

Sanctuary

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

Asylum Applications for the two months - July (339) and Aug '08 (333) - totalled 672.

(included are some 4 re-applications in July and 7 in Aug). The 2008 monthly average for new asylum applications up to end-Aug is 309.

First Instance: Of 714 applications processed in May/June '08, some 53 applicants were recognized as refugees at *first instance*, some 637 applicants were refused and 45 applicants were returned to have their case processed in the EU country to which they first arrived. (cf. *Dublin Convention/Regulation*). Of some 180 applications processed under the *prioritized* category, two were recognized as refugees.

Appeal Stage: Of 390 *Substantive Appeals* processed in July/Aug '08, 65 appellants were recognized as refugees – that is, a refusal decision at *First Instance* was overturned. In the same period, some 32 applicants withdrew their appeal.

Top Countries of Origin of new asylum applicants in 2008, up to 30 Aug: Nigeria: 26%; Pakistan & Iraq: 6%; DR Congo: 5%; Georgia: 4%.

Backlog of unprocessed cases at 30 Aug '08: 4,690 (*First Instance*: 1,232; *Appeals*: 3,458)

Family Reunification: New applications in July/Aug '08 totalled 62 (involving 127 dependants). Some 71 applications (140 dependants) were processed to completion (ie. report sent to Min. Justice).

Separated Children (Unaccompanied Minors) - of 59 young people under 18 years referred to the HSE/ Separated Children's Unit in the months, July/Aug '08s, some 31 were re-united with family, 27 placed in care. In July, one referral, a Chinese (female) 'went missing from care' and one referral was 'inappropriate'.

Direct Provision: At 7.09.08, 6,290 people were resident in 52 centres (cap: 7,145) in 20 counties – included are 704 people in Mosney; c.300 in Athlone, Cork (Kinsale Rd), Ballyhaunis; 200+ in 7 centres; 80-180 in 20 centres.

While numbers of people applying for asylum have decreased, capacity and numbers resident in *Direct Provision* centres increase. At the same time, capacity & occupancy in *Self-Catering* facilities have decreased.

Self-Catering: 6 Centres (Dublin (3), Ballaghdereen, Dundalk, Mallow). Capacity: 620; Residents: 350.

Reception Centres – two, both located in Dublin (Stillorgan, Baleskin). Capacity: 459; Residents: 271.

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

CHURCH

NOT JUST "MIGRANTS": BUT BROTHERS AND SISTERS: National Directors (CCEE – Commission of Bishops' Conferences of Europe) from 21 European countries, responsible for pastoral care of migrants, met in Vienna from 12-14 September 2008. The theme of the meeting was *African migrants in Europe and in the Church: pastoral responsibilities*. Leaving aside how African migrants may have arrived in Europe, the participants insisted, they must always be treated as human beings, as brothers and sisters ... Also highlighted was Europe's responsibility to promote justice and cooperation in the development of the poorest nations.

Included in the meeting's ten *Recommendations* was a call to the Catholic Church in Europe to *express itself with perseverance as a moral point of reference and to address an explicit appeal to national governments, European political opinion-makers and intergovernmental bodies in defence of the unconditional and universal respect of migrants' human dignity*. (Details on www.ccee.ch)

EU AND NATIONAL ISSUES

Report on asylum-seekers and immigrants in the UK - Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, on 18 September last, presented the first of three memoranda, focusing on asylum and immigration in the UK, in which he said *Improvements must be introduced to strengthen effective respect for the rights of asylum-seekers and immigrants in the United Kingdom*. Based on recent visits to the UK by the Commissioner, the memorandum addresses among other issues the special needs of children and the administrative detention of asylum seekers. It also strongly criticises UK authorities for practising forced returns, on the basis of diplomatic assurances, even to countries known to use of torture.

Cf. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/news/2008/September/20080923.htm>

Access to Protection at Airports in Europe -

This recently published report (*Sept '08*) is an overview of the findings and conclusions of a project by the NGO Hungarian Helsinki Committee entitled *Monitoring asylum seekers' access to territory and procedure at European airports - exchange of experience and best practices*. The project, in which six refugee-assisting NGOs took part, examines best practices and common areas of concern with regard to asylum seekers in six European Airports - Amsterdam, Budapest, Madrid, Prague, Vienna & Warsaw. Included in the report (available in English) are recommendations on how the right to seek asylum could be better protected in Europe.

European Pact on Immigration and Asylum - Justice and Home Affairs Ministers from the 27 EU Member States have now agreed on the Pact which was initiated by the French Presidency. The Pact has five main objectives: organising legal migration, controlling irregular immigration, reinforcing border control, creating comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and building a Europe of asylum. It envisages the harmonisation of different asylum practices in the EU and the resettlement, on a voluntary basis, within the EU, of people under the protection of the UNHCR. It includes a strengthened responsibility (burden)-sharing provision for those Member States which are faced with specific and disproportionate pressures on their national asylum systems. The Pact is scheduled to be adopted by EU Heads of States at the 15-16 October 2008 European Council in Brussels. (ECRAN Update, 12, 19, 26 Sept 2008 www.ecre.org)

Direct Provision (DP) – The Irish Refugee Council (IRC), in its pre-Budget submission, is asking that the DP weekly payment to people seeking asylum be increased from €19.10 to €65 for adults and from €9.60 to €38 for children. The IRC is also supporting the campaign of the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) for Child Benefit to be a universal payment for children. Cf www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Increase in Fees for Immigration ID cards – For non-EU/EEA migrants, including students, registering with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), there has been a 50% increase in fees from €100 to €150. This is in addition to annual fees for a work permit (€500) and for an annual re-entry visa (€100).

RESOURCES

Refugee and Migrant Project news on new website of the Bishops' Conference - www.catholicbishops.ie/refugees

BULLETINS: Comhlámh - elink@comhlamh.org; NCCRI - www.nccri.ie; MCRI - www.mcri.ie; Integrating Ireland - info@integratingireland.ie; Refugee Information Service - wale.mogaji@ris.ie

Inter-cultural Insights – Christian reflections on racism, hospitality and identity – available on www.irishchurches.com www.embraceni.org Hardcopy: Inter-Church Centre, 48, Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ; Refugee and Migrant Project, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

ATD Fourth World/UN Day for Eradication of Poverty - 17 Oct, '08, 11am, Famine Memorial, Custom House Quay, D.2. Info - 17october@eircom.net; 01 8558191; ATD Fourth World, 31 Mountjoy Sq, D.1

MAMA '08 – Media and Multicultural Awards recognize the people, groups, events, companies and institutions that embrace cultural diversity in Irl. Closing date for entries: 17 Oct '08. www.mamaawards.com

Human Rights, Human Dignity: Health and Housing - Amnesty International Conference - will explore the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights and how human rights can be used to inform social policy and service delivery - 20 & 21 Oct 2008, Davenport Hotel, Lr Merrion St, Dublin 2 Em. conference@amnesty.ie

Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral Immigrant Support Committee's Conference - exploring theology, immigration and asylum. *Speakers:* Rev Prof. Michael Conway, *Maynooth* and Rev Dr Annes Nel, *Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, Bangor, N Ireland* - Thurs 13 Nov '08, 10am - 4pm, Clarion Hotel, Lapps Quay, Cork. Register - Email: revnigeldunne@eircom.net or Tel 021 4963387

TO PONDER

Advocacy is part and parcel of pastoral care and strives to press forward ethical decisions on Migrants and their families in accord with the teachings of the Church. ... A solid theology of migration is necessary so that responses to Migrants and Refugees are not just actions, works, deeds, activities and services that we perform, but a new way of Being Church. ... We can raise our unified voices on behalf of Migrants and Refugees ... to advocate for effective institutional responses. ... We can work together to strengthen the legal and normative framework of international migration to ensure the protection of migrant rights.

Info on Human Development, Jan/June '08 - Newsletter of Office for Human Development of Asian Bishops' Conferences

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



