



CHURCHES' REFUGEE NETWORK

*An informal network of
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*



No. 4 (06/05)

REFUGEE WEEK: 20th –25th June 2005*

Celebrate the sacred concept of asylum; celebrate life and the integrity of creation; celebrate the enormous contributions refugees make to the UK's economic, political and social life. Every year during the UK-wide festival of Refugee Week hundreds of educational, arts and cultural activities are organised to explain why people become refugees and obligations both moral and legal, to help them. This year's theme is based on the concept of **persecution** as part of the global causes of forced migration. You can show solidarity by joining or supporting an event or organising one in your local area.

Assistance and information from the National Refugee Week helpline on 020 7346 6752 or www.refugeeweek.org.uk

* 20th June is World Refugee Day, which was established by the UN in 2000 with the aim of increasing awareness of the global refugee situation.

NATIONAL NEWS

New Immigration and Asylum Bill expected in July 2005

The 17th May Queen's Speech confirmed another Bill on Immigration and Asylum. This will be the fourth piece of legislation Labour has introduced since coming to power in 1997. *"Further legislation will be introduced to tighten the immigration and asylum system in a way that is fair, flexible, and in the economic interest of the country...legislation will be taken forward to introduce an identity card scheme which may have implications for the asylum process,"* the Speech stated.

The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, added that, *"We've made sufficient progress in transforming our immigration system, and intend to do even more through our five year plan to make sure that immigration works for Britain – that we have strong borders but allow migrants to come here when that benefits our economy."* (See CRN Newsletter, March 2005 on the five-year plan).

Inter alia, the Bill is expected to include limitations to indefinite leave to remain for those granted asylum and

increased use of fast track and detention for so-called manifestly unfounded claims.

The Refugee Council has warned that a new Bill will not work unless its aim is real reform of the asylum system, beginning with urgent action to improve the quality of decision-making on asylum claims (a view supported by many cross-party select committees and the National Audit Office); the establishment of an independent, non-political, decision-making body and the introduction of the right to work for asylum seekers.

More information from the Home Office www.homeoffice.gov.uk and the Refugee Council www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Return of food vouchers for asylum seekers?

Human rights NGOs were shocked to discover that the government has reintroduced food vouchers for refused asylum seekers who are unable to leave Britain for reasons beyond their control. The voucher system under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, were abolished by the former Home Secretary, David Blunkett in 2002, after a long and hard-fought campaign by human rights NGOs who were outraged that vouchers deprived asylum seekers of their dignity. NW TUC joint consultative committee spokesperson, Alec McFadden, noted that former T&G general secretary, Sir Bill Morris, had led a strenuous campaign to overturn this *"most outrageous way of treating asylum seekers."*

A T&G spokesperson confirmed that he had received reports of asylum seekers in Salford using vouchers worth £35.00 to shop for basic necessities in Asda and Morrisons. He pledged his support for a fresh campaign to stop the reintroduction of vouchers by stealth. A Refugee Council spokesperson pointed out that there are other issues around toiletries and nappies which cannot be bought with vouchers. However, a Home Office spokesperson claimed that in 2004, the National Asylum Support Service had received legal advice that people in Section 4 accommodation could not be provided with cash.

More information from T&G Workers Union www.tgwu.org.uk and the Refugee Council www.refugeecouncil.org.uk



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YMCA relents: refugee 'forced labour' scheme to be abandoned

Merseyside refugee campaigners welcomed the decision to scrap a pilot project forcing refused asylum seekers to carry out unpaid work in return for accommodation. The scheme, organised by the YMCA on behalf of the government, was set to take place in Liverpool this summer. But the plans are being cancelled after furious campaigners raised concerns about 'forcing' refused asylum seekers to undertake "slave labour" or be destitute.

A YMCA spokesperson admitted, "There was concern about the compulsory nature of the project and we now no longer think that it is appropriate and would prefer it if the scheme was voluntary." But Ed Murphy of the Merseyside Refugee Support Network, while giving a cautious welcome to the decision, warned that "scrapping the pilot should not be limited to Liverpool because of the opposition there, but be nation-wide: no to slave labour anywhere in Britain." Under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2002, refused asylum seekers are given accommodation if they are unable to return to their home countries for reasons beyond their control. But refused asylum seekers would be expected to carry out "community activities" while they wait deportation under Section 10 of the same Act.

Immigration Detainees – new inspection criteria published

The Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, has published criterion by which she will assess detention centres. The document called 'Immigration Removal Centres (IRC) Expectations' will be used in future to assess the conditions and treatment of immigration detainees in immigration removal centres and short-term holding facilities. These criteria covers all aspects of life in immigration detention, informed by domestic and international human rights standards and will be the basis on which detention facilities and the treatment of detainees will be assessed.

For a copy of the IRC Expectations call HM Prisons Inspectorate on 020 7053 4381 or use the following link:
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/expectations.pdf>

Government's says refugee integration matters

Cross-government action to ensure refugees are able to make a full and positive contribution to society was announced jointly by the Home Office and the Department for Works and Pensions. The policy, billed as the integration strategy, sets out the rights and responsibilities of refugee status and places emphasis on accommodation and jobs skills to enable refugees to give "something back to society".

More information from the Home Office
www.homeoffice.gov.uk and the Department of Work and Pensions www.dwp.gov.uk

Justice Denied – Asylum and Immigration Legal Aid system in crisis

This dossier contains evidence of the impact of cuts to asylum and immigration legal aid introduced in April 2004 by the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA). In all, 78 organisations and numerous individuals participated in the study conducted by Bail for Immigration Detainees and Asylum Aid. Among its conclusions were: severe shortage of good quality advice and representation available to asylum seekers etc.

For more information visit: www.biduk.org.uk or www.asylumaid.org.uk

NGO calls for end to waste of refugee skills

The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) has called an end to the "scandalous waste" of highly qualified refugees' skills in a report of 14th March 2005. The report say that of around 1,500 refugee doctors, dentists and other health workers living in the UK, only a few are employed in their own profession. A further 2,000 refugees are highly skilled in engineering, science, education and computing but not being employed on the same level as they were in the home countries. CARA called for "greater resources and guidance for refugees to stop pools of talent remaining unsupported".

CARA provides grants to academic refugees living in the UK to further their educational or vocational goals. Grants may cover expenses such as course, exam or bench fees, associated research, travel and equipment costs and much more, including in some limited cases, maintenance. Deadline for applications is 1st July.



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However, CARA warned that it cannot fund all applicants and many will go unsupported.

More information at www.academic-refugees.org

Watchdog seeks more powers to deal with gangmasters

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) set-up in the wake of the Morecambe Bay cockle-pickers tragedy, no sooner than beginning work in early April 2005, got bogged down in controversy over the budget announcement by Chancellor Gordon Brown to merge the GLA with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). GLA head Paul Whitehead said that the body should be merged with the DTI's Employment Agencies Inspectorate, not the HSE. He argued that the GLA in fact needed more powers to extend the scope of its work into the construction, catering and other industries outside agriculture. The T&G deputy general secretary also criticised the Chancellor's move saying, "This is about much more than health and safety. It is about limiting all forms of exploitation of some of the most vulnerable workers in society."

More information at www.tgwu.org.uk

Immigration Policy Quiz

See if you can work out which political parties are responsible for the following quotes. You can choose between Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Veritas, UKIP and the BNP. Answers on the last page.

- 1) "All those entering Britain with the intention of staying, would be subject to health checks for certain communicable diseases."
- 2) "London is bursting at the seams...a magnet for bogus asylum seekers and economic migrants, both legal and illegal."
- 3) "We are committed to tackling remaining problems and pockets of abuse in our immigration system – for example suspect colleges and marriages."
- 4) "We'll admit only those that are needed because of their skills. They will be expected to speak English, pass health tests, have no criminal convictions and integrate into the British way of life."
- 5) "We will set an annual limit to immigration, including a quota for asylum seekers. We will put in place 24-hour security at ports to prevent illegal immigration. We will introduce an Australian style

points system for work permits – giving priority to people with the skills Britain needs."

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

Hague Programme action plan 2005-2010

The EU Justice, Freedom and Security Commissioner, Franco Frattini, presented a five-year work programme for his Directorate to the European Parliament for approval. It included the implementation of the Hague Programme, which was adopted by the European Council on 4th-5th November 2004. The Commission set out 10 priorities with dates for Commission proposals, but no deadlines for the adoption by the Council and the Parliament. The priorities are: a common asylum policy; migration management; integration of migrants; border and visa policies; and fundamental rights and citizenship.

More information at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/the_hague_priorities/index_en.htm

UK-EU Presidency migration priorities

It has been revealed that the UK, during its Presidency of the EU (July–December 2005), intends to resuscitate a long forgotten Home Office two-pronged proposal to reduce the flow of asylum seekers to the EU by way of asylum processing centres (APCs) along routes into the EU and close to EU borders. Asylum seekers arriving spontaneously in the EU will be removed to these centres for asylum processing. Libya appears eager to set up a pilot centre for asylum seekers. Regional Protection Zones (RPZs) would also be established near conflict area where refugees would be expected to go for protection, rather than making the journey to the EU for asylum. It seems those refused asylum in APCs would be sent to the RPZs, if their country of origin remains unsafe.

EU Monitoring Centre on Racism to move

On 15th April the European Commission revealed its intention to adopt a proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The new agency's task will include tackling racism issues, currently dealt with by the EUMC. The new agency is expected to be



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operational on 1st January 2007, when EUMC is expected to be dissolved.

For the EUMC Annual Report 2003/2004 visit:
<http://www.eumc.eu.int>

Spain grants amnesty to around 700,000 migrants

The Spanish government marked the end of a three-month amnesty period for 'illegal' immigrants on the 7th March 2005. By this time nearly 700,000 new work and residency permits were issued. This policy has bucked a Euro-wide trend of cracking down on so-called economic migrants. Labour Office officials say that, with workers families included, more than a million people would no longer have to hide from police or labour inspectors. Supporters of the amnesty included trade unions, Churches and employers associations. Labour Minister, Jesus Caldera said that the amnesty was justified "because it is the only way to deal with situations that are humanely and socially unjust and unsustainable and which harm the economy."

The Minister also said that the amnesty has led to an increase in social security contributions of about €1.5b a year, an extra contribution that will offset the looming pension crisis. Some critics however say that the amnesty will attract people living illegally from as far as Germany, Italy and France, to Spain.

INTERNATIONAL

Council of Europe's Anti-Trafficking Convention ready for signing

The Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted by the Committee of Ministers 3rd May. It was opened for signature at the Council of Europe's Summit in Warsaw, 16th-17th May. 14 European countries have signed the Convention so far. NGOs have called on the UK government to do the same, arguing that this was the only international action available to end the global slave trade. However, the UK government has declined to sign the Convention, expressing fears that the Convention, because of the protection it affords for trafficked people, may also act as a "pull factor" for refugees and migrants. In addition, the government argues that there is sufficient protection in existing laws for trafficked people viz. Sexual Offences Act (Trafficked and Individual Sexual

Offences) 2003 and in the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004. The government is not entirely wrong on this, but these laws lack specific provisions enabling assistance and protection for the trafficked person and ensuring victims time for recovery from their ordeal and access to redress.

Inter alia, the Council of Europe's Convention will guarantee trafficked people a 30-day period during which they can receive support to aid recovery, including safe housing and emergency medical support and it will guarantee a temporary residence permit for those who may be in danger if they return to their country of origin.

More information available from the Brussels-based Christian Action and Networking against Trafficking in Women on 0032 2 234 68 00; or Churches Alert to Trafficking across Europe on 0845 456 9335; or Anti-Slavery International on 020 7501 8921; or the Office for Refugee Policy (CBCEW) 020 7901 4862.

New Head at the UNHCR

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has appointed Antonio Guterres, the former Portuguese Prime Minister, as the new UN High Commissioner for Refugees. However, his appointment must be approved by the UN General Assembly. According to UN sources this is expected soon.

Malaysia climbs down on migrant workers

Malaysia will allow migrant workers from Indonesia and other countries who left under an amnesty, to return as work permit holders to fill nation-wide labour shortages. In recent weeks, Malaysia has fast-tracked workers from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma and Vietnam to fill huge labour gaps in the plantation, construction and manufacturing sectors. About 1.5m migrant workers, mostly Indonesians work legally, mainly in low paying jobs shunned by locals. Despite a massive crackdown early this year, thousands more work illegally after an amnesty period ended. The government faced heavy criticism after expelling 380,000 'illegal workers' between October 2004 and February this year.

Sudan – Hague starts Darfur inquiry

The International Criminal Court in The Hague announced a formal inquiry into alleged war crimes in



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Darfur, Sudan. Prosecutors said that their inquiry would be “*impartial and independent, focusing on individuals who bear the greatest criminal responsibility.*” The Court has been monitoring the situation in Dafur, ever since the UN referred allegations of rape, murder and plunder to it, following a UN Security Council vote. More than **180,000 people have died and more than 2m people displaced** since the conflict began in 2003 when rebels took up arms against what they saw as state discrimination and neglect against non-Arab Sudanese. The government responded with counter-insurgency measures in which the Arab militia, known as the Janjaweed, committed massive abuses against non-Arab Sudanese.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) calls for remittance cost reduction

The IMF made a special appeal in April 2005 for countries to reduce the cost of remittances. The IMF says that remittance inflows for 90 developing countries amounted to more than US\$126bn, compared with US\$100bn in 2003, and it is increasing. It is argued that if remittance cost were reduced by as little as 10%, that would earn developing countries savings of between US\$10-\$12bn. The five top remittance receivers were Mexico, India, the Philippines, Egypt and Turkey, whilst the top remittance senders were the USA, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Germany and France.

CAMPAIGNS AND RESOURCES

Sanctuary – guidelines for Churches from CCRJ

For Christians there are many challenges of living in accord with Christian beliefs in the values of the Kingdom, which often conflicts with the pressures of living in a world of nation states. It is in this context that the new publication from the Churches Commission for Racial Justice attempts to address the issue of sanctuary, and the key issues and challenges Christians face when considering sanctuary to those denied natural justice in the asylum system.

This publication is available from CCRJ on 020 7654 7254 priced at £4.99 per copy.

The European Legal Network on Asylum

(ELENA) is organising an International Introductory Course on Refugee and Asylum Law, presented by

Professor James Hathaway. It will take place in the Hotel Olympia, 9th-12th September 2005, Valencia, Spain. Closing date for registration is 15th July 2005. The course will be in English and focused on international refugee law in relation to current asylum trends in Europe. ELENA, is a forum for legal practitioners whose aim is to promote the highest human rights standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers and other persons in need of international protection.

More information from: jchurchill@ecre.org

A Guide to the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act, 2004, by Dr

Satvinder Juss, Cavendish Publishers, priced £22.95, contains good analysis and provides a detailed background to the Act and explains how the Act will work. However, as we are all aware immigration and asylum law is so controversial and contested and it keeps changing every three years (my estimate). In fact, we have had three legislations in the last four years and another is expected around July 2005, (see report on Queen's Speech). This book will remain very useful even with expected changes to the asylum system with the new bill.

No one is illegal International Conference 25th June 2005, 1pm-6pm, at Cross St Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester. Entry by donation. This conference is organised by the No-one is Illegal Manifesto Group: www.noii.org.uk

Internship positions at PICUM

PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, an NGO that aims to promote the human rights of undocumented migrants in Europe, is offering an opportunity for activists to play an important role in its projects and other on-going work. The opportunities are primarily involve data collection, communications and policy initiatives.

For more information email info@picum.org or call 00 32 2 274 14 39.

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) seeks help and solidarity with campaigns to stop the arbitrary deportation of asylum seekers and migrants.



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For a list of currently active campaigns see www.ncadc.org.uk

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) detention report

JRS, a worldwide body founded in 1980, has as its primary mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees. The European regional office in Brussels has published its research and findings about asylum seekers in detention in Europe.

The report called: Detention in Europe (Administrative Detention of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Immigrants – Observations and Position Documents) is available from JRS UK on 020 7357 0974.

Closing the door? Immigrants to Britain 1905-

2005 - An exhibition to mark the century of the Aliens Act 1905, exhibitions and events from 23rd March – 21st August at the Jewish Museum, Raymond Burton House, 129-131 Albert Street, London NW1. For more information call 020 7248 1997 or visit: www.jewishmuseum.org.uk

University of East London refugee seminars:

A series of seminars were held during April and May at the University of East London to mark 100 years of the 1905 Aliens Act. *Inter alia* the subjects covered were Foreigners, Aliens and Jews the 1905 Aliens Act and After; acts of exclusion then and now; Fortress Europe et al. It is unclear if there are plans to publish the seminar papers, but do contact Diane Ball on 020 8223 2770 for information or email d.m.ball@uel.ac.uk

Racial Justice Sunday – 11th September 2005

This year's Racial Justice Sunday celebration in the UK is themed on 'One Race, the Human Race.' It marks the 10th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday. Posters, prayer leaflets, worship material and general information is available from the Catholic Association for Racial Justice on 020 8802 8080 or email info@carj.freeserve.co.uk or the Churches Commission for Racial Justice on 020 7654 7254 or www.ctbi.org.uk/ccrj

London Mayor announces Press Awards for good practice on asylum

Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, has announced a new awards scheme for London's local press to

recognise good practice in their coverage of asylum issues. The scheme includes the capital's faith, regional, Black, Asian and minority ethnic press. The Mayor's Office would like to find out from those most affected (refugee and voluntary groups, local government and newspapers) about examples of good practice. A leaflet outlining the scheme, its background and full details about nomination procedures is available from:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/llpa/>

The closing date 28th June and awards will be presented in July 2005.

Pope John Paul II RIP

With the death of Pope John Paul II, we have a lost a truly great friend and supporter of refugees and migrants. Throughout his pontificate he always spoke up for the right of refugees and migrants wherever he went. He was also instrumental in raising the profile of refugee and migrants within the Catholic Church and beyond. His gift to the world and to the Church was his vision of the integrity of creation and the dignity of the human person. He felt strongly that faith must relate to the reality of life and death. Suffering through exploitation, poverty and war and violence could be addressed and overcome by tackling the root causes. The Holy See for example was one of the primary movers on the UN Convention for the Protection of Migrants. He asked Episcopal Conferences worldwide to offer prayers and support to refugees by setting aside a special day during the first week in Advent to celebrate World Migration Day.

Answers to Immigration Quiz:

1. **UKIP**
2. **BNP**
3. **Labour**
4. **Veritas**
5. **Conservatives**

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