

## **Bulletin 1 August 2008**

### **SDV News and events**

#### **Support SDV through Easysearch**

Please remember to use easysearch when searching the internet. By doing so you can raise money for SDV.

Go to the link below, choose Scottish Detainee Visitors as the cause you would like to support, and get searching. It's easy to use and seems as effective as Google. AND it is literally money for nothing!

You can also navigate to easysearch from the SDV website where you will find all sorts of other ways to raise funds and details of events.

For SDV members, this is a really easy way to do your bit for fundraising!

<http://www.easysearch.org.uk/>

### **Immigration, asylum and detention news**

#### **Australia revokes instant detention for asylum seekers**

The Australian government is to stop automatically locking up asylum seekers, but reserve the right to detain people applying for refugee status who may be a security threat.

The changes further relax rules imposed by the previous government, which made detention mandatory for people who arrived illegally in Australia — a policy that drew heavy criticism from human rights activists and gruesome protests by asylum seekers.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/29/australia>

#### **Foreign inmates reach record number in spite of ministers' drive to increase deportations**

Record numbers of foreign prisoners are being held in jails in England and Wales, according to government figures published yesterday. One in eight of the male prison population and more than one in five of female inmates are foreigners either serving sentences or awaiting trial.

More than half the prisoners held in six jails are foreign and one prison has been converted to hold only foreigners. Yesterday's figures show that almost 11,500 foreign citizens are in jails despite a drive by the Government to deport more of them when they end their sentence. A total of 4,200 foreign prisoners who were deported last year served their sentence and the Government has promised to increase the figure to 5,000 this year.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article4439596.ece>

## **Rules to ban sham marriages are unlawful, Law Lords rule**

The ban was brought in by then-Home Secretary David Blunkett in 2004, amid concerns that thousands of people a year were using sham marriages to stay into the UK.

The regulations required people not legally settled in the UK to seek special permission to marry. These rules applied to couples even if one of them had a legal right to be in the country. However the regulations were ruled as illegal by the High Court in 2006 and then Appeal Court last year. On Wednesday, the Law Lords agreed, saying they were an "arbitrary and unjust interference" with human rights.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2475465/Rules-to-ban-sham-marriages-are-unlawful-Law-Lords-rule.html>

## **Asylum seeker and refugee destitution has doubled, says trust**

Destitution among refused asylum seekers and refugees in Britain has more than doubled in 18 months, according to a report which describes government policy on the issue as "unacceptable".

The number of children affected has quadrupled and rough sleepers have increased by a third, says the follow-up study by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The trust prompted a national debate in March last year after revealing how many failed asylum seekers were surviving only through charity and church support.

The new report finds that bans on working and receiving benefit have been compounded by mistakes in the implementation of new asylum model (NAM) rules introduced after the previous survey. The biggest reason for destitution was error or delay in the only government support available - "section four" grants for those awaiting judicial review into failure of asylum requests, or physically unable to return to their country of origin.

A spokesman for the Home Office said there was no reason for any asylum seeker to become destitute. He said: "We provide measures that ensure that individuals are not destitute, and we work to ensure that all are treated with respect and humanity."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/jul/24/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices>

## **New Labour's bare-knuckle fight against asylum seekers**

Comment piece on the asylum system, examining violence from guards during deportation (see below), recent reports on asylum and immigration and the support some asylum seekers and refugees find in their communities.

Full story at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jul/24/immigration.humanrights>

## **"Outsourcing Abuse" - report on nearly 300 alleged assaults against asylum deportees**

"Outsourcing Abuse" by Birnberg Peirce & Partners, Medical Justice and NCADC, published July 14, describes an alarming number of injuries sustained by asylum deportees at the hand of private "escorts" contracted by the Home Office. It reveals evidence of widespread and seemingly systemic abuse of vulnerable people who have fled their own countries seeking safety and refuge, and that assault claims have largely been brushed off by the Home Office.

"I have just read one of the most shocking reports about our immigration system that I have seen in 20 years as a Member of Parliament. The report "Outsourcing Abuse" catalogues the frightening state-sponsored violence that happens to asylum-seekers when they are being deported. This report suggests a complete failure [by the Home Office] to investigate many of the allegations. This report is distressing and upsetting for anyone to read. But for Ministers it is a damning verdict on their inability to inject even a shred of humanity into a flailing immigration system." Diane Abbott MP.

Download the full report at:

<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/emmaginnsfolder/emmaginnsfolder/july%2008/OutsourcingAbuse.html>

**Families in Immigration detention: January and February 2008**

In response to a freedom of information request from NCADC, the home office has revealed the following:

<b>January 2008</b>			<b>February 2008</b>		
No families	No adults	No children	No families	No adults	No children
<i>Yarl's Wood</i>			<i>Yarl's Wood</i>		
65	97	105	89	116	97
<i>Tinsley House</i>			<i>Tinsley House</i>		
15	21	24	15	18	24
<i>Dungavel</i>			<i>Dungavel</i>		
1	2	0	4	5	7

**Other news and events**

**Unity Centre Mural Competition**

On the side of the Unity Centre is a window that is boarded up and covered by a shutter that the centre didn't have the key for. Recently the centre was used to film part of an episode of Taggart and STV generously paid for the shutter lock to be fixed so they could open it and add signs to the window.

Unity have decided to have a competition to get a mural painted on the window to cover the signs and make the side of the centre much more attractive and eye-catching for people going past to sign at the Home Office.

They are offering a prize of £25 for the best design!

So if you're artistic and would like to enter we would like a mural design that reflects what the Unity Centre is trying to do as well as highlighting the principles of solidarity, internationalism and mutual aid. Remember the window is on the side of the street

that people walk down on their way to the Home Office so we want something attractive and uplifting!

Send your design by email, or the post to the Unity Centre and they'll decide the best design and announce the winner before the end of September!

The mural is for an area measuring 160 cm across and is 145 cm high and you are welcome to come and see where we want the mural to go.

[info@unitycentreglasgow.org](mailto:info@unitycentreglasgow.org). The UNITY Centre, 30 Ibrox Street, Glasgow, G51 1AQ