

Refugee Community Network

Newsletter 2 June/July 2003

Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum (NNRF)

Taking Abbas Amini's protest forward

The Home Office tried to get Abbas' 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' reversed on appeal. They failed when the Adjudicator threw out their 'appeal'. Abbas had already said that he was protesting for all asylum seekers. He refused to stop his hunger strike and made a number of demands to the Home Office. His demands included a review of the way asylum applications are refused and more respect for asylum seekers waiting a decision.

At the 2nd meeting of the Network on 14th June, we discussed a campaign to take forward Abbas' protest. This would include asking local MP, John Heppell, to take up a number of concerns with the Home Office.

- People left *destitute*, with no money or a place to live, when NASS withdraw financial support
- Home Office mistakes or unfairness
- Home Office challenging positive decisions

Typical problems.

During the discussion, a number of problems were highlighted. Some of these people had experienced themselves, others had happened to other people. They included:

- The Home Office sending the wrong interpreter, using a language or dialect from a different region.
- The Home Office only checking at the start of an interview if the person can understand – not at the end. *Suggestion – don't sign anything you don't completely understand.*
- The Home Office getting basic information wrong – a place name or someone's age.
- People being frightened, nervous or feeling intimidated at the interview.
- A young person under 18 being interviewed alone and refused asylum, because the Home Office said she was 18.
- Someone being given 2 different numbers and files by the Home Office. *They were granted asylum and sent a refusal letter!*
- Someone being refused asylum against the wrong number. *Despite numerous attempts to clarify the situation, including representations through the MP, the situation remains unresolved.*
- Being sent a NASS 35 because of a computer error.
- No decision being made for 4 years and then being sent a refusal.
- The Home Office sending court dates to the wrong address and an appeal not being allowed.
- The Home Office going to court with no papers. *In one case, the case was adjourned . . . over 2 years ago.*
- Inconsistent decisions being made about similar situations.
- The Home Office interviewers not seeming to have up-to-date and accurate information on what is happening in the home country.

What next:

These examples are now being put together in a short report. This will be given to John Heppell, and copied to other local MPs. The information will be useful in our campaigns to let local people know some of the difficulties facing asylum seekers and refugees.

We need to continue to gather information to show the continuing problems refugees and asylum seekers face.

Network News

The aims of the network are to:

- support refugees and asylum seekers who are supporting others in their communities;
- bring people together from different communities and living in different parts of Nottingham;
- share information.

This was the second meeting. 28 people came, from Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan [North and South], Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Next Network meeting:

Saturday 19th July at 2pm
Arthur Johnson Room
at the YMCA
Shakespeare Street.

Possible items for discussion:

- *Planning a campaign on the right to work*
- *Building confidence*

Refugee '118' Centre OPENING HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday
and Thursday
afternoons 1 to 5:
ADVICE SESSIONS

Monday evening 6.30
to 8.30: **SOCIAL
DROP-IN**

The Nottingham Refugee Campaign Group

NO FORCED DEPORTATIONS TO IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN

The Government has already deported people to Afghanistan, ignoring the advice of NGOs, Refugee Groups and people inside Afghanistan who say that the situation is far from secure. Now the Government plan to start returning people to Iraq, saying that now Saddam is gone that country is also safe. Asylum seekers have been forcibly returned to other unsafe countries too. For example, last year the government were sending people back to Zimbabwe despite continuing human rights abuses! Help the local campaign against forced deportations. **WATCH OUT for FURTHER INFORMATION** + we'll keep you in touch.

We meet on the 1st Tuesday of each month to plan campaigning on asylum and refugee issues, including deportation. EVERYBODY WELCOME.

+++ **NEW BOOK** +++

States of Conflict:

Stephen Castles, Heaven Crawley & Sean Loughna [ISBN 1 86030 215 5]
£9.95

The authors looked at the top 10 'countries of origin' for asylum seekers in the EU. These included Iraq, Iran and Somalia. They argue that the **common cause** of people seeking asylum in Europe is conflict at home, including political unrest and human rights abuse. They then argue that the solution to the 'asylum problem' is to do something about the reasons why people have to flee their homelands in the first place. However, given the money made in arms sales etc. humanitarian considerations are not 'top of the EU agenda'. Instead, EU governments concentrate on stopping refugees from getting to Europe. An excellent campaign 'tool', it's expensive so get it from the library.

Regular meetings

Womens' group: Fridays 10am – 3pm at St. Peter's Church in the city centre. Open to all women refugees.

Refugee women interested in meeting other women to discuss campaigning, culture, politics, issues affecting women – anything you like: contact Huda and Abigail at 118 Mansfield Road [leave your name and address]

Health professionals group: meets on Tuesday evenings at 6pm at the NNRF office

(Please let us know about other regular meetings)

+++++ **Asylum News In Brief** +++++

TRANSIT CENTRES: UK government plans to house asylum seekers in 'transit centres' on the edges of Europe seem to have been abandoned. Germany and other EU countries opposed them. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees wants European countries to give more money to support those countries near 'refugee producing areas' where thousands of asylum seekers are supported in camps. It also wants countries in the EU to agree a common level of support to asylum seekers in their own countries. There is concern that European governments might use these 'regional protection zones' as a way of getting out of their international refugee obligations. Concerns are being expressed about the safety of UN protected areas, after massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia despite UN protection.

LEGAL SUPPORT CUT: The UK government has decided to cut the amount of legal support for asylum seekers. Now only 5 hours of legal time can be paid for. This may make it hard to fund appeals.

IRAQI ASYLUM CASES: The Home Office have reopened Iraqi asylum cases 'put on hold' during the war in Iraq. Although cases will now be heard 'on a case by case' basis, mass refusals are expected.

For regular updates see Refugee Council www.refugeecouncil.org.uk Asylum Aid www.asylumaid.org.uk National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns [NCADC] www.ncadc.org.uk Institute of Race Relations [IRR] www.irr.org.uk and Amnesty International www.amnesty.org.uk