, namely a 20% fall in 14 of the “old” Member States and an increase of 31% in the new. Despite an 11% fall

compared to the first quarter, France received the largest number of asylum seekers (14,050), followed by (after the USA, where it fell slightly), the United Kingdom and Germany (where it fell in both countries) and in Austria (an increase of 11%, following a 24% fall in the previous quarter). In the new Member States there had been a 26% increase in demand in the second half of 2004 compared to the first quarter: especially in Cyprus (due to demands from citizens from Bangladesh who initially came with student visas), in Slovakia and in Poland, whereas in the Czech Republic the number of requests fell.

## **WORLD**

### **Mine Ban Treaty**

In November 2004 in Nairobi, the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty will be reviewed and a new plan of action for the next five years drawn up. Attention will once again focus on the mine clearance, assistance for victims of land mines especially refugee returnees. *For more information contact Campaign Against Arms Trade on 020 7281 0297.*

### **UNHCR**

01.10.04 UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers speaking by video conference to the EU Justice and Home Affairs ministers meeting in Scheveningen, Netherlands, urged them to reaffirm the EU’s commitment to refugee protection, both within the EU and beyond.

### **Crisis in Sudan**

Ethnic violence has once again erupted in Sudan, impacting on more than 2 million people forced to flee their lives and homes to temporary camps in Darfur, Western Sudan. *For more information contact Cafod (020 7733 7900) or Christian Aid (020 7620 4444).*

## **CAMPAIGNS AND RESOURCES**

### **European Social Forum**

The London Churches Group for Social Action with The Justshare Coalition is holding a debate between the Church and the City of London



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entitled: **“God and Mammon”** at 11am Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October at St Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside, EC2. *Further information from: Chris Brice on 020 7932 1121.* Check the European Social Forum website [www.fse-esf.org](http://www.fse-esf.org) for other programmes on the six theme areas: War and Peace; Democracy and Fundamental Rights; Social Justice and Solidarity (against privatisation, for workers and women’s rights); Corporate globalisation and Global Justice; Against Racism; Right to Asylum and Environmental crisis and sustainable society.

*The Winchester Visitors Group* have set up a scheme whereby churches and other institutions can sponsor an asylum seekers for 12 weeks at £70 per week with the possibility of renewal. This will cover rent in the most basic room and leave a minimum for subsistence. The Winchester Society of Friends has already sponsored one asylum seeker. For more information contact: *Hugh Woodd, Molescroft, Lainston Close, Winchester on 01962 86913.*

*Office for Migration Policy (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales)* is due to publish a document called: *The Catholic Church’s Concern for Refugees and Migrants – its Foundational Documents and Social Teaching.* For more information contact *John Joseet on 020 7901 4862.*

*The National Catholic Refugee Forum* exists to facilitate networking, sharing and solidarity among Christians, other faith groups and refugee communities who are working with and for refugees. *More information from: Mary Horbury on 01244 317627.*

*The London-based Inter-Faith Refugee Network* exists to support and develop practical faith-based responses to the needs of people seeking asylum. *For more information contact Chris Brice on 020 7932 1121.*

*Solicitors International Human Rights Group* will soon be established to bring together solicitors legal skills in the battle for human rights. *For more information contact Michael Ellman on 07813 813362.*

*The Ethics and Politics of Asylum* by Matthew Gibney draws upon political and ethical theory and a review of the asylum policies of the US, UK, Germany and Australia, and asks why asylum has become such a charged issue in these countries. *Copies from the Cambridge University Press on 01223 326050.*

*Refugee Study Centre (Oxford University)*

Dates of Public Seminars on: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk)

### **REFLECTION**

People fleeing and becoming refugees; how strangers should be received; and what real hospitality means: these issues, with their christological and soteriological dimensions; are a central component of the Bible message in the Old and New Testaments

- Be hospitable to strangers, and provide them with your protection (cf. Gen 18:2-8; Lk 7:44)
- Make sure the stranger is able to retain his/her identity (Deut. 10:18)
- Understand that your own life is like a pilgrimage (cf. 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Cor 5:1-10) and is marked with departures and wanderings
- Learn to recognise the Lord Himself in every guest and every stranger (Mt 10:40; Mk 9:37)

**This is a CRN newsletter prepared by John Joseet, who can be contacted on 020 7901 4862.**

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