

# Refugee Community Network

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## Stop the Asylum and Immigration Bill

In November 2003, the Government set out its latest plans to restrict the rights of asylum seekers. These plans are now being discussed in Parliament. The Government expects them to become law in around May of this year.

The Government want four changes:

1. It wants to give immigration officials more powers to arrest people & to search property if they think a crime has been committed. Crimes would include things like fraud and perjury (lying to the court or at an immigration interview).

2. It wants to make entering the UK without valid documents illegal. Refugees who destroy their documents, or whose documents are not valid, could be fined or sent to prison. Being told to destroy documents by an agent would not be an excuse.

3. It wants to stop benefit to families with children whose asylum claims have failed. Already NASS support is stopped for people without children whose claims fail. This is a particular problem for people from countries such as Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone who are not being sent back to their home countries. It may result in children of 'failed asylum seekers' being taken into care by social services.

4. It wants to stop asylum seekers appealing to the courts against 'negative decisions' made by immigration tribunals and adjudicators. It will also make a single system of the tribunal and adjudication so that the decision of the tribunal will be final.

Refugee supporters argue that under the 1951 Refugee Convention it cannot be illegal for refugees to enter a country using 'false papers'. They also say that stopping asylum cases from going to court is against Article 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Many people, including children's social workers, have condemned the idea that the authorities might put the children of 'failed asylum seekers' who refuse to leave the country into care.

There are campaigns against this new Bill up and down the country.

### Aims of the network

- Support refugees and asylum seekers to support others in their communities.
- Bring together asylum seeker and refugee activists from different communities and different parts of Nottingham.
- Share information.

## Fast against destitution

Over the weekend of 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> January refugees and local supporters took part in a 48-hour fast against 'destitution'. The fast was held at St Peter's Church hall in St Peter's Gate in the city centre. Other people gave out leaflets and collected signatures from people walking by. 'Section 55' of the 2002 Immigration Act has meant that many asylum seekers arriving in the UK are refused NASS support. About 20% of people seeking asylum are now refused support of any kind. This means that people are left without money or accommodation. If they have no friends or family to help them they are left homeless and penniless – or 'destitute'. The protest fast was covered by the local radio and TV, and in the Evening Post. People in Sheffield, Liverpool, Leicester, Oxford and Cardiff organised similar protests. After the fast, people were provided with a meal by the group 'Food Not Bombs', as well as by some of the women who had been fasting, who cooked Kurdish food.

### NEXT MEETING

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February at 2.00pm  
YMCA, Shakespeare Street  
Arthur Johnson room

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