

Sanctuary

A bi-monthly newsletter on asylum, refugee and migrant matters from a religious perspective
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OVERVIEW

Asylum Applications for the year 2008 totalled 3,866 (incl 59 re-applications) – the comparable figure for 2007 was 3,985 (52 re-applications).

First Instance: Of 4,584 applications processed in 2008, some 295 applicants were recognized as refugees at *first instance*, some 3,906 applicants were refused and 388 applicants were returned to have their case processed in the EU country to which they first arrived. (cf. *Dublin Convention/Regulation*).

Appeal Stage: Of 8,863 *Substantive Appeals* processed in 2008, 1,220 appellants were recognized as refugees (i.e. 14% of *First Instance* negative decisions appealed were overturned) – a further 629 appeals lodged were withdrawn before being processed). Of 4,436 *Accelerated Appeals*, 197 negative decisions were overturned.

Top Countries of Origin of asylum applicants in '08: Nigeria: 26%; Pakistan: 6%; Iraq, Georgia & China: 5%.

Backlog of unprocessed cases at 31 Dec 2008: 4,608 (*First Instance*: 1,196; *Appeals*: 3,412)

Family Reunification (FR): New applications in '08 totalled 408 (involving 846 dependants). Some 337 applications (687 dependants) were processed to completion (ie. report sent to Min. Justice). Top countries of origin of FR applicants – Iraq: 15%; Sudan: 11%; Nigeria: 10%; Somalia: 8%; Zimbabwe: 7%.

Separated Children (Unaccompanied Minors) - of 50 young people under 18 years referred to the HSE/ Separated Children's Unit in the months, Nov/Dec '08, some 17 were re-united with family and 29 placed in care. Some 9 'went missing from care' - Chinese (3 F/3M: 15-17 yrs), Nigerian mother & child (18 yrs/2yrs), Vietnamese (M:16 yrs).

Direct Provision: At 28 Dec '08, 6,250 people were resident in 52 centres (cap: 7,131) in 20 counties – included are 767 in Mosney; 200-300 in 10 centres (Athlone, Ballyhaunis, Clondalkin, Cork City, Galway x 2, Knockalisheen, Monaghan, Millstreet, Sligo) and 100+ people in 9 centres.

Self-Catering: Reduced to 5 Centres (Dublin (2), Ballaghderreen, Dundalk, Mallow). Cap: 537; Residents: 387.

Reception Centres – two, both located in Dublin (Stillorgan, Baleskin). Capacity: 459; Residents: 370.

(Statistics: Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Separated Children's Unit)

CHURCH

Directory of Migrant-led Churches and Chaplaincies, launched December 2008, shows the distribution of the 361 churches/chaplaincies across the island of Ireland, of which some seventy are Catholic chaplaincies involving communities from countries such as Brazil, France, Philippines and Poland. In the Foreword, Michael Earle, Gen Sec, Irish Council of Churches, welcomes the Directory as *a timely contribution to an ever-changing picture of new neighbours coming to live amongst us throughout this island. Some stay for a short time, some have already put down roots, some want to stay but are not allowed to. Each carries a unique story. Each brings a unique contribution...*

Available to download at www.iccsi.ie

Mayday! In response to 7 days (16-23 Jan '09) filled with tragedies suffered by boat people off the coasts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) called on governments, international institutions, civil society organisations & the media to respond with urgency and humanity to the plight of those involved. ICMC is working with Church organisations, UN and non-government partners to establish standards of protection and assistance for migrants and refugees suffering violence & trauma on these crossings.

- *ICMC applauds* the recent commitment of the Council of Europe to develop specific regional guidance for the consistent provision of first aid, recovery & referral services to all who need it after crossing the seas to Europe.

- *ICMC emphasises* the call of Catholic bishops to focus [also] on protecting rights along the way and even before the journey begins. As the US bishops urged Pres Obama, this includes addressing the root causes of migration, *so migrants and their families can remain in their countries of origin and work and live in dignity.*

Cf www.icmc.net Further info Mr. Marc Aellen, +41 22 919 10 20 - aellen@icmc.net

INTERNATIONAL, EU AND NATIONAL ISSUES

Human Rights Watch (HRW) – World Report 2009 – In relation to the situation in the EU, the report observes that *migration and asylum policies remain focused on keeping irregular migrants, including children, out of the EU, and removing those who are present rather than ensuring that their rights are protected.* EU migration policy continues to focus on border enforcement rather than human rights protection. Concerning the

European Pact on Immigration and Asylum (adopted Oct '08), HRW underlines concerns about its potential impact on the right to family life and the risk of return of people to a situation of persecution or ill-treatment. The study also highlights the deficiencies of the *Returns Directive* in that it permits the detention of irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, for up to 18 months & allows for a 5-year re-entry ban. **United Nations High Commission for Refugees** (UNHCR) - In the context of a meeting (13 Jan '09) of Interior Ministers of 4 Mediterranean countries, UNHCR emphasised that it is vital to ensure that States' border control measures and agreements do not block access to safety for those seeking international protection in the EU. UNHCR insisted that *people seeking asylum must...be allowed to disembark in a safe place, where they can receive information about their rights and have a genuine opportunity to file an application which will be considered in a fair procedure.* The *European Council on Refugees and Exiles* (ECRE) also emphasises that border management policies and operations of EU Member States must ensure full respect of the principle of non-refoulement at its external borders. (Cf ECRE Weekly Bulletin 16 Jan 2009 www.ecre.org)

Combating Racism and Xenophobia – This EU *Framework Decision* was formally approved at a meeting of EU Ministers at end-Nov '08. However, Member States still have 2 years to comply with the *Decision* which requires them to take steps to ensure that the following acts, committed intentionally, are punishable - *Public incitement to violence or hatred; public condoning of crimes of genocide; public denial of crimes targeting member(s) of a group defined by race, colour, religion, etc.* (Migration News Sheet, Dec 2008)

Migreurop - a European network of associations, activists & researchers, aiming at raising awareness regarding EU mechanisms for the exclusion of migrants and asylum seekers - in a letter (20 Jan '09) to the European Council and Commission - expressed concern about lack of transparency in negotiations of readmission agreements. *Migreurop* notes that it appears that the EU *exploits the economic dependence of certain non-member countries to ensure that they collaborate with their migratory policy through the signing of a readmission agreement.* (Cf ECRE Weekly Bulletin 23 Jan 2009 www.ecre.org)

The Spanish Refugee Council (CEAR), noting that asylum applications in Madrid airport decreased by 60% in 2008 compared with 2007, has expressed concern that this decrease is due mainly to failure to grant people seeking asylum the right to enter the country and to access the asylum procedure. (ECRE Weekly Bulletin, 9 Jan 2009)

The **EMBRACE N. Ireland Fact Sheet 2008 on *Crossing the Border***, contains background info, *commonsense principles* and a list of NI organizations from which immigration advice can be obtained. The *Fact Sheet 2008* and *Embracing Diversity: EMBRACE Information Update 2008* can be accessed at www.embraceni.org

RESOURCES

Unity in Diversity In our Churches: *a resource to assist parishes/ congregations with the integration of new residents into their faith communities and Irish society*, produced by the Parish-based Integration Project (PIP), Bea House, Milltown Park, D.6 & Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues (ICCSI). Hardcopy - PIP: adrian@iccsi.ie Online - www.iccsi.ie

LIVING IN IRELAND – A guide for new residents, produced by Crosscare Migrant Project, this multi-purpose info source will be helpful *before, during and after moving to Ireland.* Cf. www.migrantproject.ie or www.crosscare.ie

KADE Development Education Photopack, consists of 70 photos exploring development themes in Ireland. The photos, in PDF format on CD-Rom (€20), can be printed and laminated. E-m. info@kade.ie/Tel 066 7181358

Challenge to Change - A Development Education Project in Presentation Schools, 2007-2008, includes migration-related issues. Info re project/publication: Sr Margaret Mary Healy - preseduc@eircom.net Tel 01 4509430

Encounters with Islamic Theology – eight week evening lecture series 26 Jan-June 29, 2009, 7pm, at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) hosted by Irish School of Ecumenics/TCD. Info - Jane Welsh Tel 01 8961297 & jwelch@tcd.ie

Fostaigh Programme - Information and Support Unit (ISU), Waterford, assists people seeking asylum/refugees with right to work and on Social Welfare Payment to access employment. To register, contact ISU: 051 852564

TO PONDER

Many families, or one or more members, migrate because they cannot live with dignity in their own country or society. To support themselves and their families, people get employment in jobs that necessitate mobility. Undocumented or irregular migrants, in particular, leave their country without their whole family, with the intention of sending remittances back home. Since they are all a resource to the societies where they work, regardless of their legal status, it is their due to have their problem of temporary or prolonged family status resolved.

Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People – Concluding Communiqué: Congress, May 2008

For further info on items in this newsletter, contact Sr. Joan Roddy, Refugee & Migrant Project Director
SANCTUARY can now be accessed at www.catholicbishops.ie/refugees



