

Bulletin 28 April 2009

SDV News and events

SDV Annual General Meeting

Thanks to all who attended the AGM. Our latest annual report is now available on the homepage of the website (link below). If you would like a hard copy of it, please contact the coordinator.

The new SDV committee was elected at the AGM. They are: Rima Al-khalidi, Dan Brennan, Martin Deane, Mary Kate Dickie, Catrin Evans, Michelle Opit and Sophie Kavoukis.

They will elect office bearers at the next committee meeting and the results will be reported in the bulletin.

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

Easyfundraising and Easysearch for SDV

Please remember both these very easy ways to raise funds for SDV. Details on the website:

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

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Inside Yarl's Wood: Britain's shame over child detainees

Children held in the infamous Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre are being denied urgent medical treatment, handled violently and left at risk of serious harm, a damning report by the Children's Commissioner for England says

Sir Al Aynsley-Green's investigation paints a shocking picture of neglect and even cruelty towards children trapped within the centre's razor-wired walls, and finds "substantial evidence that detention is harmful and damaging to children and young people".

Since opening in 2001, the Bedfordshire detention centre has been plagued by hunger strikes, self-harm incidents, a suicide and riots. It was severely damaged by fire during disturbances in 2002. Despite repeated scandals - and the damning findings of this report - planning permission was given last month to double the centre's capacity from 405 places to nearly 900.

Around 2,000 children a year are held in immigration centres - half in Yarl's Wood, which has been run by a private company, Serco, since 2007. The experience they described is prison in all but name. Politicians, immigration experts and doctors last

night called for an end to the detention of children and for urgent measures to ensure other detainees are treated humanely.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/inside-yarls-wood-britains-shame-over-child-detainees-1674380.html>

House of Commons Parliamentary Questions on Asylum and Detention

Asylum [examine new evidence]
House of Commons / 23 Apr 2009

Martin Horwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures are in place to enable UK Border Agency caseworkers to examine new evidence in respect of individuals seeking asylum.

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 22 April 2009]: The procedure followed by UK Border Agency case owners in examining new evidence in respect of individuals seeking asylum depends on the stage the asylum claim has reached when the new evidence comes to light.

If the individual's asylum claim is outstanding, the new evidence will form part of the initial consideration.

If the individual has had an initial decision on their asylum claim, but they have an appeal outstanding, they may have a reconsideration of the original decision by the UKBA case owners, or the new evidence may be considered at appeal by an immigration judge, depending on the similarity of the new evidence to that which has previously been considered.

If the individual has come to the end of the asylum process and has exhausted their appeal rights, any new evidence put forward will be considered under paragraph 353 of the Immigration Rules.

Detainees: Immigration [No time limit for detention]
House of Commons / 23 Apr 2009:

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will review the UK's opt-out from the EU returns directive; and if she will adopt a maximum time limit for the detention of illegal immigrants. [264766]

Jacqui Smith: While the United Kingdom has not opted-in to this directive, we agree that a collective approach to removal would have advantages. However, we are not persuaded that this directive delivers the strong returns regime that is required for dealing with irregular migration. We prefer to formulate our own policy in line with retaining control over conditions of entry and stay; including the returns procedure. Our current practices on the return of illegal third country nationals are in line with the prescriptions of the directive.

Detention is a final option and is only used for the shortest period necessary. Every decision to detain is taken on a case by case basis and we do not have a maximum time limit.

House of Lords – Parliamentary question

Sudan: Asylum Seekers

House of Lords / 21 Apr 2009: Column

Question: Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the light of the murder of Adam Osman Mohammed following his return from the United Kingdom to Southern Darfur, they consider it safe to continue returning asylum seekers to Sudan. [HL2487]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord West of Spithead):
Enforced returns of non-Arab Darfuris to Sudan have been suspended since July 2008 and will continue to be suspended until a forthcoming country guidance case has been heard by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal later this year. Individuals are entitled to seek voluntary return to their country of nationality at any time and the UK Border Agency would not attempt to prevent such returns.

Mr Adam Osman Mohammed returned to Khartoum under the voluntary return scheme in August 2008. He travelled to South Darfur some months later and was reportedly killed.

Other news and events

Two Jobs at Friends of the Earth Scotland

Friends of the Earth Scotland is seeking to fill two vacancies:

- Communications and New Media Officer, 35 hours per week, Salary scale £20,387 to £25,550
- Activism and Volunteer Development Officer, 21 hours per week, Salary scale £20,387 to £25,550 pro-rata

Further information, job descriptions and application forms are available at the link below:

<http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/jobs/>

Volunteer Opportunity with World Development Movement

The World Development Movement, one of the UK's most leading campaigning organisations, is looking for an enthusiastic and effective volunteer to support a new community-based initiative which aims to share skills for active global citizenship.

Tasks will include

- Developing materials and resources
- Event support
- Research
- Some basic administration

Demonstrated experience of two or more of the following would be an advantage:
Good interpersonal skills, writing for the public, research and resource development,

events organisation, popular education, international development and social justice, campaigning, climate change or trade justice awareness, media skills.

This will be considered as an internship position for 1 day a week in central Edinburgh starting mid-May, for at least 2 months. Local travel and expenses can be covered. To apply, please send a CV and short email/covering letter explaining your interest in this work, to the email address below by Friday 8 May

simon@wdmscotland.org.uk.