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The overwhelming majority of irregular migrants make a valuable economic contribution despite living under the shadow of illegality

Inside this issue

May saw the passing of the UK Border Bill through Parliament, the seventh major overhaul of the immigration and asylum process since 1993. Jon Cruddas MP tabled an amendment to the UK Borders Bill on behalf of the Still Human Still Here Campaign. The Joint Committee of Human Rights also makes several recommendations in its report on the human rights implications from the UK Borders Bill. Further details are provided below.

Early Day Motion on the ‘Strangers into citizens campaign’

At the end of April, Jon Cruddas MP introduced an Early Day Motion congratulating the Strangers into Citizens campaign for the one-off regularisation of long-term irregular migrants:

That this House recognises the Government's commitment to tighten UK borders and introduce new monitoring and assessment systems into the immigration process; notes the Home Office assessment that up to 500,000 irregular migrants currently live and work in the UK; further recognises that the overwhelming majority of (irregular) migrants make a valuable economic contribution despite living under the shadow of illegality; acknowledges the Institute for Public Policy Research estimation that regularisation of certain groups of migrant workers could raise £1 billion in taxes; congratulates the Strangers into Citizens campaign for the one-off regularisation of long-term irregular migrants through a pathway to citizenship; and calls for a full cross-party debate to consider granting a two year work permit to migrants who have lived in the UK for more than four years, following which they would be granted indefinite leave to remain, subject to an English test and positive references from an employer or person of standing in the community.

Read EDM 11371 at:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=33150&SESSION=885>

The *Strangers into Citizens* campaign proposes that irregular migrants who have lived and worked in the UK for four or more years be granted a two-year work permit. At the end of those two years, subject to employer and character references, they should be given leave to remain. Find out more about the campaign at <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk>

The UK Border Bill

The Bill is currently passing through Parliament and includes measures for biometric registration, treatment of claimants, enforcement and removal of criminals. Jon Cruddas MP tabled an amendment to the UK Borders Bill on behalf of the Still Human Still Here campaign. The amendment would have given those who have been refused asylum access to financial and housing support whilst they appeal their decision or wait to be returned to their country of origin, thus preventing them from becoming destitute. Although the amendment was not called by the Speaker, the campaign will continue to pursue it in the House of Lords. It is expected the UK Borders Bill will have its Second Reading in the Lords on 13 June.

The bill includes measures for biometric registration, treatment of claimants, enforcement and removal of criminals.

<http://www.jrseurope.org/publications/FebMar%20Web%202007.pdf>
<http://www.picum.org>

Joint Committee on Human Rights – UK Borders Bill

The Committee makes several recommendations in its report on the human rights implications from the UK Borders Bill.

- The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) codes of conduct should apply to immigration officers who have the authority to exercise police type powers.
- The Bill should be amended to include a timeframe for the Secretary of State to decide on an automatic deportation action.
- Amendments should be made to prevent and end destitution among asylum seekers.
- The report states that UASC suffer a lower level of protection in relation to a range of rights compared to other children and that more should be done for this group. It is suggested that the Immigration Service and Immigration Removal centres be required to have regard to the needs and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when discharging their functions and providing services.

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200607/jtselect/jtrights/105/10504.html

European migrants who opt to stay need more help, says Joseph Rowntree survey

Only a third of newcomers knew how to register with a doctor, and just over half knew about their rights to work and access services.

Eastern European migrants who have no plans to settle in Britain permanently when they arrive often change their minds within months of coming here, according to new research. Only 6% of those surveyed planned to remain in the UK for good when they first moved here. But just under a quarter had decided to stay by the time they were interviewed for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a year or so later. But the report's authors warned that a "short-sighted" assumption that there is no need to help temporary residents settle into life in the UK is causing problems for service providers and discouraging integration. Less than half of the central and eastern European immigrants interviewed said they had been told about their rights and responsibilities, and public service providers were also confused about their entitlement. Only a third of newcomers knew how to register with a doctor, and just over half knew about their rights to work and access services.

Immigration figures 'are false'

Rise in immigrants is placing greater pressure on Council services

Councils say the government's statistics are seriously underestimating the total influx and they need more money to cope. Councils are so concerned that official figures are failing to record the true number of migrants entering their area. Although the Office for National Statistics plans to improve its methods for tracking immigration, critics say the new way of counting migrants was equally problematic. Councils in and around the capital claim the rise in immigrants is placing greater pressure on services and is starting to have an impact on their finances.

<http://society.guardian.co.uk/asylumseekers/story/0,,2068724,00.html>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6652671.stm

Curtailing undocumented migrant's access to services

The government is planning to curtail undocumented migrants' access to public services such as housing, benefits and health care, and to private services such as banking. John Reid, the Home Secretary, said that "living here illegally should become ever more uncomfortable and ever more constrained," while the Home Office minister, Liam Byrne, claimed that "we need to switch off the privileges of being in Britain if you are here illegally". The deportation of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants will also be stepped up. Source: (Solidar Migration Bulletin, Issue 4, 28 February 2007, pp.6f)

"Living here illegally should become ever more uncomfortable and ever more constrained"

As part of its efforts to "crack down on illegal migrants" the Home Office has published a brochure explaining its "strategy to ensure and enforce compliance with our immigration laws." Basically, this is an agenda focused on creating a closer network of information on individual immigrants by the authorities, of more controls and a stepping up of "detection and removal."

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/6353/aboutus/enforcementstrategy.pdf>

Statistics regarding self-harming behaviour

The National Coalition Of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) has published figures stating that every other day a detainee incarcerated in a UK Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) makes an attempt at self-harm, serious enough to require medical treatment. In the 10 months from April 2006 to January 2007 there were 176 such attempts, one incident every 1.7 days. In the same period, 1,643 detainees were put on 'Formal Self-Harm at Risk.' Detainees and campaigners believe the actual numbers are a lot higher. The NCADC reports that since 2000, 47 asylum seekers/migrants have taken their lives in the UK: 10 in immigration removal centres, 6 in prisons, and 31 in the community.

Every other day a detainee incarcerated in a UK IRC makes an attempt at self-harm

<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/resources/self-harm2006.html>

Policy News

Court of Appeal rules on duty of support for failed asylum seeker

The Court of Appeal has issued a judgement in the case of Regina (AW, A and Y) v Croydon London Borough Council and Another. The Court found that the duty to provide for an able-bodied destitute failed asylum-seeker, for whom the provision of support was necessary to avoid the breach of his or her rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, fell upon the Secretary of State for the Home Department whereas, the duty to provide for an infirm destitute failed asylum-seeker in such circumstances rested upon the local authority. Lord Justice Laws said that the division of responsibility for the support of asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers was a difficult and contentious area. Find out more about this judgement at:

The division of responsibility for the support of asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers was a difficult and contentious area

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/law/reports/article1774827.ece>

Court of Appeal rules on right to marry in UK irrespective of immigration status

The Court of Appeal has ruled against the Home Secretary by upholding the right of non-European nationals, who are in genuine relationships, to marry in the UK irrespective of their immigration status.

www.irr.org.uk/2007/may/ks000020.html

The Home Office has published research on: 'Asylum Statistics: 1st Quarter 2007 – United Kingdom'.

- Total applications for asylum in the UK fell by 1% from previous quarter and were 12% lower than quarter 1 2006 (excluding dependents)
- The most frequently represented nationalities by applications were Afghanistan, Iran, China, Somalia and Eritrea.
- Of initial decisions, 15% were to grant asylum, 10% were to grant humanitarian protection or discretionary leave, 75% were refusals.
- Five regions with highest number of asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation were Yorkshire & Humberside; North West; West Midlands; Scotland and North East.

For more details go to:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/asylumq107.pdf

Liberty challenges unnecessary imprisonment of asylum claimants

The European Court of Human Rights sought to determine if the detention of asylum seekers for administrative convenience violates their right to liberty.

Liberty, the AIRE Centre, and the European Committee for Refugees and Exiles have intervened in Saadi v. the United Kingdom to argue that the detention of asylum seekers who are not suspected of attempting to make an unauthorized entry is unlawful. The challenge claims that depriving any individual of their liberty can only be legally justified when it is necessary rather than convenient. For further information please see:

<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/news-and-events/1-press-releases/2007/detention-of-asylum-seekers.shtml>

The detention of asylum seekers who are not suspected of attempting to make an unauthorized entry is unlawful

Church challenges government over failed asylum seekers

The Church of England is joining calls for the Government to end the destitution of people refused asylum in Britain.

The Archbishops' Council revealed its intention today to join the 'Still Human Still Here' campaign, run by a coalition of church, refugee and asylum organisations to highlight the plight of thousands of refused asylum seekers in the UK.

www.christiantoday.com/article/church.challenges.government.over.failed.seekers/10872.htm

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Citizens Enquiry

A national 'citizens enquiry' into the UK asylum system this week heard evidence of major flaws in the way that vulnerable asylum seekers such as children, torture survivors and the disabled are treated in the UK.

www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk/files/23.05.07.pdf

Support to practitioners:

Launch of the London Churches Refugee Fund

On 17th June the London Churches Refugee Fund will be launched to provide help to destitute asylum seekers. The fund will raise money to help destitute asylum seekers and will work primarily through church-based organisations to respond directly to their needs. Find out more at:

<http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/520>

DVD offers advice for young asylum seekers

A DVD is available offering advice for young asylum seekers. For more information see:

http://www.stv.tv/content/news/main/display.html?id=opencms:/archive/news/20070122/Advice_for_young_asylum_seekers

Advice Guides

The Refugee Council has launched their newly revised “Support Pack”. This is a free and online resource providing helpful tips on dealing with situations arising from the asylum process.

The pack provides information to help advisers assist asylum seeking and refugee clients. The support pack includes sections on the UK asylum process, the asylum support system, educational and employment entitlements, accessing healthcare and what to do after receiving a decision on an asylum claim. The support pack also provides a comprehensive contact list for advisers in Greater London, East of England, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside.

It is especially useful for advisers working in community groups or advice agencies across the country.

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/asylum/supportpack>

Refugee Week 18 – 24 June 2007

Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK and encourages a better understanding between communities.

For listings of special events to mark the day worldwide, please see www.unhcr.org/events/3e7f46e04.html

*Information to help
advisers assist asylum
seeking and refugee
clients*

*Refugee Week 18 – 24
June 2007*

Campaigns

In support of the Still Human Still Here campaign, a series of sleep-outs across Britain have been organised for the end of June. These events are a way of raising awareness locally and targeting local media and politicians.

For more information:

www.refugeecouncil.ork.uk/gettinginvolved/campaign/just_fair/summersleep_outs

Reports and Publications

The Human Rights Act 1998 (Meaning of Public Authority) Bill has been published.

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/joint_committee_on_human_rights/jchrrpn37_22_0507.cfm

The Hammersmith and Fulham Refugee Forum's CRE (Council for Racial Equality) funded Media Project has been evaluated by ICAR (Information Centre about Asylum & Refugees). The report illustrates how the Media Project in Hammersmith & Fulham has impacted on press and broadcast coverage of asylum and refugees.

www.hfrf.org/pdf/HFRF_Media_project_evaluation_report_May_2007.pdf

Amnesty International has published its annual assessment on human rights worldwide: 'Amnesty International Report 2007'.

<http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/launchpack-eng>

Upcoming Events

No Recourse to Public Funds Conference

The British Red Cross and the NRPf Network are hosting a conference to look at the issues facing both voluntary and statutory services. The conference is aimed at both senior managers and policy makers with the intention to:

Improve outcomes for people who are destitute with no recourse to public funds.

To generate dialogue between central government, local authorities and the voluntary sector, on the issues of welfare and care that arise for people with no recourse to public funds.

To improve mutual understanding and working relationships between local authorities and the voluntary sector in respect of destitute persons from abroad who have no recourse to public funds.

Conference to look at the issues facing both voluntary and statutory services

For further information, please contact Hugo Tristem on

htristem@redcross.org.uk or 02078777290.

For further information, please contact:

<http://www.islington.gov.uk/nrpfnetwork> or e-mail nrpf@islington.gov.uk or tel. 020 7527 7101

NRPf Network C/o Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service, Islington Council, 299 Hornsey Road, LONDON N19 4HN