

women's asylum news

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The number of trafficking victims claiming asylum and going through the appeal court system has dramatically increased over the past year. A number of the most notable decisions have been reported in previous issues of Women's Asylum News.

In such cases, the most commonly used Geneva Convention category, is that of 'particular social group' (PSG), a category which has always been one of the hardest to make out and which, particularly in trafficking cases, has become increasingly complex and narrowly defined. In light of this, some of the comments of the Tribunal in the recent Reported decision in JO Nigeria [2004] UKIAT00251, should be welcomed as a refreshing recognition of the need to go back to basics on the PGS argument.

The case involved a 17 year old Nigerian victim of trafficking. She had been refused asylum, but granted limited leave to remain. Her refugee appeal was dismissed by the Adjudicator. A key material point in the appeal to the Tribunal was the Adjudicator's finding that the appellant was not a member of a PSG. The Tribunal found that, on the particular facts of the case, although the appellant would be at serious risk of persecution on return to her home area, internal flight was a viable option. It was not therefore required to make an explicit finding on her membership of a PSG, although it did accept it as 'arguable' that women in Nigeria formed a PSG. However, it went on to make valuable comments in relation to two key issues commonly arising in trafficking cases.

Particular Social Group not to be 'defined' by persecution itself

**'Particular Social Group' not to be interpreted narrowly
Tribunal says**

Firstly, in relation to the PSG category, the Tribunal noted the following:

"In our view, their Lordships made it clear in that judgment (Shah & Islam [1999] 2 AC 629,) that the PSG category should not be interpreted too narrowly" (IAT, para.18).

The Immigration Appeal Tribunal (IAT) flagged up the point that the increasing narrowing down of the PSG increases the danger of falling into the trap of actually defining the group by reference to the persecution suffered, (e.g. 'trafficked girls in x society'). It is a core aspect of the PSG category that it cannot be 'defined' by the persecution itself.

For the Tribunal, the ultimate question is simply this: 'In the society, are there legal and social measures sufficient to demarcate women a particular social group?' Significantly, it noted that the discrimination need not necessarily be as extreme as in the Shah & Islam case in order to succeed. Indeed, it stated that, in its opinion, "too little regard has been paid to the fact that all that was required in Shah & Islam (per Lord Hoffman) was the existence of legal and social conditions which were discriminatory against women" (para. 18).

Tribunal acknowledges increased risk of re-trafficking for victims of trafficking

Secondly, the Tribunal clearly acknowledged that already having been a victim of trafficking could increase the risk being re-trafficked in the future, at least in the area from which they were originally trafficked. Referring to a report by the appellant's social worker, the Tribunal commented:

"We are prepared to accept, on the basis of her own experience of cases of young girls in the UK who have been trafficked that there is for such persons, an increased risk of re-trafficking" (para.22).

Whilst the notion that past persecution can increase vulnerability to future persecution has generally been acknowledged in other refugee case law, it is useful to have explicit acknowledgment from the IAT in the context of victims of trafficking. It is likely that this trend towards 'narrowing down' has occurred primarily because Adjudicators have often been reluctant to allow a case on a broad PSG category. This is despite the Shah & Islam definition of 'women in Pakistan' as a PSG and despite the clear acknowledgment of Court that not all women in a particular society need to be at serious risk of persecution in order for women in that society to form a PSG for the purposes of the refugee Convention.

Hopefully, the words of the Tribunal will not only be taken on board by grateful legal representatives, but also by the Adjudicators and Tribunals as they face an increasing number of trafficking victims before them as appellants in 2005.

related publications **Draft Report of the Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings (October 2004) available in PDF online:**

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/crime/forum/docs/26102004_draft_report_en.pdf. Also: "Hidden Slaves: Forced Labor in the United States" published in September 2004 by Free the Slaves and Human Rights Centre, University of California, Berkeley. See: www.hrcberkeley.org/download/hiddenslaves_report.pdf.

RWRP news

Women talk publicly about their ordeal in detention in the UK

Over 50 people attended a public meeting held by the Refugee Women's Resource Project (RWRP) and Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) in the House of Commons on 19th October 2004, to discuss their recent report "They took me away: women's experiences of

immigration detention in the UK.¹ Debora Singer, RWRP's Coordinator and Sarah Cutler, BID's Research and Policy Officer presented the findings and recommendations of the report.

War on asylum

In her speech, Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, welcomed the report as it focuses on people who are particularly vulnerable – women, in immigration detention, who are asylum seekers, the most dehumanised group in our society. She described the 10-year war on asylum in the UK – an assault on the concept of international protection that was formerly seen as a positive one. She described the recent measures taken in this regard including more draconian visa regimes, carriers' liability, forced destitution, prolonged detention, fingerprinting, criminalisation of asylum seekers, electronic tagging and restricted access to the legal process.

Shami noted that women and children were particularly vulnerable in detention. Conditions do not meet humane standards – for example, the lack of hygienic facilities for looking after babies and the use of violence in removals. A two-stranded strategy is needed to break through the hostility of political parties and the media to asylum seekers. Firstly, campaigners need to give a human face to the people who suffer this ill treatment (as in this report). Secondly, the link needs to be made between foreign policy and asylum policy. It appears that war can now be justified on the basis of human rights abuses committed by foreign regimes. However, when victims of these same abuses seek refuge in the UK, they are often turned away. Campaigners should expose this contradiction.

Shami concluded by encouraging groups to work together, including with those outside the

refugee sector, citing an example of successful partnership working between Liberty, Shelter, Save the Children and others who jointly intervened to regarding Section 55 of the Immigration and Asylum Act.

Experiences of detention

Two of the women who had been interviewed for the research made very moving contributions. Ida told the meeting about when she was taken into detention. Her case had been refused and her solicitor had asked for discretionary leave. She went to report to the Immigration Service and was taken to another room, searched and questioned. After 15 minutes she was told a final decision had been made – she was to be detained and removed. Crying, Ida described how worried she was and how she suffered as she was then taken in a van 'like a criminal' to Tinsley House having spent a whole day at Immigration. After her transfer to Yarl's Wood she finally managed to contact Black Women's Rape Action Project who helped her and gave her hope, and she was released. But she is still asking 'what did I do wrong? I was tortured and I came to ask for protection'. The government does not realise what people are suffering.

Annie from Cameroon told of how she was five months pregnant when she was picked up and taken into detention. Under stress, she started bleeding and was taken to hospital for a week – where the care was better than in detention. Then she was taken back to detention where she stayed another month until she was released. She described how she gets no support for herself and her baby. She has to report to Immigration regularly, but every time she goes she is afraid she will be deported. She said it is very difficult for women in detention – some women are detained for a year or more.

A third refugee woman reported that her appeal to stay in the UK was still being

¹ A copy of the report can be found at www.asylumaid.org.uk, then click on 'Publications'. Also available at www.biduk.org.

considered when she was sent papers for removal. She was picked up and taken to Oakington with her 10-month-old baby. She had no belongings with her, not even milk for the baby. It was a hot day, and the van driver ignored the women and children crying in the van. She said they were treated like prisoners. At the detention centre no suitable food was provided for her baby – only chips. When the baby was sick no medical help was given for two days. She ended by saying 'we are people like you – don't treat us this way. This is a civilised country!'

End routine detention

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, supported all the report's recommendations. He stated that routine detention should be ended and the detention of people who are mentally ill or pregnant should be stopped. He said that the use of prisons for detention was outrageous as asylum seekers have committed no crime and he was concerned about plans to expand detention facilities. He pointed out that the Home Office and Foreign Office have no adequate tracking mechanisms to ascertain what happens to people who are returned. Finally he stated that a strong challenge to Home Office country assessments is required.

The discussion from the varied audience reflected the concerns of the speakers: A refugee woman spoke of having been detained with her two-year-old child; a participant from the Children's Society spoke of a Roma family who had been removed that morning despite their disabled child still undergoing medical treatment here; a representative of Women Against Rape pointed out that women are easy targets as they take their children with them when they go to report; a solicitor commented that the Legal Services Commission require a four page form for solicitors to get legal aid to attend detention centres - this serves as a deterrent and suggests there is an agenda to restrict legal advice.

There was a suggestion that people should write to the Immigration Minister referring to

the report, copying their correspondence to their MP.

Maurice Wren, Asylum Aid's Coordinator, encouraged those with evidence of the effects of the legal aid cuts to provide information for the dossier which Asylum Aid and BID are compiling. For more details, see www.asylumaid.org.uk/Policy/CALACpresentation.htm.

related publication **New Directory of Experts on Detention Conditions Worldwide** published by the Immigration Advisory Service's Research and Information Unit (September 2004). It contains contact details and brief description of over 60 organisations and experts who have expert knowledge on detention conditions in 37 countries around the world. See: www.iasuk.org/C2B/document_tree/ViewACategory.asp?CategoryID=41

related event **Training course: 'Bail applications: How to challenge detention'**, organised by ILPA and Bail for Immigration Detainees on 1st December 2004, 4.00pm - 7-15pm. For further details see: www.ilpa.org.uk/. To book, email: info@ilpa.org.uk.

Other UK news

New Home Office measures to fight forced marriage

The Home Office is planning to launch a consultation later this year on whether to create a specific criminal offence of forcing someone into marriage.² Other measures include the set up of a joint Home Office – Foreign Office Forced Marriage Unit which will provide information and assistance both to potential victims and professionals. At the

² See Foreign Office Press Release, 'New measures to tackle forced marriages', 27 October 2004 at www.fco.gov.uk.

same time the minimum age for marriage entry clearance will be raised from 16 to 18 and an extra clearance officer based in Islamabad. S/he will assist those who have been abandoned in Pakistan by their partners and have a right to return to the UK as well as help reluctant spouses.

These measures follow existing work (which started in 2000) with public agencies, the voluntary sector and community leaders to raise awareness of forced marriage and encourage victims to seek support and advice. Nearly 1,000 cases of suspected forced marriages have been dealt with since 2000.³ Currently those guilty of forcing someone into marriage can be prosecuted for kidnap, false imprisonment or rape. Whilst the measures are welcomed, the voluntary sector is concerned that they will not protect women and girls fully.⁴ Refugee Community Organisations are encouraged to take part in the consultation process to ensure adequate protection measures are adopted.

NASS Policy bulletin on Travel expenses and Reimbursing Essential Travel Costs revised

The revision took place on 2 November 2004. See:

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/applying/national_asylum_support/policy_bulletin/travel.html.

UK project & events

New groups for Albanian and Turkish young women asylum seekers and refugees

YWCA Doncaster is running these two new groups following the set up of a group for

Turkish women in January 2004.⁵ Many of them have had traumatic experiences, which means they lack confidence and find making friends and trusting others very hard. They live secluded and in isolation, and often face prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives.

The project offers an opportunity for them to go out and meet others in a safe place. More than 50 women come regularly, to benefit from the support offered. They meet and make friends and have enjoyed courses in aromatherapy, reflexology, personal safety and the driver theory test. For more details, telephone 01302 309800 or visit online: www.ywca.org.uk/

'What is Beijing +10?' info meeting

Beijing +10 is a UN world conference on women's human rights, which will take place in New York in February 2005. Government representatives will report on how far they have met their commitments on women's human rights.

This information and networking meeting on Friday 3rd December (1-3:30pm, lunch included) aims to raise awareness of Beijing +10 and enable more women to get involved, especially those from groups that have so far been marginalised in UK involvement in Beijing+10. Venue: Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ. Nearest tube: Vauxhall (Wheelchair accessible, hearing induction loop in use). See: www.wrc.org.uk/currentissues.htm.

related project **London Feminist Network: Day of Discussion on Women's Rights** sharing information with individuals and women's rights groups on the state of women's rights today. Contact London Feminist Network c/o Linda on 020 7265 9307.

³ See BBC News, 'Law on forced marriages pondered', 27 October 2004, online at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3956399.stm>

⁴ Refugee Council, in *RCO news*, Issue No. 8, November 2004.

⁵ Source: YWCA Newsletter, Issue 10, Autumn/Winter 2004/5.

Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS World AIDS Day 2004

The Mayor of London in association with Zimbabwe Women's Network-UK and the African HIV Policy Network are pleased to invite you to a half-day event on 6 December 2004 (9.30am to 1.00pm followed by lunch). This event is for women's organisations, HIV/AIDS service organisations, refugee community organisations, health professionals, women living with HIV, policy makers with an interest in women's health. Participants will have an opportunity to hear the voice of women living with HIV in London and devise personal and organisational strategies to mitigate the negative social, psychological and economic impact of HIV in London. The event is free and takes place at City Hall, The Queen's Walk SE1 2AA. Please reserve a place before 29 November by calling Iris Belli on 0207 983 4511 or email iris.belli@london.gov.uk.

African women's mental health matters

is a one day conference organised by Akina Mama wa Afrika and taking place on Tuesday 14th December 2004 from 9.30am to 5.30pm. Issues that impact on African women's mental health in the UK will be examined, including: Asylum/Immigration, Sexual Trauma, FGM, Infertility, Trafficking, Displacement, Conflict, HIV and other health issues. Cost: £25. Venue: Methodist International Conference Centre, 81-103 Euston Street, London NW1 2EZ. Tel: 020 7691 1438/43. Tube stations: Euston Square and Euston. Buses 73, 30, 10, 68, 91, 253.

'Women refugees - from volunteers to employees'

is a Workshop Discussion on the results of a research project by Working Lives Research Institute and the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit researchers at London Metropolitan University examining refugee women's paid and unpaid work in the voluntary sector and the role of volunteering

as a pathway into employment. The workshop will address the issues central to volunteering practices and policies in the voluntary sector focusing on refugee women. A summary report will be launched too. When: Tuesday 7 December from 1.30 pm. Venue: The Women's Library, Old Castle Street, London E1 7NT (Aldgate East tube). See also: www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk.

Please confirm your attendance with Anna Wojedwozki on 020 7133 4238 or email A.Wojedwozki@londonmet.ac.uk

related project **Encouraging refugees and asylum seekers into mainstream volunteering** is a series of three seminars organised by the Volunteering and Asylum Project in London to provide a unique opportunity for refugee organisations, volunteer agencies, funders, policy makers and funders to meet to exchange experience and ideas, and network. For more information email volunteering@tandem-uk.com, visit www.tandem-uk.com, or phone 0113 2686222.

Celebrating diversity: Creating Unity conference

The Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture is organising this conference on 11 December 2004. It focuses on theoretical and practical approaches to working effectively with refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced torture or organised violence. Contact Paula Robinson, probinson@torturecare.org.uk or telephone 020 7697 7824.

See also Mind's conference on 3rd December, 'Reaching for sanctuary: providing good mental health services for refugees,' London (one day). Starting at 9.30am the conference will focus on good practice and legal duties. Full information at: www.mind.org.uk/Information/Conference+and+training.

Concert gathers international artists in aid of Darfur refugees

The UNHCR is bringing together several internationally known singers and musicians for a December 8 'Refugee Voices for Darfur' concert at London's Royal Albert Hall in aid of refugees and displaced people from the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan (start: 7.30pm) Tickets will go on sale on Saturday 20th November: Box Office 020 7589 8212 or online at www.royalalberthall.com. The event will also be released on CD and DVD. For more information on the concert or the Darfur crisis see: www.unhcr.ch/press-releases.

UK training & courses

Women into Leadership course for Refugee Women

The Mosaada Centre for single women is organising two residential weekend courses that provide leadership training, coaching and consultation to refugee women seeking to effect change within their community and professional organisations. Dates of the training are:

26 to 28 November 2004 and 25 to 27 February 2005. For more details, contact Brenda Anthony on 020 7247 7111 or email brenda@mosaada.org.uk.

Free two-year training course in research skills for African women

The African Educational Trust has devised a two year free training course for African women in community based research skills 'Researching the Needs, Presenting and Representing Women in the Community'. The course will train participants to conduct action research and present and articulate research findings and use them to advocate on behalf of African and refugee women at the community, local, regional and national level. There are places for 30 participants. If you are interested please contact May Omona, Project

Co-ordinator, Africa Educational Trust, 38 King Street, London WC2E 8JR. Telephone: 020 7836 5075/7940, fax: 020 7379 0090 or email: m.omona@africaeducationaltrust.org.

International news

Nigerian woman sentenced to death by stoning acquitted

Two Nigerian women have been recently sentenced to death by stoning for having sex out of wedlock. Hajara Ibrahim, aged 18, was promised in marriage but then agreed to a relationship with another man who said he would marry her. She became pregnant and has been accused of adultery. She argued that she was not already married, in which case her conviction should instead be for fornication which does not carry the death sentence. On 10 November she was acquitted and discharged after the Dass Upper Sharia Court delivered its judgement. According to Baobab, "the Sharia court Judge Mustaphar Umar upheld the five grounds of appeal raised before the court by the counsels to Hajara; Barrister Abdulkadir Suleiman and Barrister Ndidi Ekekwe from BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights."

Another woman, Daso Adamu has also been accused of adultery but claims that her last child (of 3) was fathered by her ex-husband and not by another man. Her appeal was heard on 3 November and the case has been adjourned to 2nd December 2004 for judgement. Both sentences were imposed in the northern Islamic state of Bauchi, Nigeria, but no stoning has yet been carried out in Nigeria since Sharia law was implemented in 12 Northern states in 1999.⁶

⁶ BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights at www.baobabwomen.org/press.html and AFP, 27/10/04, 'Pregnant Nigeria teenager appeals against stoning sentence', at <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/041027/323/f5fhq.html>

related action Join the *Feminist Majority's* online petition⁷ and urge Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo to take immediate action to prevent these atrocities from occurring:

http://capwiz.com/fmf1/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=6540626

Pakistan: Victims still at risk of honour crimes under new Criminal Law Amendment Act

Pakistan's National Assembly adopted the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004 at the end of October, amending sections of the Pakistan Criminal Code of 1860 to include penalties for honour crimes. Hundreds of women are killed every year in Pakistan for alleged misdemeanours such as adultery, marrying without the family's consent, pre-marital sex or having been raped, with many cases going unreported.

This is the first piece of legislation to specifically mention honour crimes, which in the case of murder will now carry a minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum of 25 years in prison. However, commentators have pointed out that this change does nothing to confront the issue of impunity for perpetrators of these crimes, as, like all offences against the human body, they come under the law of Qisas and Diyat (retribution and blood-money). These are offences where the offender can seek forgiveness from the heirs of the murdered person. The heirs can forgive the perpetrator in the name of God, without receiving compensation, or can do this after receiving it.

In the case of honour crimes, where the perpetrator is often a member of the victim's family (commonly brother, husband or father), this means that forgiveness is often granted

⁷ Information circulated by Women's Human Rights Net, www.WHRnet.org, 14 October 2004.

and no punishment meted out to the offender. Families of poor victims are under pressure to accept a sum of money in compensation to settle the matter, the murderer then going free. According to campaigners, impunity has been the single most important factor encouraging honour killings in Pakistan. As the Criminal Law Amendment Bill does not address this issue, victims will continue to be at risk.⁸

New family law courts to deal with divorce in Egypt

Egypt's personal status courts, criticised by women activists, have been replaced by new family law courts. The 224 new courts, with about 1,200 judges, will deal with the approximately million cases each year concerning divorce, alimony, child custody and paternity. Divorce cases will now be handled by a single court, rather than a possible three under the previous system, which often caused significant delays and barriers to women.⁹

South Africa: Plans to bring new legislation into line with UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons

The South African Law Reform Commission is investigating new legislation to bring domestic law on trafficking into line with South Africa's obligations under the United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. It is hoped that legislation will be in force by 2006. Commentators have argued that offences within trafficking are already covered by existing legislation, but a Commission spokesperson disagreed, noting for example that currently, "*victims of trafficking are being arrested and prosecuted for offences committed as a direct result of their being trafficked. A victim who has entered the country without valid documentation can be charged under the Immigration Act. Similarly,*

⁸ Asian Centre for Human Rights, 27/10/04, Cultural Cruelties: Confronting honour killings, at <http://www.achrweb.org/Review/44-04.htm>

⁹ Womens Enews, 30/10/04 at www.womensenews.org.

a victim who was forced into prostitution by her traffickers can presently be prosecuted for prostitution."

Trafficked victims in South Africa are deported without prior investigation to establish whether protective systems are in place in their countries of origin, to ensure that they are not returned to the same circumstances that made them vulnerable to being trafficked in the first place. There is also a lack of information on the size of the problem and numbers of people affected.¹⁰

AI report reveals high levels of violence against women in the Solomon Islands

Amnesty International have released a report describing the high levels of rape and other violence against women in the Solomon Islands where perpetrators have not been brought to justice. Women are scared to report crimes to the police, who are often the offenders, as they fear revenge attacks, and are often discouraged from reporting by male relatives. Despite the end of five years of civil war, violence against women continues, particularly domestic violence. Nearly 200 rapes were reported in the 6 months to June this year. Amnesty is calling on the government to take urgent action on the problem, starting with forming a national strategy to combat violence against women.¹¹

Pro-reform women journalists arrested in Iran

Two Iranian women journalists have been arrested in the last few weeks in connection with their work for pro-reform websites. Mahboudeh Abbasgholizadeh, the editor of

¹⁰ IRIN, 19/10/04, 'SOUTH AFRICA: Caution urged over new human trafficking laws'

¹¹ AI Press release, 7/11/04, at <http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGASA430022004>. See the report at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa430012004>

Ferzaneh, a magazine about women's issues, was detained on 1st November on her return from London, where she took part in the European Social Forum. Police searched her Teheran home, confiscating her computer hard drive and other items. On 28 October Fershteh Ghazi, who writes about women's issues and who works for the daily Etemad (which means 'Trust' in Farsi), was arrested and reportedly accused of 'immoral behaviour', a charge often brought against political prisoners in Iran. Five other journalists have also recently been arrested on similar charges. The European Parliament has passed a resolution condemning their arrests.¹² See also the online petition 'Free Iranian woman journalist, human rights and civil society activist' at www.PetitionOnline.com/mahbobeh/.

related news Algerian woman journalist wins 2004 Courage in Journalism Award Salima Tlemcani is the pen name of a reporter for *El Watan* newspaper in Algiers who has covered armed Islamic groups in Algeria for more than 12 years reporting accounts of rapes and murders. She was put on a death list by the Armed Islamic Group (10 of the 22 journalists on the list were assassinated) and is currently battling several lawsuits and a prison sentence because of her reporting.¹³

Bangladeshi lawyer named UN rights expert on human trafficking¹⁴

Sigma Huda of Bangladesh was appointed as the United Nations Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on trafficking of persons, especially women and children. A long-time advocate against violence against

¹² Reporters without borders, 5/11/04, at http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=11793

¹³ Source and for more information on the award, see International Women's Media Foundation at www.iwmf.org/courage/.

¹⁴ Text edited from the following source: UN News Centre at www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=12425&Cr=traffick&Cr1=

women, she is the founder and current president of the Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association; the Secretary-General of the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights and a founding member of various organizations fighting against trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls. The Special Rapporteur is mandated by the Geneva-based Commission to recommend ways to uphold and protect the rights of the victims of trafficking.

UN urged to act on women, peace and security

The United Nations Security Council held a debate at the end of October where members discussed progress made since its Resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000, condemning gender-based violence and calling for a greater role for women in peace and security operations.

The Council issued a statement calling on the Secretary-General to produce an action plan by October next year detailing how the UN will achieve the goals of reducing violence against women and girls in conflict zones and giving women a much stronger voice in post-conflict peace-building processes. The statement called for a gender perspective to be part of every UN peace and security operation, and for greater support to be given to victims of gender-based violence.¹⁵

related publication Following Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), UNIFEM appointed two women independent experts to travel to conflict areas, interview women and bring their concerns to the attention of the

¹⁵ UN News Centre, 28/10/04, 'UNSC urges UN to act on violence against women in conflict' at www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=12380&Cr=women&Cr1. Amnesty International has highlighted the fact that since the adoption of Resolution 1325, less than 20 percent of Security Council resolutions include language on women or gender, and has urged the Security Council and the UN in general to ensure that the resolution is integrated into all relevant areas of its work. See Amnesty International News Release, 28/10/04, AI Index: ACT 77/078/2004.

United Nations and the world. The result is a report that highlights the gender dimensions of violence and displacement during conflict to the role of peacekeepers and the need for women to play a central part during peace negotiations and reconstruction. See: www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=149.

New portal on 'women, war and peace' website

UNIFEM has created this website with information from a wide variety of sources. It has links to reports and data from the UN system, and also from experts, academics, NGOs and media sources. The aim is to monitor the implementation of UN resolution 1325, and to provide information to encourage researchers, policy makers, analysts and NGOs so they can routinely include, seek and contribute more information and analysis on women, war and peace. See: www.womenwarpeace.org/.¹⁶

International events & actions

16 days of activism against gender violence november 25 - december 10 2004

The 2004 Take Action Kit of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership is now available in both electronic and hard copy form. For more, visit online:

www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/kit.html.

European campaign to combat domestic violence against women

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has expressed its extreme concern at the "*extent and escalation of domestic violence against women*" which it says concerns all Council of Europe member states.¹⁷ It

¹⁶ Information circulated by the European Women's Lobby, Newsflash, October 2004.

¹⁷ Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, Recommendation 1681 (2004) at <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta04/EREC1681.htm>. Other source:

recommends the organisation of a pan-European campaign on domestic violence in 2006 in cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, associations and NGOs; it also recommends that the Committee of Ministers draw up proposals for awareness-raising campaigns and the adoption of effective protection measures for each Member State at national level.

Training for women's rights leaders

Rights & Democracy, in collaboration with the Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre and WLUML is holding a number of training sessions for women's rights leaders in December 2004 in Pakistan. The trainings aim to provide the necessary resources to Afghan women's civil society to effectively engage in peace-building and women's human rights work. For more see: [www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd\[157\]=x-157-75336%20&cmd\[189\]=x-189-75336](http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[157]=x-157-75336%20&cmd[189]=x-189-75336)

Press statement on human rights violations re sexual rights in Muslim Societies

Women and men from across Muslim societies in South and South-East Asia have come together and issued a press statement calling upon their governments and the entire Muslim world to take all possible legal, social and political measures to eradicate human rights violations related to sexual rights and bodily integrity. For more see online:

www.wwhr.org/id_908

new publications

international

"Women's Rights in Focus: Egypt"

is a new report by Freedom House (October 2004) based on 16 focus groups conducted with a broad-cross section of the Egyptian

public in May and June 2004 in Cairo, Alexandria, and several villages in the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt. The research captured views from an equal number of women and men representing a wide range of education levels, from illiterate Egyptians to college graduates, and ranged in age from 20 to 65. The study finds that *"advances in women's rights remain blocked by Egypt's closed political system, inadequate public education, and a population largely disengaged from political life. As a result, men and women are poorly informed about women's rights. However, an ongoing media revolution led by the explosive growth of satellite television is helping to better inform Egyptians of women's rights, among other issues."* For more on the research and its authors, see online: www.freedomhouse.org/research/specreports/egyptwomen.pdf.

"Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass rape –Time for Remedies"

This new report by Amnesty International (AI, 26 October 2004) documents cases of brutal sexual violence inflicted on women, children and men, and highlights the lack of effective access to adequate medical care as one of the most pressing needs of tens of thousands of survivors. Based on horrifying accounts of the sexual violence survivors have suffered at the hands of warring factions and their struggle to obtain medical care, the report finds that in Eastern DRC there is a lack of trained doctors including specialists and a massive shortage of equipment and drugs. Victims of sexual violence have no means to seek justice and obtain redress for the crimes they have endured whilst social stigma attached to rape means they often suffer rejection by their communities. Full report online at <http://amnesty-news.c.topica.com/maacM9Jaba8v5ce3IxWb/>

Interights' bulletin 'Women's rights in the 21st century'

Source: European Women's Lobby Newsflash No. 11, October 2004.

Volume 14 Issue 4 contains articles on a range of issues ranging from the protection of women's rights in Africa, to the statutory provisions against 'honour killings' in Jordan; from the recent case law around forced sterilisation to women's rights in Sri Lanka. The issue also features a pullout section - 'International Law Reports' - which holds summaries of major decisions, concerning women's rights, in international tribunals applying international human rights law. (Source and for more information see: www.interights.org/news/default.asp#Bulletin%2014.3%20headline).

"Protecting Parents: Why Mothers and Fathers Who Oppose Female Genital Cutting Qualify for Asylum"

is an article by Marcelle Rice, a student at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, featuring in the November issue of *Immigration Briefings* (Vol 04-11, USA). The Briefing was researched during her work as a Law Clerk with the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS, USA). Source: DVasylum_updates@yahoo.com.

"Stop the Apartheid Wall"

is a publication by the Jerusalem Centre for Women (October 2004) which notes the results of a year long program that aimed to increase awareness of Palestinian women on human rights, violence against women, democracy and the importance of women's political participation. For more details on and how to obtain a copy, see online www.j-c-w.org/stop_the_apartheid_wall.htm.

Turkey: Shadow Report to CEDAW raises critical concerns

Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)-New Ways has submitted the report in July 2004 for Turkey's periodic review by CEDAW. The shadow report raises critical questions and concerns on the Turkish Government's official report regarding the implementation of

CEDAW in Turkey. The report is also endorsed by the Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code. More details at: www.wvhr.org/images/shadowreport.pdf

related publication Reservations entered by many states on their ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) render the convention "*practically meaningless and ineffective*", according to a new report by Amnesty International. The report looks at reservations put in place by states in the Middle East and North African region, but notes that many other states have also entered reservations, including the UK.¹⁸

new publications

UK

New FCO annual report highlights failure to protect women's rights in several countries

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) annual report sets out key human rights problems in countries over which it has the greatest concerns. These include the US (treatment of detainees in Iraq), Burma, Zimbabwe, Uzbekistan, Korea, Chechnya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Nepal, Indonesia and Sudan. Chapter 9 covers women's rights and children's rights, and several countries are criticised for, among other matters, their lack of legislation on or action against domestic violence and honour crimes. RWRP hopes concerns raised by the government in the report will be taken into account when the Home Office considers women's claims for asylum from these countries. Full text at www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Servlet?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1099139303196.

¹⁸ Amnesty International News Release, 3/11/04, AI Index: ACT 77/082/2004. Full report available at <http://amnesty-news.c.topica.com/maac05NabboFhce3IxWb/>

“A safe place to be? the quality of life of asylum-seekers in Sheffield and Wakefield”

This report, commissioned by two local authorities examines the experience of asylum seekers in terms of arrival, the induction process, their encounters with welfare services, their contact with local residents, and their hopes for the future. It highlights good quality services and personal kindness mixed with hostility, racism and the inadequacies of some welfare providers.¹⁹ Price £10/£4 to local refugee and community groups. Cheques payable to the University of Hull and sent to Social Research Papers, Social Policy, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX.

“Death Trap: The Human Cost of the War on Asylum”

The Institute of Race Relations' publication documents the deaths of 180 asylum seekers and undocumented migrants who have died either in the UK or attempting to reach the UK in the past fifteen years. Download the report at:

www.irr.org.uk/pdf/death_trap.pdf.

online resources

international & UK

New documents added to Forced Migration Online Digital Library

Over 750 additional documents collected from various sources, including The Refugee Studies Centre, Tufts University, The Women's Commission and the University of East London, have been added to the Digital Library. Check:

<http://fmo.geh.ox.ac.uk/fmo>

Please send any information that you would like to see published in our next bulletin by 13 December 2004 (see email or postal address on back cover).

¹⁹ Source: refed@yahoogroups.com. (ISBN 1 903704 23 5).

women's asylum news

Produced by RWRP (for more information on this issue, please contact Sophia Ceneda)
Asylum Aid, 28 Commercial street
London E1 6LS Tel: 020 7377 5123
Fax: 020 7247 7789
Email: sophiac@asylumaid.org.uk
Website: www.asylumaid.org.uk

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- Right to vote at the AGM
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