

† Sanctuary †

A bi-monthly newsletter on asylum, refugee and migrant matters from a religious perspective
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No. 53, 31 March 2008

OVERVIEW

Asylum Applications: Jan (329) and Feb '08 (296) totalled 625 (including 38 re-applications).

First Instance: Of 814 applications processed in Jan-Feb '08, some 80 people were recognized as refugees at *first instance*, some 683 applicants were refused and 50 applicants were returned to have their case processed in the EU country to which they first arrived (cf. Dublin Conv/Regulation). In this 2 month period, some 222 applicants had their cases processed under the *prioritized* category and 2 of the applicants were recognized as refugees.

Appeal Stage: Of 265 *Substantive Appeals* processed in Jan-Feb '08, 32 appellants (12%) were recognized as refugees – that is, a refusal decision at *First Instance* was overturned.

Top countries of origin (CO of asylum applicants 2008) - Nigeria: 27%; Iraq: 7%; Pakistan: 4%; China: 4%; Georgia: 4%; Somalia: 4%. When number of applicants is small, info on CO is not provided.

Backlog of unprocessed cases at 29 Feb '08: 4,514 (*First Instance*: 1,212; *Appeals*: 3,302)

Family Reunification: New applications in Jan-Feb'08 totalled 61 (involving 102 dependants).

Some 36 applications (68 dependants) were processed to completion (ie. report sent to Min. Justice).

Removals – Of 152 removal (deportation) orders signed in Jan-Feb '08, some 89 orders were issued. A total of 22 people (14 in Jan; 8 in Feb) were removed from the State.

Separated Children (Unaccompanied Minors) - of 66 young people under 18 years who came to Ireland in the 2 months, Jan-Feb'08, 42 were united with family and 24 taken into care.

Of 41 *separated children* who went missing from the care of the HSE in 2007, 12 were accounted for.

Direct Provision: At 16.03.08, 5,919 people were resident in 52 centres in 20 cos. (cap: 6,843) –751 in Mosney; c.300 in Athlone, Cork (Kinsale Rd), Ballyhaunis; 200+ in 5 centres; 90-190 in 13 centres.

It is important to note that while the number of *Direct Provision* centres and occupancy levels are being increased by the Dept of Justice, self-catering accommodation is being reduced.

Self-Catering: 8 Centres (Dublin (5), Ballagherreen, Dundalk, Mallow). Capacity: 668; Residents: 494

Reception Centres: (2) - Dublin (Stillorgan, Baleskin). Capacity: 459; Residents: 294.

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

CHURCH

ComECE Migration and Asylum Working Group, meeting in Brussels on 14 Feb last, was addressed by a representative of the French Government who presented the priorities of the forthcoming French Presidency of the EU (July-Dec 2008) in the field of migration and asylum. Particular focus will be on finding effective ways to cooperate with third countries and on policy coherence. The enhancement of the powers of the European border control agency (FRONTEX) is a priority, as well as the introduction of biometrics in the context of the EU Visa Information System. France is also monitoring the discussions on the 'return directive' but is totally opposed to regularization programmes. The *European Pact on Immigration*, to be presented at the outset of the Presidency's mandate, will aim at creating a set of *common principles* on management of migration issues to be accepted by all Member States. In the field of asylum there will be an effort to move from *minimum principles* to *common principles*. Since France favours a common EU policy, an interministerial conference on asylum will be held in Sept '08 in an attempt to reconcile the differing perspectives on asylum of Member States.

INTERNATIONAL, EU and NATIONAL ISSUES

From Words to Action -The Iraqi Displacement Crisis and the Role of the European Union - theme of a conference organised by international NGOs (Brussels, 19 Mar '08) to urge the EU to acknowledge the scale and urgency of the crisis. The event shed light on the humanitarian crisis of Iraqis displaced within Iraq and in the region. For targeted people who have to flee Iraq, it is impossible to reach Europe legally as there are no embassies accessible to apply for visas. Therefore, Iraqis in need of protection have to flee to neighbouring countries or to be smuggled to Europe at high security risks and financial costs. Judith Kumin, UNHCR Representative, emphasised that Iraqis who

access Europe represent a small minority - 2.7 million Iraqis are internally displaced (IDPs) and 2 m. are displaced in the region, especially in Syria and Jordan. UNHCR calls on EU States to increase the number of resettlement places and advised against returns to Iraq as the situation has not stabilised.

(ECRAN Update, 21 Mar '08 www.ecre.org)

The European Council meeting (13 March '08) predicted that climate change will lead to considerable migration movements. A report to the meeting noted that within a decade "there will be millions of environmental migrants". Some countries already badly hit by global warming are demanding that this relatively new phenomenon be recognised internationally as a valid reason for migration. The report warns that global warming will lead to "significant potential conflicts" over energy resources in the coming decades. Those conflicts are likely to cause important forced displacements of populations.

(ECRAN Update, 15 Mar '08 www.ecre.org)

EU Long Term Residency Directive (LTR) – the European Commission has proposed an amendment to the LTR Directive which would extend its scope to refugees and persons with subsidiary protection - both groups are excluded in the current Directive. UNHCR recommends that time spent in the asylum procedure be included in the calculation of the five-year qualification period and that LTR should also cover people with "temporary protection".

Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008 www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2008/0208/B0208D

Responses to the draft Bill have already been made by a wide variety of organizations including the UN High Commission for Refugees, Irish Human Rights Commission, Irish Refugee Council, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Jesuit Refugee Service and many other NGOs and Churches concerned with the rights of migrants and of people seeking asylum in Ireland. In its response, the Churches' Asylum Network (CAN) highlighted: *Lack of statutory provision for family reunification; Insufficient protection for trafficked persons; Increased powers of detention; Absence of clear and comprehensive immigration policies and procedures and lack of an appeal mechanism for review of immigration decisions; Restrictions on access to benefits and services for persons in an irregular situation.* (CAN, facilitated by the Refugee & Migrant Project, includes in its membership some 35 Church/Community groups).

RESOURCES

Behind The Veil - Speaking from Muslim Women's Perspectives - Conference, Fri 28 Mar, 9am - 4pm, Walton Theatre, Trinity College, D 2. Book: womenconference@hotmail.co.uk - 085 1377499.

Religion and Belief in Changing and Diverse Societies, Tues 8 April, 12.30 – 17.00, Renehan Hall, South Campus, NUI Maynooth, organised by Dept of Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth. The seminar is free. Book: Maura Haughney at appliedsocialstudies@nuim.ie before 4 April

Intercultural and Anti-Racism Week, 7 - 14 April. Send details of events planned - for inclusion on *Integrating Ireland* website - to Liam Quigley, Integrating Ireland - Immigrant Network, Tel 01 475 9473 ext.20; E-m: info@integratingireland.ie - www.integratingireland.ie

Funding and the Strings Attached - Community Sector Conference - Wed 30 April, 11am-1.15pm, ATGWU Hall, Mid Abbey St, D 1, initiative of Migrant Rights Centre Ireland *et al*, will include a research paper by Brian Harvey on the funding of the community sector. Cf. info@mrci.ie

More Responsive Public Services- A guide to commissioning migrant and community organizations - a recent report, by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, looks at migrant networks as service providers to migrants. Cf info@jrf.org.uk

TO PONDER

...on the whole our contemporary society of liberal democracy has ceased to function as an efficient reflector of change – and therefore as an engine of greater social progress. This leaves great responsibility with civil society, and in particular with that large ethical subset of it, the human rights movement. The Conference in Dublin showed how much this community has in common with the Church. ... There is nothing to stop the Catholic Church and leading human rights groups from entering into a dialogue ... for the purpose not of achieving spurious agreement where there is none, but rather for the development of a shared position on those points on which both sides agree.*

Conor Gearty, Common Cause, The Tablet, 15 March '08

* Conference - *Who is my Neighbour?* - organized by Irish Commission for Justice & Social Affairs, Croke Park, 18 Feb '08

For further info on items in this newsletter, contact Sr. Joan Roddy, Refugee & Migrant Project Director
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