

women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

issue number 65

november/december 2006

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Please send any information that you would like to see published in our next edition by 26 January 2007 at wan@asylumaid.org.uk (see postal address on back cover).

The 'family' as a particular social group

In our October 2006 issue we published an article on the House of Lords decision in the case of Fornah; now we look at the decision in K (FC) which was heard by the Lords at the same time, 17 and 18 July 2006 and determined on 18 October 2006.¹ Both cases were heard together as they dealt with the definition of particular social group; Fornah in the context of female genital mutilation and K with the issue of a "family" forming a particular social group.

Facts of Mrs K's case

Mrs K is an Iranian citizen who was married with one child. In April 2001 her husband disappeared. According to Mrs K, he had been arrested and detained in prison without being charged or tried. She did not know why he was being detained. She visited him in prison and on one occasion she noted that he had signs of ill-treatment. About two or three weeks after his disappearance, the Authorities in Iran searched Mrs K's house and took away books and papers. They returned a week later; searching the house further. On this occasion, they insulted and raped Mrs K. Mrs K made herself scarce after this incident. The Authorities did not approach her again nor approach any of her family members. However on 24th September 2001, Mrs K was informed by her son's headmaster that the Authorities had attended the school and made enquiries about her son. This frightened Mrs K and she fled from Iran with her son. She travelled through Turkey arriving in the UK on 5 October 2001, where she claimed asylum.

¹ *SSHD v K and Fornah v SSHD* (2006) UKHL 46, 18 July 2006

The appeal process

The Secretary of State refused her claim on 30 November 2001. She appealed to Mr D J B Trotter, Adjudicator who held that in the current situation in Iran *"the families of those of adverse interest to the authorities could well be targeted."* He found that Mrs K had a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of her membership of a particular social group, *namely her husband's family.* He also found that she had established her case under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Secretary of State did not challenge this latter finding but challenged the finding that K had a well-founded fear of persecution for belonging to a particular social group, that of her husband's family. The Secretary of State's appeal was successful before the Immigration Appeal Tribunal who found that although *"the family is a quintessential social group, where the primary member of a family is not persecuted for a Convention reason, then the secondary members cannot be said to be persecuted for being members of the primary person's family"* following a 1997 Tribunal finding in the case of *Quijano v Secretary of State for the Home Department (1997) Imm AR 227.*

The Tribunal followed this decision because Mrs K could not tell the Court why her husband had been detained and it was therefore impossible to assess whether this had been for a Convention reason; Mrs K could not therefore claim to have a well-founded fear for the purposes of the Refugee Convention.

The interesting thing is that in resisting Mrs K's claim, the Secretary of State did not argue that a family could not be a particular social group under the Convention; he submitted that in light of the decision in *Skenderaj v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2002] EWCA Civ 567, [200] 4 All ER 555*, para 21 it could. The Court of Appeal in this case had stated that *"a family group could be a particular social group, since society recognises the family bond as distinct and attaches importance to it, but only if society also sets it apart in such a way as to stigmatise or discriminate against it for that reason."* The problem here in the

Secretary of State's submission was that K was unaware of the reason why her husband had been detained; she was thus unable to say why the Authorities *would stigmatise or discriminate* against her as a member of his family.

In the High Court decision of *R v Immigration Appeal Tribunal, Ex parte De Melo [1997] Imm AR 43*, paras 49-50 the Secretary of State had sought to argue that *"where an individual is persecuted for a non-Convention reason, concurrent or subsequent threats (or, presumably, acts) against his family likewise cannot be regarded as persecution for a Convention reason. If it were otherwise, the person initially ill treated- here, the father- would have no claim to asylum under the 1951 Convention, and so it would be anomalous were the members of his family, persecuted or ill-treated simply because of their association with him to be accorded Convention rights."* Laws J in *De Melo* rejected the Secretary of State's submission saying that even if a person is persecuted for a non-Convention reason, his family may form a particular social group within the meaning of the Convention if they are *"then persecuted because of their connection with him; it is a matter of ordinary language and logic, for reasons of their membership of a family- the group- that they are persecuted... The definition of refugee in article 1 of the Convention treats membership of a particular social group as being in pari materia (in the same subject) with the other 'Convention reasons' for persecution, that is, race, religion and so forth."*

This finding in *De Melo* was rejected in *Quijano* as seen above. However Lord Bingham in paragraph 21 of K said that *"the reasoning of Laws J in De Melo was in my respectful opinion correct, and the Court of Appeal were wrong to reject it in Quijano.* (In *Quijano*, the Appellant's claim related to persecutory treatment directed to him because of his relationship with his stepfather who had crossed a Columbian drug baron). *The drug baron's persecution of the stepfather was plainly not for a Convention reason, and he could not have claimed recognition as a*

refugee. But there was nothing in the facts as briefly reported to suggest that the real reason for the persecutory treatment of the appellant was anything other than his family relationship with his stepfather. That relationship may on one sense have been fortuitous and incidental... but if it was the reason for the persecution that he feared it was, in principle, enough."

This suggests that the fact-finder or Court should be asking 'what was the cause of the appellant's fear?' and not 'what was the cause of the apprehended persecution?' This latter question distracts from the real issue which is: what will be the real reason for the persecution of the claimant of which the claimant has a well-founded fear of persecution? [Article 1 of the 1951 Convention defines a refugee as someone with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of membership of a particular social group; and if a family is recognised as a quintessential social group, then one can correctly say that they have been persecuted for belonging to that family whether or not the reasons for the persecution is a non-Convention reason.]

Lord Hope of Craighead, in paragraph 36 of the K case, considered this question: what are the facts that an applicant must prove to establish that her well-founded fear is for reasons of her membership of a family? In paragraph 41 he said, "*I agree...that it is not necessary to show that all members of the social group in question are persecuted before one can say that people are persecuted for reasons of their membership of that group*". He was rejecting here Roch LJ's statement in *Quijano* that 'for the family to become a particular social group it must be a family that is being persecuted because it is that family.' Lord Hope reminded us that of the well-established principle that persecution which is feared cannot be used to define a particular social group. There must be some characteristic other than the persecution itself, or the fear of the persecution, that sets the group apart from the rest of the society. This may be because its members share a common characteristic other than their risk of being

persecuted, or because they are perceived as a group by society. Therefore Roch LJ's analysis could not be correct. Lord Hope said in paragraph 44 that "each family is set apart from the rest of society because of the ties that link its members to each other, which have nothing to do with the actions of the persecutor." In paragraph 45, he referred to UNHCR's position on claims for refugee status under the 1951 Convention relating to Status of Refugees based on a fear of persecution due to an individual's membership of a family or clan engaged in a blood feud, 17 March 2006 which stated that "it is universally accepted that the family is a socially cognisable group in society". The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights defines a family as the "natural and fundamental group unit of society, entitled to protection by society and the State". Lord Hope continued by saying that "*the ties that bind members of a family together, whether by blood or by marriage, define the group. It is those ties that set it apart from the rest of society. Persecution of a person simply because he is a member of the same family as someone else is arbitrary and capricious, and just pernicious, as persecution for reasons of race or religion. As a social group, the family falls naturally into the category of cases to which the Refugee Convention extends its protection.*" In Paragraph 50, he said "*In K's case, she was being singled out for persecution simply because, as his wife, she is a member of the same family as her husband.*"

Therefore in response to his question in paragraph 36, one needs to show that the applicant is related to a family member and it's their membership or relationship to that family member that creates the risk. They need not show that the primary family member was persecuted for a Convention reason.

Does it matter if the other members of an applicant's family were not persecuted or are not at risk of persecution because of their membership of that family; and how will that affect the applicant's claim? Lord Hope said in paragraph 51 that, an applicant "need not prove that all members of the family are at risk

of being persecuted for reasons of their membership to that family, or they are susceptible to being persecuted for that reason.”

Lord Bingham's and Lord Hope's agreement that a family could constitute a particular social group was echoed by Lord Rodger who said in paragraph 61 that *“As a general proposition, divorced from the context of the Refugee Convention, it is obvious that a family can constitute a “particular social group”.* In paragraph 62 he said *“all that matters is that the person concerned should have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of being a member of a particular family which, for some reason or another, has been targeted for serious ill-treatment, against which the state affords no protection.”* Therefore supporting the argument that the reason for the persecution does not matter; the fact that the family or a member of the family is being persecuted is sufficient. He referred to Mr Singh's submission in paragraph 44 that *“a family could be a particular social group for the purposes of the Convention but that the Convention only applied where the family was targeted for itself, rather than for anything that any of its members had done”.* Lord Rodger rejected this submission by saying that *“there is nothing in the wording of the Convention to support that narrow interpretation”.*

Baroness Hale said in paragraph 107 of the judgement that *“protecting people against ill-treatment which targets members of a particular family, not for what they have done but for who they are... is well within both the language and the purposes of the Convention.”* Lord Brown agreed with the opinions of the other Lords.

The importance of K is that it finally settled the argument in the UK jurisdiction, that, a family is a particular social group within the meaning of the Convention and an applicant may claim successfully that it is *for reasons of* their membership of that family—the group—that they are persecuted.

Gender sensitivity

Baroness Hale stated in paragraph 88 that *“Mrs K had been raped by the Revolutionary guard.”* Mrs K had said in her first statement that *“they came in an afternoon, this was really horrible, they said horrible things to me and I had not been properly covered when I opened the door and they insulted me. They searched everywhere”.* Baroness Hale continues, *“only later did she bring herself to reveal to her community psychiatric nurse that the insult had been rape. The adjudicator considered carefully whether the lateness of the allegation undermined its credibility.”*

The Adjudicator had stated that *“I fully accept that the mores of Iranian society and in particular the attitude of women would make this a shameful matter to her and I do not accept that the late revelation of the rape undermines her credibility on the point. She had then gone into hiding. But when the revolutionary guards came to her son's school she determined to leave.”*

Baroness Hale in paragraph 89 said that *“of course, not all such complaints are credible. But if I may say so, this (the Adjudicator's findings on this issue) was an admirable example, of a gender-sensitive approach to the situation in which this lady found herself- in accepting, not only the rape, but also that the final trigger for her flight might be, not risk to herself, but the risk to her child.”*

RWRP News

Are you a woman seeking asylum in the UK?

As part of its campaign to raise awareness of the Home Office Gender Guidance RWRP will be making available new resources for women asylum seekers in the New Year.

Firstly we have produced leaflets in twelve languages to inform women about the Gender Guidance (Asylum Policy Instruction on gender

issues in the asylum claim²). We hope that women will then be in a better position to assert their rights under this policy. The leaflets are bilingual so that they can show them to their lawyers or Home Office caseworkers. They are to be distributed through the Home Office Asylum Screening Units, the Inter-Agency Partnership, the Red Cross Refugee Units and other agencies that work with newly arrived asylum seekers. They will be available in Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Pashto, Somali, Turkish, Tigrinya, Urdu, Vietnamese for free downloading on the Asylum Aid website at www.asylumaid.org.uk in January.

Secondly we have produced an audio CD for training and awareness-raising purposes, which covers the basic information in the Gender Guidance and the consequences if this policy is not followed. The six tracks can each be used individually. The CD lasts 15 minutes and is in English only, available free from women@asylumaid.org.uk

UK News

Independent Commission on Asylum

Asylum Aid, together with the Citizens Organising Foundation and others, has been working throughout 2006 to establish an independent commission of enquiry into the UK asylum system.

The Independent Asylum Commission was formally launched in October 2006 at the House of Commons and it began its work in November with a series of briefings on the current state of the asylum system from Asylum Aid, Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Refugee Council, Institute of Public Policy Research, Bail for Immigration Detainees and the Home Office.

²

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/asylumpolicyinstructions/apis/genderissueintheasylum.pdf?view=BinaryH>

The Commission's approach will be informed by the principle that the asylum system should be fair, just and consistent with the UK's human rights obligations. The review will seek to answer the following questions

- Are people who need protection able to access the UK asylum procedure?
- Does the asylum determination and appeals procedure provide protection to those who need it in line with the UK's obligations under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention?
- Are asylum seekers treated humanely throughout the asylum process up until and including a final decision on their cases and possible departure or removal from the UK?

The Commission will publish its findings in early 2008 and its recommendations will be widely circulated to the UK Government, the major political parties and other interested agencies and institutions, including relevant European institutions, with a view to informing the policies of the political parties in advance of the next general election in the UK.

The Co-Chairs of the Commission are Sir John Waite, a retired Appeal Court judge and a former Chair of UNICEF, and Ifath Nawaz, a solicitor and Chair of the Association of Muslim Lawyers in the UK. The Commissioners include Katie Ghose, Director of the British Institute for Human Rights, the Rev. Canon Nick Sagovsky, Canon Theologian at Westminster Abbey, Lord Rambotham, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons, Zrinka Bralo, Director of the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum and Silvia Casale, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The Commission has agreed that the review will have key seven themes:

- access to the asylum determination process
- the operation of the asylum determination process
- the asylum appeals process

- the treatment of vulnerable groups in the asylum process
- the detention of asylum seekers
- material support and accommodation for asylum seekers including those at the end of the asylum process
- the removal of refused asylum seekers

The Commissioners will issue a public call for written evidence in January 2007 and will hold a series of public hearings across the UK throughout 2007, each linked to a specific theme. They will also commission original research from the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University and will be provided with a set of comprehensive literature reviews by the Information Centre on Asylum and Refugees (ICAR).

People seeking asylum in the UK and any individuals or organisations working with them are encouraged to submit evidence to the Commission.

For further information about the Independent Asylum Commission, please visit www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk WAN will also continue to update you about the progress of the Commission.

UK projects

Refugee Women's Stakeholders Group

The Refugee Women's Stakeholders Group grew out of a conference held in June 2005 by a partnership of agencies focusing on refugee women's issues.³ It aims to get such issues onto the Home Office's agenda by creating and following up dialogue with the relevant officials. Over the course of 2006, this group has grown so that the e-network of interested individuals throughout the country has now reached 50.

³ RWRP, Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Refugee Women's Association, Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation and Latin American Women's Rights Service

Topics discussed with the Home Office this year have included women who have experienced gender persecution who are detained in the fast track at Yarl's Wood and country information reports. Progress has been made on both issues and continues to be followed up. Topics on which discussion has started and will be continued in the coming year are voluntary returns, childcare during asylum interviews and conditions at Yarl's Wood.

Those who join the network can contribute to these discussions suggesting which issues should be raised and how to progress matters. If you would like to join, please contact Elaheh Rambarzini at Elaheh.Rambarzini@RefugeeCouncil.org.uk

Award winners

The Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid won the **Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize** awarded each year to a group who have worked to stop violence against women and children. The individual award went to Comfort Momoh for her clinical and campaigning work on female genital mutilation and the special award went to Nadia Siddiqui for her work on behalf of Asian women experiencing domestic violence.

The Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKRWO) won the **Lilith Rising Stars Award: Best voluntary sector violence against women project**. Established in 2002 IKRWO provides support and advocacy to women at risk of honour killings, forced marriage and domestic violence.

Southall Black Sisters won the **Liberty/Justice Human Rights Award** for their commitment to defending women who face violence and abuse and their work on drafting a Private Member's Bill providing civil remedies for victims of forced marriage.

International news

Zimbabwe: High level of rape reported by Zimbabwean women applying for asylum

Zimbabwean women applying for asylum in South Africa are reporting a high level of rape by security forces in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean Torture Victims/survivors Project (ZTVP) has launched "Women on the run: Female Survivors of Torture Amongst Zimbabwean Asylum Seekers and Refugees in South Africa" to coincide with the global campaign for 16 days of activism against gender based violence.

ZTVP runs a counselling service in Johannesburg for women refugees, their report found that at least 15% of Zimbabwean women refugees seen over the last 20 months alleged that they had been raped.

The most frequently reported perpetrators were supporters of the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). State agents were also reported, including the army and Central Intelligence Organisation; of all the state agents the police were most frequently reported.

Only 36% of women interviewed for the report had been able to make an application for refugee status and just 2% had been granted refugee status. ZTVP said these figures should cause the "South African authorities serious embarrassment".

Jacob van Garderen, national coordinator of the Refugee and Migrant Rights Project at Lawyers for Human Rights, a South African NGO told IRIN that applying for refugee status was difficult. It can take a year to get an appointment with the department of home affairs just to apply for refugee status, during this period many asylum seekers are deported to the country where they fear persecution,

which is against the South African constitution.⁴

South Africa: Lesbians target of hate crimes

Black homosexual men and women are encountering increasing violence and victimisation despite legislation protecting sexual minorities in South Africa.⁵

In 1996 South Africa was the first African country to introduce a constitution protecting people from discrimination based on sexual orientation, on 1 December 2006 same-sex marriage became legally recognised.

Prof Vasu Reddy, chief research specialist at the Gender and Development Unit of the Human Sciences Research Council told IRIN that the constitution did little to guarantee acceptance or tolerance, especially for gays and lesbians living in townships. "This intolerance is translated into verbal abuse, psychological abuse or other subtler forms of victimisation, which fall short of being punishable under current law, but there are increasing reports of physical expressions of homophobia being on the rise".

In February Zoliswa Nkonyana was beaten and stabbed to death by a gang of young men for being a lesbian, in front of her home in the township of Khayelitsha, near Cape Town.

In September 2005 a young woman nearly bled to death after being attacked on a float during the annual Johannesburg Gay Pride march.

The HRSC and the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre hosted a day

⁴ IRIN News, *Zimbabwe: Women refugees in South Africa claim rape and torture at home*, 7th December 2006, accessed 14th December 2006.
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=56659>

⁵ IRIN News, *South Africa: Black gays the target of hate crimes*, 7 December 2006, accessed 14 December 2006,
http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=56661&SelectRegion=Southern_Africa&SelectCountry=SOUTH_AFRICA

long roundtable discussion on gender based violence, hate speech and homophobia against black lesbians as part of the '16 days of activism against gender based violence'.

Prof Reddy told IRIN "Many of our sisters are still brutally assaulted...'corrective rape' has become a common practice for young men opposing homosexuality, and who are set on 'curing' gay women of sexual deviance and an 'un-African' way of life".

With reference to the myth that homosexuality is uniquely European or American OUT, a local NGO supporting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals points out that years of international research shows that between 5 – 10 % of people in every community are homosexual, "sexual orientation has nothing to do with one's skin colour or geographical location."

Afghanistan: Self-immolation, rape and forced marriage widespread in south

100 women in the insurgency-hit southern province of Kandahar have attempted suicide by self-immolation or taking poison in the past eight months. Najeeba Hashimi, head of women's rights in the Kandahar office of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) told IRIN⁶ "Our data shows that at least 64 women have attempted suicide by setting fire to themselves and 36 others have resorted to taking poisons such as rat killers...the real figure could be much higher as many cases in remote districts go unreported."

Life for women in southern Afghanistan has changed little since Taliban rule despite progress in other areas. The AIHRC says forced marriage, rape and self-immolation are still widespread. An 18 year old woman who had attempted suicide told IRIN "I did not know

how to end the misery of torture and daily beatings I got from my cruel husband. So I poured petrol on myself and set myself ablaze...I did not like him even at the beginning... but there was no solution because I was married by my father."

The AIHRC cite forced marriage as a significant cause in the rise of self-immolation amongst females; they estimate between 60 and 80% of marriages in Afghanistan are against the will of the woman or girl. The UN says 57% of girls are married before 16, despite the legal age for marriage being 18. AIHRC say poverty and illiteracy prevent women from finding protection; over 80% of women in Afghanistan are illiterate. Abdul Quader Noorzai, regional head of AIHRC in Kandahar, told IRIN "Violence against women cannot be tackled effectively in our country unless poverty and illiteracy are addressed properly in our communities."

Iraq: No protection for Iraqi women

Deteriorating security in Iraq following the US-led invasion has led to an increase in restrictions on movement, rape, violence and death, according to the Women's League for International Peace and Freedom.⁷ IRIN reports that despite calls from women's NGO's "Iraqi law neither protects women from the authorities nor their own families."

A 38 year old mother of three told IRIN, "I cannot stand the beating anymore. Every day my husband finds a reason to beat my face or throw whatever he has in his hand at me. The last time he threw a knife at me because I was cooking rice with carrots, which he hates, but which the children like. Most of the time he has no reason to beat me, but even though he does [beat me] I know I cannot leave. My family told me that only prostitutes divorce their husbands. ...I asked my husband to let me

⁶ IRIN News, Desperate women choose suicide, 29 November 2006, accessed 18 December, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=56568&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN>

⁷ IRIN News, IRAQ: Najjet Muhammad, Iraq "I cannot stand the beatings any more", 6 December 2006, accessed 18 December 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=56633>

teach at a nearby school because I am a primary school teacher. The answer he gave me was a half-hour beating over all my body with his belt and shoe.

"I'm tired of this violence inside my home. Muslim Shi'ite society, especially in Najaf, does not give rights to women. It suppresses women, saying women were born for marriage and domestic work and that their voices should never be heard. And we are ... in Iraq, a country that was once known for its modernity and prosperity."

new publications

UK

Misjudging rape

Misjudging rape: breaching Gender Guidelines and international law in asylum appeals is a dossier of how immigration judges (formerly adjudicators) fail to implement their own guidelines and flout international law when they consider the asylum claims of women and girls seeking protection after experiencing rape. This report by Black Women's Rape Action Project (BWRAP) and Women Against Rape (WAR) was launched at Garden Court on 5th December 2006.

In the UK rape survivors face many obstacles in demonstrating how their claims for asylum relate to the Refugee Convention and why they should therefore be granted protection. The Asylum Gender Guidelines, published in 2000 by Immigration Appellate Authority (now the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal) are one of few official tools laying out how women's claims should be treated at appeals. The Guidelines aim to: *"ensure that the procedures used do not prejudice women asylum seekers or make it more difficult for them to present their asylum claims."*

In analysing over 60 adjudicators' rulings BWRAP and WAR found that:

- Few Adjudicators even referred to the Guidelines

- Women raped by soldiers were told the rape they suffered was "simple dreadful lust" and therefore not persecution.
- Rape survivors were told that it would be safe for them to return to their country of origin and live thousands of miles away from their homes.
- Women who did not report rape immediately were accused of reporting in order to "enhance a fabricated asylum claim."
- The testimony of "a pretty young woman" was dismissed as not credible because she did not report rape in her country of origin.
- A woman detained under the fast track system was told that three days was "ample time" to find a lawyer and her case dismissed because it was "riddled with discrepancies."
- In identikit rulings, two women were told by the same judge: "Rape is a horrific crime which should not be utilised lightly merely to bolster an asylum claim."
- Where the Guidelines were adhered to women reported feeling that they had a fairer hearing.

By publicising the Guidelines and therefore what women should be entitled to, the report helps inform women about their rights and what can be done when preparing an appeal.

Latest research on UN expert on violence against women

RWRP's latest research looks at whether the individual complaints mechanism of the Special Rapporteur (the United Nations expert) on violence against women could benefit women asylum seekers in the UK. *A last resort? Women asylum seekers and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women* by Debora Singer, was launched at an event co-hosted by Amnesty International on 7th December 2006.

For the research the cases of all eight women asylum seekers who have used this mechanism were analysed. In addition, eight stakeholders were asked to evaluate the

mechanism and consider its use specifically in relation to women asylum seekers in the UK.

The research identified two main concerns with the workings of the mechanism, namely the rigorous confidentiality guidelines and the lack of follow up to communications to and from governments. The findings also showed a disparity in how the mechanism was perceived. The lawyers viewed it in terms of providing a legal remedy whilst the staff working on the mechanism and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women herself viewed it in strategic terms.

The report concludes that even if the individual complaints mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women were improved, it would have little to add to the asylum determination process for women asylum seekers in the UK because the UK has an extensive judicial process which allows fresh claims to be considered. However, the thematic reports and country/regional visits of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (including her forthcoming European Consultation in January 2007) could be used strategically to progress the policy issues raised by the situation of women asylum seekers.

An executive summary and the full report are available at www.asylumaid.org.uk

related news

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has accepted an invitation from the National Association of Women's Organisations to hold an NGO-led consultation for the European region in London on 11 to 13 January 2007. The overall title of the consultation is: **What practical steps need to be implemented in order to achieve an equitable world for women and girls?** and it will focus on three topics: *state infrastructure* such as legislation, policing, cross border regulations; *prevention* such as education, media stereotyping; and *moving women* which refers to gender-based violence associated with migration, asylum seeking and refugees. RWRP and Southall Black Sisters have been

invited to liaise with colleagues in the sector in relation to the latter strand. A consultation paper has gone out, as have invitations to the actual meeting with the Special Rapporteur, for which places are limited. WAN will report on the consultation in the next issue.

online resources

UK

Electronic Immigration Network – Women's Country Information pages

RWRP and Electronic Immigration Network (EIN)/HJT (HJT supply EIN's country database) have worked together to improve access to publicly available reports documenting women's experience in countries of origin, by producing a dedicated women's page for each country. The new pages allow for quicker searching by types of gender related harm for each country.

This is an excellent new research tool for legal representatives designed to improve the efficiency of researching women's asylum and human rights cases. Working on women's cases can be very time consuming, as fewer reports are available on gender-related harm such as honour crimes, trafficking, female genital mutilation, marital rights, domestic violence and women's legal status. Research in the field tends to focus on the male experience as indicative of the human rights situation in a country.

RWRP will be contributing supplementary materials on researching gender and persecution in the context of asylum and human rights claims.

This initiative forms part of RWRP's Women and Country of Origin Information (COI) campaign. The campaign seeks to raise awareness of the particular difficulties for women in substantiating asylum and human rights claims due to a lack of research documenting women's experience of human rights violations in their home countries.

women's asylum news

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Name _____

Address _____

I would like Asylum Aid to treat my donations as Gift Aid donations (please tick)

Signature _____ Date _____

Your declaration covers all donations you have made to Asylum Aid since April 2000 and any donations you might choose to make hereafter. You must have paid as much tax (or more) in this year as we will reclaim on your donation

**To support Asylum Aid's work, please complete and return this form to:
Asylum Aid, FREEPOST LON18836, London, E1 6BR (using a stamp will save us money)**