

## **Bulletin 23 January 2009**

### **SDV News and events**

#### **Free Funds**

On the "free funds" area of the easyfundraising website, there are lots of ways to raise funds for free for SDV. These include free trials with lovefilm (£8) and blockbuster (£6.25). If we all did this, we could raise quite a lot of money! Go to easyfundraising using this link

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

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

#### **Asylum system not coping with backlog of cases, says watchdog**

The asylum system is developing a backlog of new cases that threaten to undermine efforts to clear an existing bank of more than 200,000 "legacy cases", some dating back more than 10 years, a Whitehall spending watchdog warns today.

It reveals that the new system is "struggling to cope", and although new asylum claims are being dealt with much more quickly, it discloses that a fresh backlog is building up. The number of cases awaiting an initial decision doubled last year from 4,200 in June 2007 to 8,700 last July and continues to grow.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jan/23/asylum-system-backlog>

[http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.2483828.0.asylumseeker\\_backlog\\_doubles\\_and\\_fewer\\_than\\_10\\_sent\\_home.php](http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.2483828.0.asylumseeker_backlog_doubles_and_fewer_than_10_sent_home.php)

#### **Black staff sacked by Refugee Council win discrimination case**

The British Refugee Council has been ordered to pay one of its former employees £30,000 in compensation after a tribunal ruled that it was guilty of racial discrimination when it sacked the only two black people working at an immigration centre.

The council must pay the amount to Zaina Ukwaju, who won a claim for unfair dismissal, victimisation and racial discrimination after losing her job as a detainee adviser at the Oakington immigration centre in Cambridge. Her colleague, Nigerian-born Emmanuel Obikwu, also won a racial discrimination case against the council after he was dismissed alongside Ms Ukwaju. Mr Obikwu's compensation amount will be decided at a later hearing.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/black-staff-sacked-by-refugee-council-win-discrimination-case-1451405.html>

## **Asylum Election Pledge**

Before the next election, Liberty is calling on all MPs and parliamentary candidates to sign our asylum election pledge.

Please lobby your MP and parliamentary candidates and ask them to remember Britain's history as a place of refuge for the persecuted. Show your representatives that you reject xenophobia in discussions about asylum and immigration policy. The pledge we are asking your MP to sign:

*"There is no place for racism and xenophobia in modern British politics. Nor is democratic debate advanced by the denigration of the most vulnerable in our country, including children and asylum seekers who do not enjoy the right to participate in elections.*

*I promise to remember the importance of refugee protection, even in free and wide-ranging debates about immigration policy. I will never play fast and loose with the proud tradition of a nation that must always offer succour to those in genuine fear of persecution."*

Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, said:

"The time has come for a clear and respectful warning to those who hold or seek power over the most vulnerable people in this land. Britain hates bullies and finds them no more attractive in red, blue or striped clothing. Do not underestimate the ocean of common decency in the oldest democracy on Earth. We will be watching."

To discover who your MP is visit

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

To write to your MP visit

<http://www.writetothem.com/>

## **Largest immigration removal centre to open in March at Gatwick**

Video about this story at the link below. Includes comment from Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7831461.stm>

## **Asylum inspector: I won't be a stooge**

There's something telling about the word John Vine used to describe himself, when he spoke in Edinburgh. "I'm desperately trying to get the message across that I'm an independent public servant," he told members of the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and other agencies with an interest in refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers.

Invited to speak at the council's annual general meeting, he had been introduced through a slip of the tongue as a member of the UK Border Agency. In fact, Vine, a former chief constable of Tayside Police is the first chief inspector of that agency.

It's a challenging enough role, without doubts creeping in about his independence, which clearly lies behind that self-confessed "desperation". As new chief inspector of the agency, a fledgling replacement for the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, he provides independent oversight of a wide range of highly sensitive work.

[http://www.theherald.co.uk/features/features/display.var.2482913.0.Asylum\\_inspect\\_or\\_I\\_wont\\_be\\_a\\_stooge.php](http://www.theherald.co.uk/features/features/display.var.2482913.0.Asylum_inspect_or_I_wont_be_a_stooge.php)

## **Other news and events**

**Two Sides - One Story: Guantánamo From Both Sides of the Wire  
7:30pm (doors 7.00pm) Friday 30 January, Adelaide's, 209 Bath  
Street, Glasgow, G2 4HZ**

Speakers include: Moazzam Begg (ex-Guantánamo detainee) and Christopher Arendt (Ex-Guantanamo guard)

Presented by Cageprisoners, supported by SACC, Glasgow Stop the War Coalition, the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Scottish Media Workers Against the War and the Federation of Student Islamic Societies. Admission Free – Unticketed

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