

Bulletin 20 March 2009

SDV News and events

SDV Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 21 April, 6pm

The next AGM will be held on the above date at the Boiler House at the Hidden Gardens. It's important that all SDV members attend.

A new committee will be elected at the AGM so think about putting yourself forward as a committee member.

After 3 years, Michelle will be standing down as Treasurer at the next AGM. This means this role will need to be filled. The person does not need to have massive financial expertise. He or she would simply need to be numerate and Michelle would provide a handover to go through the procedures. If anyone is interested in this role, or knows anyone who might be, please contact Kate or a member of the committee.

Free funds

Check out easyfundraising for lots of new ways to raise funds for SDV for free. If we all did this, we could raise quite a bit of money. Find out more about easyfundraising for SDV using the link below:

<http://www.sdv.org.uk/id15.htm>

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Sent back by Britain. Executed in Darfur

A failed asylum-seeker who returned to Darfur under a government repatriation scheme has been murdered by Sudanese security officers after they followed him home from the airport in Khartoum, The Independent has learnt.

Adam Osman Mohammed, 32, was gunned down in his home in front of his wife and four-year-old son just days after arriving in his village in south Darfur.

The case is to be used by asylum campaigners to counter Home Office attempts to lift the ban on the removal and deportation to Sudan of failed asylum-seekers. Next month, government lawyers are expected to go to court to argue that it is safe to return as many as 3,000 people to Khartoum.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sent-back-by-britain-executed-in-darfur-1646507.html>

Asylum seeker children 'removed in caged vans'

The Children's Commissioner for England has expressed concern over claims that children of asylum seekers, some as young as eight years old, were being transported in "caged" vans.

Sir Al Aynsley-Green said his worries followed conversations with numerous "very traumatised" children about their treatment at the hands of the immigration authorities.

However the head of the UK Border Agency insisted prison vans were never used for the removal of families.

Sir Al told Channel 4 News: "We have listened to countless children, especially in the context of arrest, detention and possible deportation.

"These are very traumatised children in my view and some of these children have told me of their experiences of being transported in what they call 'caged vans'. I haven't seen these vans myself. That is what the children tell me."

However, UK Border Agency chief executive Lin Homer insisted only minibuses or people carriers were used to move families.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/4970331/Asylum-seeker-children-removed-in-caged-vans.html>

Anglo-French detention centre to thwart would-be illegal immigrants

A joint Anglo-French detention centre is being planned for Calais to hold hundreds of migrants gathering near the Channel port to try to enter Britain illegally.

Migrants would be held to await deportation from France on chartered aircraft paid for by the British and French governments. The move follows calls from the French authorities for Britain to take an active role in curbing the flow of migrants arriving in Calais.

With about five hundred migrants in Calais - and about ten reaching Britain hidden on lorries every night - Eric Besson, the French Immigration Minister, is under pressure from residents whose anger has been fuelled by incidents such as the fight that broke out between dozens of migrants in the centre of Calais yesterday.

Phil Woolas, the Immigration Minister, disclosed proposals to tackle the surge of migrants, many from Afghanistan and Iraq, at Channel ports hoping for a new life in Britain. He took Home Office officials by surprise with his disclosure of the initiative, which he said ministers hoped could be announced officially at the annual Anglo-French summit in May.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article5927520.ece>

Brook House IRC is now open for the deportation business

Capacity 426 beds and a handful of detainees now in residence.

Brook House IRC
Perimeter Road South
Gatwick Airport
Gatwick
West Sussex
RH6 0PQ

Visiting times: 14:00 to 18:00 and 19:00 to 21:00

Switchboard: 01293 566500

It has been built to category B prison standard same as Colnbrook IRC

Brook House IRC will be managed by G4S who manage, Oakington, Dungavel, Tinsley House IRC's, and are the main escort providers for moving immigration detainees around and out of the UK, and make massive profits in the process.

Protests in Tinsley House

There have been protests in Tinsley House as a result of changes in meals brought in after the opening of the second Gatwick removal centre (Brook House – see above). Parents are currently on hunger strike.

Three hurt in Campsfield disturbance

Three people were injured in a disturbance at Campsfield House Detention Centre, in Kidlington, involving 45 detainees, it has emerged. Thames Valley Police said three men were taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital, in Oxford, following the incident at about 2pm yesterday.

A police spokesman said two were discharged yesterday and one remained in hospital with a minor head injury. It is not yet known if the people who were injured were detainees or staff.

http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/4200503.Three_hurt_in_Campsfield_disturbance/

Green light for Yarl's Wood expansion

Planning permission has been granted for a new immigration centre near an existing unit in Bedfordshire.

The UK Border Agency wants to build a detention unit to house 500 single men at Yarl's Wood and says it will be built to prison standards. The existing centre houses about 450 single women and families.

Bedford Borough Council has given permission for the plans, which involve rebuilding part of the complex destroyed in a riot and fire in 2002.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/beds/bucks/herts/7934284.stm

Asylum seeker 'litigation industry' created around child assessments

A "litigation industry" has sprung up based on "unreliable" age assessments for young asylum seekers, the High Court was told today.

A QC said the issue was of importance because "no less than 10% of children looked after (by local authorities) are unaccompanied asylum seekers."

Charles Bear QC, appearing for Kent County Council, said under 18s who arrived in the country alone were classed as children and - unlike adults - entitled to housing and education and unlikely to face deportation.

The QC said medical reports had been prepared by paediatric specialist Dr Diana Birch challenging experienced social workers' assessments that lone applicants were aged over 18 and to be treated as adults.

He described Dr Birch as "an unreliable source of evidence". He alleged the case showed "how easy it was for a litigation industry to develop a momentum that is not really justified."

The county council, which is responsible for asylum seekers arriving at the Channel ports, and the London Borough of Croydon are defending decisions to refuse to accept assessments by Dr Birch in two High Court test cases.

The Kent council wants a ruling that would allow local authorities to ignore all assessments from Dr Birch in future.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1161524/Asylum-seeker-litigation-industry-created-child-assessments.html>

UK accused over asylum seekers left to live on \$1 a day

Hundreds of thousands of failed asylum seekers are living in the UK in extreme poverty, because they fear torture or death if they return to their home countries, according to a report released today.

The report warns many failed asylum seekers are living in a "twilight zone", with no housing or financial support, and no right to work. Many failed asylum seekers are living on less than "a dollar a day", the global yardstick for extreme poverty, it claims. Recent research by the London School of Economics estimated there are 500,000 failed asylum seekers in the UK.

Christine Majid, from the refugee charity Pafra, who commissioned the Underground Lives report, says the number of destitute asylum seekers the charity dealt with tripled in the past two years and called destitution a "deliberate" policy to force asylum seekers out of the country.

She said: "In the 21st century the fact that the government is trying to starve people out of the country, it is absolutely inhumane and it just isn't working. These people would rather starve on the street here than return to their own countries."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/mar/16/asylum-seekers-immigration-poverty>

Other news and events

A job you might be interested in: NCADC Nationally-based Campaign Co-ordinator Salary: £26,000pa initially

A worker is required by the NCADC to help the organisation achieve its aims of assisting people facing removal/deportation. The successful candidate will be based at their home so location is not important, there will be some travelling around the country. He or she will undergo enhanced CRB checks and ideally have relevant experience in most or all of the following areas:

- Campaigning against deportation
- Delivering training
- Voluntary sector/community group activities;
- Promoting and facilitating co-operation and the exchange of information between campaigning groups
- Research and communication on areas relevant to immigration, migration and deportation

Ideally, candidates should be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the issues involved, and a passion to help our organisation move towards its goals.

Further information about us and our objectives, together with details of this role and information on how to apply are on our website:

<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/Newszine104/Advert.html>

Charity Bike Rides and Walks for the Charity of Your Choice (that would be SDV!)

Just bike and Just Walk are events organised by Across the Divide who specialise in charity challenges. Find more details at:

<http://www.just-bike.co.uk/charity-bike-ride/>