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Women's Asylum News

Women's Project at Asylum Aid

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Asylum Aid 25th Anniversary Celebration!

Wednesday 25 November 19:00-21:00

London, W1

Lead Article

The brutal and devastating hardship faced by the women at Calais

After 8pm on August 20, two women from Sudan arrived in Calais. One had a child with her; the other had two. They had been travelling for weeks and, upon arrival, made their way to the Jules Ferry Centre. Run from three military tents, this day centre hands out one hot meal per day and allows access to showers, toilets and electricity points for the thousands of people camped out in the sprawling tent city known as “the jungle”. It is heavily guarded and also contains beds for about 100 women and children.

Within seven weeks of the centre opening in April, all the beds were full. There are already 120 women and children there; volunteers say there is no space for a single extra body. As a result, around 200 women and children are sleeping rough among the 3,000 men in the jungle. This was the situation the two women from Sudan found. It was getting dark and there was nowhere for them to go. It was too late at night for volunteers from various aid organisations to provide them with tents to set up in the jungle. In the end, concerned volunteers made the decision to take them to a hotel for the night. The next day, they began their life in the jungle.

They were part of a growing number of women arriving in Calais, where migrants from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and elsewhere are camped out in desperate conditions, as they attempt to make it to the UK through the Channel Tunnel. The jungle, a kilometre-wide slum of rough sleepers and tents, sprung up over a decade ago, when the Red Cross refugee centre, Sangatte, closed down. It is beset by periodic phases of violence and unrest.

The world is currently in the midst of the worst global refugee crisis since World War Two: more than 50 million people worldwide are displaced. As a result, the number of people trying to access Europe has increased; so too has the number of women making these precarious journeys.

“It’s a catastrophic situation,” says Maya Konforti, who has volunteered at Calais for over a year with L’Auberge des Migrants. “Women are more vulnerable than men, especially when there are 200 women compared to 3,000 men. There is a lot of testosterone going around. They have to watch out for themselves and stick together. Women who are alone try to find a male protector, but that protection does not come for free. They don’t discuss it openly, but sexual favours go on.”

Everyone at Calais lives in dire conditions, but female migrants have a specific set of needs. Those who do not have access to the beds at the Jules Ferry Centre are sleeping in tents and, like the others camped there, do not have access to basic sanitation. Megan Saliu, a UK-based activist, set up the fund-raising campaign Supporting Sisters in Calais, to address some of these needs. “Our main concern is getting sanitary pads and basic toiletries out to the women, as well as nappies and wet wipes. But we are also taking useful supplies for men,” she says. “It’s a humanitarian crisis on our doorsteps. These

people are stuck. They can't go back."

Most people at Calais have undergone arduous, risky journeys and, having sacrificed so much, some are reluctant to admit what dire conditions they are living in. Some have paid smugglers substantial amounts along the way, others have made the trek on their own, which can be particularly dangerous for women. "The barriers for women fleeing persecution are specific to them as women. Once they do get away, the journeys they face are fraught with the danger around sexual exploitation," explains Debora Singer, policy and research manager at Asylum Aid. "We don't have exact figures, but a lot of women experience some form of rape or sexual violence on their journey to Europe. They might have to leave their children, which is extremely distressing, or they might have children with them who they are then trying to look after and protect."

A female journalist reporting on the crisis in Calais told me that a young Eritrean woman had begged her to take her six-year-old child, because it was too dangerous to attempt the final crossing to the UK – jumping into a lorry or climbing over fences – with a child in tow.

The Jules Ferry Centre was built after considerable pressure from charitable organisations. The French authorities, keen to appear tough on migration, are reluctant to expand the operation. "Over a hundred women and children have been living in the jungle for two months now," says Konforti. "It would take two days to build the prefabricated housing needed to shelter them. It's disgusting. It's illegal. That's what's so horrendous. The government sets the laws and doesn't even respect them."

By Samira Shackle, re-printed with permission from The Pool. Original article [here](#).

Sector update

Yarl's Wood: Home Office to review detention of pregnant women

The Home Office has pledged to review its policy and practices of detaining pregnant asylum seekers after having to give a formal apology and pay compensation to a Ugandan asylum seeking woman who was [unlawfully detained in Yarl's Wood](#).

Yarl's Wood, the notorious women's detention centre in Bedford, once again come under fire in August when the Independent Chief Inspector of Prisons published a [highly critical report](#) on conditions for vulnerable women within the centre, [calling](#) Yarl's Wood a "place of national concern". The report criticises Yarl's Wood for its failure to provide adequate access to healthcare for detainees, the long-term and unjustified detention of some particularly vulnerable women, and a lack of appropriate numbers of staff, including female staff, among other complaints.

The inspector noted that conditions had deteriorated in the centre since the last inspection was carried out, and criticised the fact that twice as many detainees had been released from Yarl's Wood back into the community as had been removed from the country following their detention in the last year – raising questions over the legitimacy of their detention, which is supposed to be used only when removal from the country is imminent.

Pregnant women in particular, the report noted, should only be detained in exceptional circumstances, but 99 pregnant asylum seekers were detained in the centre in the past year, often with no record kept of any exceptional circumstances that would have justified their detention. Only 10% of these pregnant women were eventually removed from the country.

The human rights lawyer and blogger, Colin Yeo, [noted](#) that in fact there is very little wrong with the guidance on detaining pregnant women that the Home Office aims to review: it states that pregnant women should not normally be detained unless it is justified by exceptional circumstances. The problem is that this guidance is not adhered to, leading to the unacceptable treatment of vulnerable women on a significant scale.

New Asylum Aid research project on women's asylum appeals

Asylum Aid is undertaking a new research project looking at how women's appeals are dealt with in the UK asylum process.

Nearly two thirds of initial asylum applications are refused each year by the Home Office. This research will explore how women asylum seekers navigate the appeals process, the extent to which current guidance is followed and what support is available to women as their case is heard at the first tier tribunal.

The researchers will undertake in-depth qualitative interviews with women who have been through the appeals process as well as legal analysis of their case files. In addition the research will involve the observation of tribunals and interviews with judges, Home Office presenting officers and supporting organisations.

Questions likely to be considered as part of the research are:

- How are claims based on gender-based persecution interpreted in relation to the Refugee Convention?
- To what extent is the role of women in their country of origin considered in determining their risk on return?
- What arrangements are made if women bring young children to the tribunal?

This research follows on from Asylum Aid's ground-breaking research on women's initial asylum claims, [Unsustainable: the quality of decision-making in women's](#)

[asylum claims](#) published in 2011. The findings published in Unsustainable led to changes in how the Home Office trains its decision-makers and the disaggregation of data on appeals results by sex for the first time.

The study is being run in partnership with [NatCen Social Research](#), an independent, not for profit organisation and is funded by the [Nuffield Foundation](#).

Significant Legal Issues

Successful challenge to DFT by vulnerable woman

On 5-6 October 2015 the Administrative Court was due to hear a challenge brought by a vulnerable woman to the decision to detain her in the detained fast track process (DFT) at Yarl's Wood. On 2 October 2015 the Secretary of State settled the claim, conceding that in light of a number of judgments where the DFT had been found to be unlawful the Claimant (C) had been unlawfully detained and agreeing to reconsider her asylum claim de novo without regard to the negative credibility findings in the SSHD's decision to refuse her asylum claim and the FTT [First Tier Tribunal]'s determination dismissing her appeal in the DFT.

C's claim for asylum is a gender based persecution claim as a woman who had married without the consent of her family to a man of a different caste. She had suffered threats and violence at the hands of her family in her home country and was unable as a woman to obtain protection from the authorities in her home country. She voluntarily attended the ASU [Asylum Screening Unit] on 8 July 2013 and was detained and routed into the DFT. She had a lengthy asylum interview with a male Home Office caseworker and interpreter and was extremely distressed throughout the interview. She met the legal representative allocated to her by the Home Office on the morning of the interview and there was very limited time for the representative to take instructions and advise her before the interview started. Her claim was refused the following day and she was refused legal aid for her appeal.

She was without legal representation until a family member arranged private representation. The barrister for her appeal was instructed the day before the hearing. The representatives had not completed their investigations into the case and applied for an adjournment on the day of the hearing on the basis that they needed more time to prepare the case, to obtain witness, medical and other evidence. The FTT refused to adjourn the appeal and counsel had to go ahead on the basis of incomplete evidence. Having to simultaneously prepare an application to adjourn and the substantive appeal was an aspect of the mischief of the FTT fast track procedure rules identified in the

second claim brought by Detention Action challenging those rules. The FTT rejected C's credibility, making adverse findings on the basis of the lack of certain evidence and dismissed her appeal. Applications for permission to appeal were rejected by the FTT and UT [Upper Tribunal] and she exhausted her appeal rights.

C subsequently instructed new representatives who submitted new evidence and further representations. C's mental and physical health deteriorated dramatically during detention and in particular after her claim was refused and she faced expulsion. These judicial review proceedings were issued in August 2013 and originally challenged a decision to reject further representations as well as to her continued detention. Permission and interim relief were refused on the papers; a renewed application for interim relief was refused at a hearing, the focus of the case at that time being on her deteriorated physical health due to food/fluid refusal. Thereafter, C instructed Bhatt Murphy. Further representations and evidence, including medical evidence of both her psychiatric state and scarring on her body, were put in together with amended grounds challenging the determination of her claim in the DFT and her ongoing detention. The Secretary of State released C on 31 October 2013 and the claim was subsequently stayed by consent pending the Detention Action litigation. During the stay, the Secretary of State granted C discretionary leave for 30 months due to her deteriorated mental health.

In C's case it was argued that she was entitled to de novo consideration of her asylum claim by the Home Office rather than a fresh claim given that the previous determination had been in the context of the unfair DFT process. She was a vulnerable applicant, within the meaning of the judgment of Ouseley J in Detention Action 1 and as defined in the order in JM v SSHD, whose claim could not be fairly decided within the constraints of the DFT. The RLC case makes clear that an asylum applicant is entitled to fairness at each stage of the process and an appeal is not an adequate remedy if the claim has been refused in an unfair process, particularly if the basis of the refusal is adverse findings on credibility.

Anonymised copies of the letter which led to settlement and the sealed final order are [available](#). The case may be of interest to other representatives as C relied on a submission that the Secretary of State could not rely on a FTT determination decided under the 2005 Fast Track Rules, which were stricter than the 2014 rules found to be unlawful in the second Detention Action claim challenging the vires of those rules. Further, the Secretary of State admitted that detention was unlawful after the DFT had concluded and C was detained pending removal.

The Claimant was represented by Stephanie Harrison QC and Bryony Poynor of Garden

Court Chambers and Jed Pennington of Bhatt Murphy. She was also assisted by Medical Justice who provided the key medical evidence that led to her release and grant of discretionary leave to remain.

National News

The Immigration Bill 2015—changes to accommodation and financial support (asylum support) for asylum seekers—How will it impact on women?

By Alice Webb, Women's Legal Advisor at the Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP)

The Government is planning major changes to the asylum support system in the UK. These changes are outlined in the Immigration Bill 2015, currently making its way through Parliament.

This article looks at the effects of the proposed changes on women asylum seekers who have had their asylum claim refused.

Removing support from families with children who have their asylum claim refused

The presence of children within a household significantly increases the stresses and hardships associated with destitution. In 2014-15, the vast majority of parents who we represented in appeals against the refusal or removal of asylum support were female single parents. This pattern was mirrored in calls to our advice line. Women, as the primary caregivers of children are likely to be disproportionately affected by the removal of support from refused asylum seeking families and this will compound the high prevalence of physical and mental health problems in this group. In 2014-15 more than one in three (36%) of the people we represented at appeals had physical or mental health problems. There is no doubt that women's ability to provide secure and consistent care and support to their children will be reduced.

Preventing pregnant women from accessing support if they have had their asylum claim refused

In 2014-15, we represented 178 women at the Asylum Support Tribunal and 84% of these appeals related to refused asylum seekers. 14% of women appellants were pregnant at the time of the appeal. The proposal to remove the possibility of support from this group will leave pregnant women destitute during one of the most vulnerable periods of their lives. Pregnant asylum seeking women already have very poor maternal outcomes and the removal of this avenue of support will inevitably impact negatively on mothers and

babies.

In 2014-15, 10% of women that we represented at the Tribunal said they had experienced either domestic violence or trafficking in the UK. We believe women under-report these issues to our advocates, so the actual prevalence of abuse and exploitation may well be higher.

We represented a pregnant woman experiencing domestic violence from her former partner and father of her child. He had told her he wanted a DNA test to be undertaken when the child was born and, if it was his, he would seek to remove the child and would try to get the mother deported. She won her appeal and was able to access safe accommodation away from him.

The provision of section 4 support offers women who may be at risk from abuse a route into safe accommodation and support. Without this potential escape route, more women will have to live in abusive situations.

Removing the right to appeal asylum support decisions from refused asylum seekers

The vast majority of the women that we represent at the Tribunal are refused asylum seekers who have a genuine obstacle to returning to their country of origin. In most cases this is due to their attempts to put in 'further submissions' to the Home Office or because they are physically unable to take a journey home without facing serious risk of harm. Many are highly vulnerable and have complex personal circumstances the Home Office fails to address when making paper-based support decisions. The opportunity for an oral hearing at the Tribunal gives these women an opportunity to explain their circumstances and have their situation explored more fully and fairly.

For example, we represented a woman who had been trafficked into prostitution in the UK. She had eventually escaped from her traffickers and claimed asylum. She left a subsequent abusive relationship after having a child and started to receive asylum support. When her mental health deteriorated her child was taken into temporary care by the local authority. With the support of mental health services she began a recovery, but her asylum claim was refused and the Home Office took the decision to remove her support just at the point when the local authority were working with her to try to return her child to her care. The Home Office were aware of these circumstances when they tried to remove her support. Fortunately, a Tribunal judge accepted the professional evidence that she had a very high suicide risk and was incapable of taking steps to return home; and that the Home Office had not taken into account the best interests of the child when making its decision. Her support was safeguarded as a result.

In 2014-15, 65% of refused asylum seekers represented by ASAP had their original Home Office asylum support decision overturned. The proposal to remove an asylum support appeal right from refused asylum seekers will result in many more women and children facing destitution – and it will allow the Home Office to make poor and, in some cases, unlawful decisions without being held to account.

The Asylum Support Appeals Project provides free legal representation and advice to asylum seekers who are appealing against Home Office decisions to refuse or discontinue their asylum support. We also operate an advice line for advisors working in this field, provide training across the UK and pursue policy work. We have a specialist women's project which undertakes this work.

For further information please visit: asaproject.org

International News

A tale of two treaties

Two new European conventions will strengthen the rights of women seeking asylum.

The *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* ([Istanbul Convention](#)) has been ratified by many member states.

The tenth ratification (by Andorra) triggered its [entering into force](#) in August 2014. The UK signed the Convention in March 2012 and is expected to ratify it although there is no clear timeframe.

The *European Union Directive on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime* ([Victims' Directive](#)) comes into force on 16th November 2015.

What do both these legal treaties mean for women seeking asylum?

The rights of women seeking asylum are all too often missed out of national and international protocols and strategies – as the [Women's Asylum Charter](#) campaign to close the [Protection Gap](#) demonstrates. The Istanbul Convention is the first international protocol that makes the connection between the issue of violence against women and the protection of women seeking asylum. More recently [General recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women](#) was published by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)) which also makes the link between violence against women and asylum.

Both the Istanbul Convention and the Victims' Directive acknowledge that women have the right to protection from violence against women regardless of their immigration status. This means they can be seen to apply to women asylum seekers.

The Istanbul Convention

The Istanbul Convention creates a comprehensive legal framework and approach to combat violence against women. It states that in promoting and protection women to live free from violence in the public and private sphere and condemning discrimination, states should provide such protection without discrimination on any grounds, including “migrant or refugee status, or other status”.

Indeed the Istanbul Convention has two articles specifically about the rights of women seeking asylum. Article 60 focuses on gender-based asylum claims. Article 60(1) requires Parties to have necessary legislative measures in place to ensure that gender-based violence may be recognised as a form of persecution. The [EU Qualification Directive](#) provides such a measure, and more informally the *Asylum Policy Instruction on gender issues in the asylum claim* ([UK gender guidelines](#)) does.

Article 60(2) requires that the reason for persecution (the Convention Ground) is interpreted in a gender-sensitive way. This covers both the motivation of the persecutor or, in the case of persecution from non-state agents, the reason for the absence of state protection. Again this is clear in the UK gender guidelines but not having this area in legislation may make it harder to enforce.

Article 60(3) is very wide and requires Parties to provide gender-sensitive reception conditions, support services and asylum procedures.

Article 61 reiterates the principle of non-refoulement already in the [Refugee Convention](#) to ensure that victims of violence against women who are in need of protection should not be returned to any country where their life would be at risk or they might be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.

The Victims' Directive

Meanwhile, the Victims' Directive states that rights must be applied to victims of crime “in a non-discriminatory manner, including with respect to their residence status”. Whilst the Victims' Directive focuses on provision for victims where the crime is committed in an EU member state, it is possible to make a read-across to victims of similar crimes in non-EU countries who claim asylum in EU countries.

In terms of specifics to support victims of crime, the Victims' Directive requires states to:

- Provide information about the process in detail appropriate to specific needs, personal circumstances and type of harm (Para 38)
- Provide trauma support and counselling for victims of gender-based violence Article 9.3 (b)
- Protect victims against the risk of emotional and psychological harm and protect the dignity of victims during questioning Article 18
- Have interviews conducted by one person Article 23.2 (c)
- Have interviews of survivors of gender-based violence conducted by a person of the same sex as the survivor if they so wish Article 23.2 (d)

These factors are clearly as relevant to women going through the asylum process as to survivors of gender-based violence going through the criminal justice system.

Significance for women seeking asylum

The two treaties therefore have particular significance for women seeking asylum.

The Istanbul Convention recognises that in protecting women from VAWG women seeking asylum must be included.

The Victims' Directive provides rights to victims of crime which include women victims of gender-based violence and this can be interpreted to include women seeking asylum.

It is to be welcomed that through these two treaties the rights of victims of crime includes the rights of victims of gender-based violence AND the rights of victims of gender-based violence includes the rights of women seeking asylum.

UNHCR: Situation deteriorating for Colombian women

UNHCR has [warned](#) that the situation for women in Colombia has continued to deteriorate, with women at risk of violence from all parties to the armed conflict ongoing in the country.

Women who are human rights defenders or who are in leadership roles are at particular risk in Colombia, according to UNHCR, and this is getting worse as women become more visible actors in public life and are increasingly being heard speaking out on human rights issues. The report emphasises that women human rights defenders have been targeted, subjected to violence, harassment and intimidation and, in many cases, killed in a systematic and deliberate fashion.

Sexual violence is widespread and used in a strategic manner by paramilitary and guerrilla groups across Colombia and has also been recognised as being used as a weapon of war. Sexual slavery within the FARC and other para-military groups remains an issue of unknown scale, while children, including young girls, are at risk of forced conscription to armed groups.

The report highlights the high risk of re-victimisation and the failure of the state to offer protection to women. It also emphasises that women cannot necessarily find safety by relocating within the country, as the groups that targeted them are usually represented in displacement areas, both rural and urban.

Colombian women have also described a fear of reporting incidents of violence, rape or harassment for fear of retaliation and because of a lack of trust in the authorities.

Women and children still face risk of trafficking, domestic violence and forced marriage in Albania

The Home Office has published an updated [Country Information and Guidance note](#) on trafficking victims from Albania. The guidance recalls that the February 2010 judgment from the Upper Tribunal in the case of [AM and BM](#) designated Albanian women who have been victims of trafficking as a particular social group in Albania, who may face persecution on those grounds and thus be entitled to refugee status in the UK. The majority of those trafficked from Albania are women and children, who are primarily kidnapped and forced into sexual exploitation.

The guidance note explains the improved efforts that have been made by the Albanian authorities to combat trafficking, including increasing the severity of sentencing for perpetrators, and establishing a shelter for women at risk of re-trafficking in the capital, Tirana. The guidance emphasises, however, that protection in Albania is not always fully effective and a decision of whether to grant protection to Albanian victims of trafficking must still be based on an examination of the individual circumstances of the applicant.

According to the [statistics](#) published by the Home Office for the second quarter of 2015 (April to June), there is an extremely high turnover of negative decisions on Albanian women's asylum applications. Half of all appeals lodged by Albanian women that received decisions within this time period were allowed, pointing to an unusually high rate of error in such cases on the part of Home Office decision-makers. There are also concerns over a lack of available female asylum interpreters for Albanian language.

In the Home Office report, factors such as level of education, social standing and economic position of the applicant and their family can be significant factors in determining whether they will be safe from re-trafficking if returned. There is also a risk of family rejection of a woman who has been trafficked because of the stigma facing women who have extra-marital sex, even in the context of rape. If the victim has a child outside of marriage, there is a risk of the child being rejected or even abandoned by the family. Although the guidance notes that "honour" killings are now very rare in Albania, this can also be a risk facing women who have been forced into the sex trade.

Amnesty International has also released a [statement](#) on the situation for marginalised groups in Albania, which notes that domestic violence, including murder, is still very prevalent in the country. There is a failure to implement protection orders and impunity for law enforcement officers who engage in abuses of women. Forced marriage can be another route through-which Albanian women become victims of trafficking.

UNHCR: Internally displaced women and children at particular risk in Ukraine

UNHCR has published an [update](#) on protection considerations in Ukraine that concludes that internally displaced women continue to face a severe risk of sexual and gender-based violence. The report raises concerns over the fact that the particular vulnerabilities of women due to their gender are not recognised in Ukrainian laws and policies on internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Not only are women at severe risk of sexual violence during and after displacement, but there are also reports of displaced women being forced to rely on transactional sex with soldiers in exchange for material support, protection, or money.

Once displaced, women and children are at a heightened risk of becoming victims of trafficking, as being cut off from support networks and family ties makes them more vulnerable both socially and economically.

There are difficulties with birth registration in some IDP camps, resulting in a risk of statelessness for babies born in the camps.

UK Training and Events

Nominations for UNHCR Women on the Move Awards now open

The Women on the Move Awards celebrate the extraordinary contributions of migrant and refugee women working at grass-roots level to improve their community. The

women will be celebrated at an awards ceremony in London in March. [Nominations are now open](#) for both woman of the year and young woman of the year.

Therapeutic yoga lessons for refugee women

[Ourmala](#) are offering free therapeutic yoga classes for refugee and asylum seeking women living in London. Attendees will have their travel costs covered, be offered a free hot lunch, English lessons and help to access other services and educational opportunities. Regular yoga practice can help women who have experienced atrocities to

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum



Endorsements: 364

Google group membership: 166

New Women's Project at the Lewisham Refugee and Migrants' Network

The [Women's Project @LRMN](#) strives to take a holistic approach in its work with refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant women by offering both practical and emotional support to suit their individual and changing needs. Through **Advocacy work** we help women to address their welfare, housing, education and asylum/immigration issues.

1-1 Counselling offers a safe platform where ladies can offload and explore traumatic experiences they've had in their lives. For many of the women it will be the first time they've been given the space to talk about what they've been through in the past, what their lives are like in the present, and their hopes for the future. Additionally, our weekly **Women's Group**, gives its members the chance to try new things, learn valuable skills and gain the confidence with which to scaffold the building of their new lives in the UK. It is an opportunity to socialise and make friends, and to be a part of a community.

Our clients have not only been faced with the conflict and/or persecution in their country of origin which has forced them to flee, but have also all-too-often been subjected to some form of gender-specific violence, either before leaving their country, during their passage to the UK or since having arrived here.

In addition to common symptoms such as disturbed sleep, chronic anxiety and depression, PTSD can manifest as a mother's emotional disengagement and consequential difficulty in forming and maintaining healthy patterns of attachment to her child(ren). This can in turn impact significantly on their emotional development and healthy cognitive functioning.

We have recently been fortunate enough to receive funding for our ['Play & Connect'](#) programme, which aims to prevent and protect against the transmitting of emotional trauma from refugee and asylum-seeking mothers to their children, by strengthening the emotional bonds between them. The programme is designed to facilitate a safe and open environment in which the mothers are supported in engaging emotionally with their children through the creative and expressive mediums of art and dance. Our hope is that through participation in the programme, the mother-child relationships will benefit from the mother's increased capacity to recognise and respond to her child's needs, and an increased feeling of trust and security on the part of the child.

By Cristina Zorat. For further information: cristina.zorat@lrnmn.org.uk or 020 8694 0323.

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She was detained without charge

Nobody believed her story and no-one spoke up for her

Her family and friends didn't know where she was

Afraid...isolated...

She had no idea what would happen to her next

And that was after she sought asylum in the UK

Our asylum system is now so tough that, all too often, this is how people seeking help are treated. And that can't be right.

We believe the system should be fair and just and that every asylum seeker should have legal help to make their case - only then can we say in good conscience 'let the law take its course'.

Asylum Aid is an independent, national charity that secures protection for people seeking refuge in the UK from persecution in their home countries.

We provide expert legal representation to asylum seekers and campaign for a fair and just asylum system. Founded in 1990, we have since helped 30,000 people to get a fair hearing. In 2009 85% of our clients were granted leave to stay in the UK when decisions were made on their claims for protection.

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Your donation will safeguard our independence and enable us to stand up for fair asylum rights without fear or favour.

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