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IN THIS ISSUE

Leading Article: "I feel that I have no rights": Statelessness in the UK	p. 1-4
Legal Issues	p. 5-7
National News	p. 7-8
International News	p. 9-12
New Publications	p. 12-16
UK Training and Events	p. 16-17
Charter Update	p. 18

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"I feel that I have no rights": Statelessness in the UK



New research into the number and situation of stateless persons in the UK identifies the risk of human rights infringements which confronts them every day, and the practical steps needed to safeguard the human rights of stateless persons.¹ This article outlines these findings and recommendations, and some of the specific implications for stateless women.

Asylum Aid/UNHCR research: *Mapping Statelessness in the United Kingdom*

During the last year, Asylum Aid has conducted a major research project with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to find out more about the situation facing stateless people in the UK. The joint research report is called *Mapping Statelessness in the United Kingdom* and was published in November 2011.

Somebody is stateless if they are not considered a national by any state under the operation of its laws. In practice, the results can be devastating. It means that no country recognises your right to reside on its territory, no foreign embassy has an obligation to protect you, and no Government is

¹ Asylum Aid and UNHCR, *Mapping Statelessness in the United Kingdom*, November 2011, http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/unhcrstatelessness_in_ukengscreen.pdf.

required to look after your interests. Statelessness has aptly been described as lacking the rights to have rights.

The UK is one of a select group of 37 states signed up to both the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Despite this, the research findings for stateless people currently living in the UK are stark.

The stateless population in the UK identified in the report is relatively small, although weaknesses in the published and internal data made firm conclusions on numbers extremely difficult. For those who are stateless in the UK, though, there is a constant risk of human rights infringements. In the absence of a dedicated and accessible procedure to identify people who are stateless, they are left in a legal limbo not of their own making, but from which there is no escape. We heard stories of destitution and street homelessness, and years of separation from spouses and children. And we heard stories like Fatima's,² about the particular vulnerability of stateless people to arbitrary detention.

Fatima

Fatima was born in the early 1980s, a stateless Bidoun in Kuwait. 'Bidoun' means 'without' in Arabic, and Fatima was one of the estimated population of 90,000–180,000 that continues to live there without citizenship rights. Her father made numerous attempts to obtain Kuwaiti citizenship for his family, but all proved futile. Their existence as illegal residents was precarious. Fatima's only identification was the 'green card' issued to many Bidouns, which extended no rights and simply confirmed her irregular status.

Discrimination against Kuwaiti Bidouns hardened considerably after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, and the family's situation became still more dangerous when Fatima's brother was arrested and detained after protesting for Bidoun rights. Terrified by continued harassment and threats, Fatima and her brother travelled to the UK in 2008 on false documents and sought asylum.

While Fatima's brother was recognised as a refugee, she was not. Her subsequent appeal was refused, and she was expected to leave the UK. As a stateless person, there were clear barriers to her doing so. Yet no steps were taken to address the situation. It seems that no efforts were made to inquire further about other countries to which she might travel, but neither was Fatima granted leave to remain in the UK.

In the meantime, Fatima reported monthly to immigration officers. She kept the UK Border Agency (UKBA) up to date with her address. As weeks and months passed, she met and fell in love with another Kuwaiti Bidoun, who is recognised as a refugee and with whom she lives. They have undertaken an Islamic wedding ceremony, and had applied for the Certificate of Approval that was then necessary for a UK civil marriage.

It was a tremendous shock, therefore, when UKBA officials raided Fatima's home early one morning in November 2009, to arrest and detain her.

"Very early in the morning," she explained, "ten or so immigration officers raided our flat. They banged violently on the door, pointing torches through the letterbox and demanding to be let in. They forced us out of bed without allowing us time even to get dressed". The experience was traumatic and humiliating: "I was taken away in front of all the neighbours who had come out to see what was happening. My husband was not allowed to come with me. I was terrified of what was happening to me".

She was held overnight in a police station, and then for three nights at a detention centre. During this time, Fatima was pressured into signing a voluntary return disclaimer, and was then released. The

² To protect the anonymity of interviewees, this is not her real name.

UKBA paperwork on her detention illustrates problems that affect many people with unstable immigration status; but also the specific issues facing stateless people.

The UKBA argued that Fatima had no close family ties in the UK, despite the presence of her husband and brother; they stated that she had not complied with immigration controls, despite reporting in person every month to officials. But Fatima was also detained because she hadn't made efforts to leave the UK – even though Bidouns are not issued with identity papers that would allow them to travel back into Kuwait or elsewhere. The Home Office argued that her removal from the UK was imminent – but this is unfathomable, as the Home Office had made no prior efforts to arrange this removal. There is no evidence they had inquired with Kuwaiti authorities about travel documents, or with other foreign embassies about possible nationality.

The UKBA is evidently aware of the difficulties facing Bidouns, whose plight is relatively well known. *Mapping Statelessness* shows that asylum seekers recorded with the nationality 'Kuwaiti Bidoun' appear as 'stateless' in published statistics, even if Fatima's experience shows that this did not always lead to changes in enforcement action on the ground. The particular difficulty of re-documenting Kuwaiti Bidoun women for return and ensuring their access to vital services is also noted in the recent UKBA internal gender audit, conducted earlier this year in response to Asylum Aid's *Unsustainable* report.

Yet Fatima was detained nonetheless, and released back into the community only after being locked up with no idea of what the authorities planned next. Fatima awaits a solution to her statelessness, and lives in fear of being detained once again. "I feel that I have no rights", she told our researchers, "either in Kuwait or here".

Recommendations

The report makes a series of key, practical recommendations that would address the problems encountered by Fatima, and by the dozens of others with whom we spoke.

Above all, the implementation of a robust statelessness determination procedure would help identify stateless people effectively when they come into contact with immigration controls, and address the risk of human rights infringements before they become a reality. Where appropriate, the procedure could be used to extend leave to remain to stateless people in the UK, which would be the first step for them towards acquiring a nationality and ending their limbo.³ Where the procedure helps to identify other countries or nationalities with which the individual is connected, and provided there is no infringement against their human rights, it could help ensure that he or she can travel safely to a country where they enjoy a right to reside.

In addition, *Mapping Statelessness* recommends that the UK Government ensures law, policy and practice meet human rights obligations to people who are stateless or cannot as a matter of fact return to their country of nationality – it is unacceptable that stateless people are left destitute and homeless in the UK, without access to support and accommodation or the right to work. Existing guidance on identifying stateless people must be updated, so that they are in line with conclusions from recent expert meetings convened to develop UNHCR guidelines on the issue.

And it recommends that statelessness should weigh against any decision to detain, on the basis that statelessness is likely to indicate that there is no reasonable prospect of removal. Fatima's terrifying ordeal was wholly avoidable.

³ Although there was no formal statelessness determination procedure, Government policy until 2002 allowed people recognised as stateless in the UK the same leave as those recognised as refugees, where the UK was the most appropriate country of residence.

Women and statelessness

Even while *Mapping Statelessness* represents the most comprehensive project of its kind, it also identifies a number of reasons why stateless people might remain hidden from many discussions of public policy on immigration.

It is notoriously difficult, for example, to contact and count people who are living with uncertain immigration status or don't have valid leave to remain, or who have been refused asylum but haven't left the UK. The research indicates that this population may well include some people who are stateless. But until statelessness is better understood by Government and NGOs, it is likely that the people it affects will remain difficult to identify. Indeed, it is possible that campaigning organisations and legal representatives have contact with stateless people without realising it. Stronger support for the stateless relies on raising the awareness of those in a position to provide that support.

Even within this difficult-to reach-population, some groups prove still harder to reach than others. This includes stateless women. Despite substantial efforts by the researchers, only a small number of women were referred to the project team, and women constituted just five of the report's thirty-seven interviewees.

On one level, this is extremely surprising. UK Government data on statelessness, which is analysed in rigorous detail in the report, indicates that women represented 33% of those in the UK recognised as stateless under the 1954 Convention during the previous ten years. In addition, data provided by the Refugee Council shows that 30% of the people identified as stateless by its frontline staff since 2003 were women. But women constituted only 14% of those referred to *Mapping Statelessness*. Repeated efforts to reach more women through liaison with other refugee organisations around the country brought no change. Stateless women remain largely below the radar.

This is of interest not least because the fact that some women are at risk of becoming stateless on account of their sex has been recognised for so long. The UNHCR, for example, has raised concerns over many years that nationality laws and gender discrimination in some countries can leave women particularly vulnerable to statelessness. Although these practices may be presented as legal technicalities, they in fact constitute a clear form of gender persecution.⁴ *Mapping Statelessness* describes some of the provisions in British nationality law that protect against children born in the UK being left stateless.

But in other ways, the difficulty of identifying and interviewing stateless women also confirms some of the fears that we may already hold. As recorded in *Women's Asylum News* and elsewhere for several years, there is a particular challenge in ensuring that the needs of women caught up in the immigration and asylum system are identified and addressed. In the absence of a statelessness determination procedure, stateless women are subject to an immigration system we already know is poorly tailored to their needs. The particular problems faced by women too often go unidentified and/or unaddressed. If stateless people are an especially hard-to-reach group, stateless women may constitute some of those whose experiences and stories are hidden even further from researchers and campaigners.

Ongoing advocacy work, then, has a large part to play. *Mapping Statelessness* is a considerable contribution to understanding an under-researched problem – and no group can be left behind.

Women's Asylum News would like to thank Russell Hargrave, Communications and Public Affairs Officer at Asylum Aid for writing this article.

⁴ There is a particular risk, for example, in countries where only men can pass their citizenship onto their children. The children who are born of women from these countries married to foreigners, or who are born out of wedlock, may end up stateless if their father is stateless, if he cannot confer nationality under the nationality law of his State or is unable or refuses to take the necessary administrative steps with the authorities of his country on behalf of his children.

Legal Issues

Parties to a mixed Sunni/Shi'a marriage in Iraq not generally at risk of persecution

*EA (Sunni/Shi'a mixed marriages) Iraq CG [2011] UKUT 00342(IAC)*⁵

The Appellant in this case is a national of Iraq and a Shi'ite Muslim married to a Sunni Muslim. These facts were accepted by the immigration judge who first considered the Appellant's appeal. However, his appeal was dismissed because there were significant aspects of the Appellant's claim that lacked credibility and the immigration judge did not accept that the couple faced a real risk of harm on return to Iraq on the basis of their mixed marriage. The Appellant sought reconsideration of the dismissed appeal. This was ordered on the basis that the immigration judge "had materially erred in law in respect of failure to take into account properly the risk to the appellant on account of his religion, specifically in the context of him being a party to a mixed marriage".

The Upper Tier Tribunal considered the Appellant's claim from the perspective of the general situation in Iraq, then the more specific issue of Sunni/Shi'a sectarian violence, and then went on to consider the risk to persons party to mixed Sunni/Shia marriages. The Tribunal concluded that "the situation in Iraq has not changed materially since the publication of the country guidance in HM as regards the general levels of violence in Iraq". The case of HM set out that "the degree of indiscriminate violence characterising the current armed conflict taking place in Iraq is not at such a high level that substantial grounds had been shown for believing that any civilian returned there would, solely on account of his presence there, face a real risk of being subject to that threat".⁶ The Tribunal also concluded that despite very real concerns of a return to the level of inter-sectarian violence of 2006 and 2007, the passage of time has not confirmed a return to earlier problems to that extent. Although tensions remains and are likely to do so, they must be considered in the context of the complexities of Iraqi life. In the future, other potential risk factors that may come into play will have to be considered.

In relation to the specific risk factor under consideration, the Tribunal concluded there was evidence showing "a significant improvement in the situation for parties to a mixed Sunni/Shi'a marriage today in Iraq" and "this mirrors to an extent the overall improvement in the security situation overall in Iraq between 2006/2007 and today". Thus, the Tribunal found that in general there is not a real risk of persecution or other significant harm to those party to mixed marriages. The Tribunal added, however, that the risk may be greater in rural and tribal areas where mixed marriages are less common and where although a Sunni man may marry a Shi'a woman the converse may not be possible. In any case, the Tribunal found that a mixed couple from the rural and tribal areas would generally be able to relocate to other areas in a city such as Baghdad or the Kurdistan region where mixed marriages took place.

As the Appellant in this case lived in the Baghdad area, the Upper Tribunal dismissed his appeal.

⁵ http://www.ait.gov.uk/Public/Upload/j2410/00342_ukut_iac_2011_ea_iraq_cg.doc.

⁶ For more information on this case, see Women's Asylum News, Issue 96, October 2010, pp. 9-11, http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/publications/143/WAN_October.pdf. Note also that *HM* is under appeal to the Court of Appeal with permission.

“Women in Jordan who have (allegedly) flouted repressive moral norms” are found to be a Particular Social Group

Saad SARHAN and Sara Issa Mohamad Disi, Petitioners, v. Eric H. HOLDER, Jr., Attorney General of the United States, Respondent No. 10–2899. United States

Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit. Argued April 13, 2011 - September 02, 2011⁷

The Seventh Circuit, United States Court of Appeals held that the Appellant in this case, Sara Issa Mohamad Disi, had established that she was a member of the particular social group “women in Jordan who have (allegedly) flouted repressive moral norms”. Disi was entitled not to be removed to Jordan from the United States (US) as the Jordanian State is currently unable or unwilling to protect her.

Disi, her husband, and their two children came to the US from Jordan in the 1990s on visitors' visas. The couple overstayed their visa when their third child, born in the US, had kidney problems. They went on to have two more children. The Immigration Judge accepted that Disi's sister-in-law Nuha, the wife of her husband's brother, started a rumour that Disi had committed adultery. Nuha told her mother, who took the news to Amman, Jordan and informed Disi's family, including her brother Besem. Besem was convinced that Disi had committed adultery and had ruined the family's reputation, and planned to kill his sister when she returned to Jordan, to restore the family's honour. It was found that he was particularly determined because he considered the rumours alone have armed his reputation in the community. In 2006, Besem visited Disi in the US and told her that when she returns to Jordan he would kill her as there would be no repercussions for him.

When Disi and her husband filed applications for asylum and withholding of removal, the immigration judge⁸ denied their application because they claimed asylum more than one year after arriving in the US and they had failed to show circumstances or any other acceptable reason for the delay. Although the judge found Disi's claim credible and believed her brother planned to kill her, the judge considered that he did not pose a continued threat to her, that Disi was not a member of a particular social group, and that even if she had demonstrated that she was, she had not shown that her brother intended to kill her on account of her membership of that group. The judge also concluded that the Jordanian state would provide her with protection against her brother's threats. Finally, the judge considered that Disi could relocate in Jordan to avoid the threat once she returned. At appeal, the Board of Immigration Appeals affirmed the decision by the immigration judge and Disi and her husband appealed to the United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit.

The Board of Immigration Appeals agreed with the immigration judge that Disi was not a member of the particular social group of “Muslim women falsely accused of adultery”. The Court of Appeals noted that the description of this group was inaccurate as “in Jordan, cause for an honor killing may arise where a woman commits a 'sin' such as going for a walk with a man who is not her husband or relative”. Disi and her husband, on the other hand, argued that Disi was a member of the particular social group which included “all Jordanian women who, in accordance with social and religious norms in Jordan, are accused of being immoral criminals and, as a consequence, face the prospect of being killed without any protection from the Jordanian government”. The Board rejected Disi's argument on the basis that the group was not socially visible. The Court of Appeals however, noted that the social visibility criterion “makes no sense” and was inconsistent with the Board's and the Court of Appeals past jurisprudence. The Court of Appeals clarified that the particular social group “is a function of a pre-existing moral code in Jordanian society [...]. Social stigma causes the violence. Society as a whole brands women who flout its norms as outcasts, and it delegates to family members the task of meting out the appropriate punishment—in this case, death”. Thus, the Court of Appeals found that

⁷ http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-7th-circuit/1579715.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FindLaw7th+%28FindLaw+Case+Law+Updates+-+7th+Circuit+COA%29.

⁸ In the United States, asylum applications can be referred to an immigration judge for an initial decision on the claim. If refused, there is a right of appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals. If the Board upholds the initial decision, asylum seekers can lodge a petition for review in the United States Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the immigration judge sits.

Disi had demonstrated to the correct standard of proof that she was at risk of persecution on account of her membership of the particular social group of women in Jordan who have (allegedly) flouted repressive moral norms.

The Court of Appeals also found that “the government is ineffective when it comes to providing protection to women whose behavior places them in the group who are threatened with honor killings” on the basis that those guilty of honour crimes were given lesser sentences than those guilty of other crimes. Furthermore, the only protection and support available to women at risk of honour crimes is voluntary imprisonment described by the Court of Appeals “as being much closer to persecution than to protection from harm”. The Court of Appeals therefore concluded that “the government of Jordan is complicit in the harm that Disi will suffer at the hands of her brother”. In terms of the possibility of relocating to another area of Jordan, the Court of Appeals held that the findings of the immigration judge and the Board of Immigration Appeals lacked reasoning and could not be upheld. The Court of Appeals considered that Disi’s brother would be able to find her anywhere in Jordan and internal relocation was therefore not a viable alternative.

The Court of Appeals thus granted Disi and her husband’s petition for review and remanded the cases to the Board of Immigration Appeals for further proceedings consistent with its opinion.

National News

Minister says UK will not opt in to amended EU asylum directives

The UK government has decided not to opt into two EU asylum directives amended under European Commission proposals. The Commission called for the Asylum Procedures and Reception Conditions directives to be recast in June of this year, a timetable driven by the 2012 deadline for creating a Common European Asylum System. The Immigration Minister, Damian Green criticised this 2012 plan and said that the UK would not opt into any proposal which ‘would weaken our border’. With regard to the specific Directive amendments, the Minister voiced the Government’s ‘grave concerns’ that amendments to the Reception Conditions Directive would mean that all asylum seekers would be allowed to work after six months, regardless of whether they had a successful claim. He also challenged the necessity of the recast directive’s restrictions on member states’ ability to detain people ‘in exceptional circumstances.’ With regard to the Asylum Procedures Directive the Minister stated its restrictions on accelerated procedures would “endanger a number of systems that the UK operates to manage straightforward claims successfully.” He made specific reference to the Detained Fast Track here and its ability to make ‘speedy but fair decisions’. He declared that the Government would continue to deal with any forthcoming justice or home affairs legislation on a ‘case by case basis’.

The UK will continue to be bound by the existing Directives.

To read the Ministerial Statement made by Damian Green, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm111013/wmstext/111013m0001.htm#11101330000114>, and the Home Office press release: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/EU-asylum> .

Call to end detention of trafficked women

According to the Poppy Project, trafficked women are being unlawfully detained by the UK Border Agency. Despite European laws stipulating that victims of trafficking should not be detained but be identified as victims of trafficking and supported with food, medical treatment and free legal advice, the Poppy Project has identified 180 trafficked women currently in immigration removal centres. The

problem is probably underreported as not all victims of trafficking in the UK have come into contact with the Poppy Project, thus the figure may only be the tip of the iceberg. They have described the forcing of women who were deprived of their freedom by trafficking gangs to face a different form of captivity as 'scandalous'. The UKBA claims that victims of trafficking are only detained 'in exceptional circumstances'. The Poppy Project has since launched a campaign calling on the Government to end all detention of trafficked people immediately. The charity needs 100,000 signatures to force a debate in Parliament.

To read the full article, see: <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-24000476-scandal-of-trafficked-women-held-in-uk.do>.

For more information on the Poppy campaign and to sign the petition, see: <http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/VictimsOfTraffickingAreNotCriminals.php>.

Child migrants vanishing into Britain's sex trade

The case of Joy Vincent has highlighted the plight of young migrants who disappear into the underground world of the sex trade. Trafficked into the UK at the age of 14, Joy disappeared from a hotel in Croydon in March 2011 and has not been seen since. This followed her rescue by police from a suspected captive sex slave situation. The Gilroy Hotel in Croydon, accommodation found for Joy by Croydon Children's Services, was meant to provide a safe haven for the teenager. Child protection experts say it was a naive decision to place Joy here, given its proximity to brothels, the continual procession of people in and out of the hotel, and the likelihood of word spreading fast that a teenager linked to the sex trade was housed there. This case follows discussions in Parliament last year surrounding the fact that some state accommodation, given its location and clientele, in effect served as "holding pens" for traffickers looking to swoop in on vulnerable children.

Meanwhile other young people are suffering the same fate as Joy; something which experts say is due in part to discrimination and institutional racism on the part of state agencies. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is highlighted in particular for criticism. Given its purpose is to protect trafficked victims by providing prompt recognition, the staffing by UKBA case owners rather than those with experience in trafficking or child protection is a point of particular concern. Data seems to suggest that the NRM is less likely to believe foreign youngsters than British young people. While there is a lack of concrete, centralised evidence of the number of young people trafficked into the UK, the UK's Human Trafficking Centre have released data estimates which suggest 285 children may have been trafficked into this country in the last year. It is likely that the real number, including those who have not been identified, is much greater. There is less data available on the number of trafficked children who have then gone on to disappear from care. Kent County Council (KCC) estimate at least 25 unaccompanied foreign children, aged 12 to 17, have disappeared from their care in the last year, admitting to having no idea where they have gone. While campaigners say it is likely they have fallen into the grasp of their traffickers once more, KCC say some will have left care because they are approaching the age 18 and will therefore have to apply for leave to remain. ECPAT UK, an anti-trafficking group, has called on the government to introduce a system of guardians for child victims of trafficking. Downing Street has rejected the idea calling current measures "sufficiently comprehensive." Not sufficient enough to protect Joy, or children like her.

To read the full articles, see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2011/oct/16/britains-child-sex-trade/print> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2011/oct/18/children-lost-human-trafficking?newsfeed=true>.

International News

Cameroon: Breast ironing still widespread

A quarter of mothers in Cameroon continue to iron the breasts of their daughters in order to suppress their growth and prevent the girls' sexual development. Items such as wooden pestles or stones are heated over fires and then pressed against the breasts as part of a traditional ritual. Renata, a women's organisation in Cameroon, found in 2006 that the two areas where it was most prevalent in Cameroon were the Coast at 53% and the North-West at 31%. Religion is a key factor; the research also found it was more popular in the Christian and Animist regions of the South, at 30-50%, than in the Islamic areas of the North, at around 10%. It is practised in other African countries too, though it is less widespread, such as Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Togo, Benin and Guinea-Conakry. Doctor Sinou Tchana, a gynaecologist from Cameroon, and vice-president of the Cameroonian Association of Female Doctors, has spoken out about the practice, as she often encounters victims and their mothers in her clinics. She says that many mothers do not understand the pain they are inflicting and that once they do, they cease the practice. There are many medical problems that can arise as a result of breast ironing, not least the pain and psychological trauma. These include abscesses, itching, an inability to breastfeed, infection, deformity, cysts, tissue damage and in extreme cases, breast cancer. Mothers who carry out breast ironing argue that they are doing it in the best interests of their girls, since in Cameroonian society a girl can get married as soon as she develops breasts. They say, therefore, that they are protecting them from the sexual advances of men. Many Cameroonian men are entirely ignorant of the practice, given that it is often performed for contraceptive reasons, and is thus not discussed. In areas where it is more ritualistic than contraceptive, however, men are aware of it and may carry out the ritual if there are no appropriate female relatives to do so. It is expected that girls will simply accept the rationality behind the procedure. Only if more Cameroonian women speak out against it will it stop.

To read the full article, see: <http://ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=105316>.

China: Domestic violence in spotlight following celebrity case

A 'superstar' of English language tuition in China, Li Yang, has been accused of violently abusing his wife. The case has thrown new light on the problem of domestic violence in the country. Li Yang, founder of Li Yang Crazy English was publically accused in September by his wife Kim Lee, on China's most popular social media site 'sina weibo'. The accusation was accompanied by damning photographs and has unleashed a tide of condemnation from internet commentators. Women's advocates in China have welcomed the attention now being paid to the problem in China but say that work combating domestic violence is chronically underfunded. Statistics frequently referred to by Chinese media, that one in three households in China suffers from domestic abuse, are alarming, but are made more alarming by the fact that they are woefully out of date, and may now be much worse. A recent survey by the All-China Women's Federation found that about 80 million Chinese families have been affected by domestic abuse, with 90% of cases involving a woman being beaten by a man. There is however, a new proposed law designed to tackle domestic abuse, now in its final drafting stages. Liu Bohong, deputy director of the Women's Studies Institute in China said that "the proposed law will make a huge difference in protecting human rights, especially for the victims of domestic violence." There is still a note of caution though- this law has been expected for years and it is not certain when exactly it will be passed. Recent events may work to quicken this process.

To read the full articles, see: <http://www.thestar.com/printarticle/1049986> and http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-09/08/content_13645363.htm.

EU: European Parliament backs amendments to Qualification Directive

The European Parliament (EP) has approved with a majority of 476 votes to adopt the recast Qualification Directive. This followed the European Commission's initial proposals to recast the Directive back in October 2009. The text has been a subject of much discussion and debate. The recast Directive now adopted by the EP was the compromise text published in July of this year.⁹ Most of the amendments that had been included in the text adopted by the European Parliament in the Orientation Vote related to gender or minors were removed.¹⁰ The amendment to article 10(1)(d) to make the two limbs of particular social group clearly alternatives and the recital referring to equality between men and women (15) have not been adopted. The draft recast continues to recognize non-State agents as actors of protection (article 7); in terms of vulnerable persons the text now adopts the terminology of "mental disorders" instead of the Commission's "mental health problems and the Parliament's "mental health illnesses" (articles 20 and 30).

The improvements within the recast Directive in terms of gender-related claims are fewer and less significant than what the Parliament Rapporteur and NGOs would have hoped for. However, recital (29) now states:

It is equally necessary to introduce a common concept of the persecution ground 'membership of a particular social group'. For the purposes of defining a particular social group, issues arising from an applicant's gender, including gender identity and sexual orientation, which may be related to certain legal traditions and customs, resulting in for example genital mutilation, forced sterilisation, forced abortion, should be given due consideration insofar as they are related to the applicant's well-founded fear of persecution.

Article 10(1)(d) states that:

Depending on the circumstances in the country of origin, a particular social group might include a group based on a common characteristic of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation cannot be understood to include acts considered to be criminal in accordance with national law of the Member States. Gender related aspects, including gender identity, shall be given due consideration for the purposes of determining membership of a particular social group or identifying a characteristic of such a group might be considered, without by themselves alone creating a presumption for the applicability of this Article.

Article 8(3) on the availability of internal protection notwithstanding technical obstacles to return has been deleted and Article 20 on the specific situation of vulnerable persons now includes victims of trafficking.

Thus, overall, the recast Directive improves upon the current minimum standards currently contained in the Directive in a number of significant areas. Notably, women seeking refuge from gender-related persecution e.g. female genital mutilation, forced abortion or rape in conflict or war situations should, under these amendments, receive greater protection. Member states will now be obliged to make assessments of asylum claims that include a comprehensive understanding of gender-related issues. As MEP Jean Lambert has stated, in her role as Rapporteur for the Directive, this marks a 'historic recognition of the different types of persecution likely to be faced by women in EU asylum law'. Other important new commitments include taking the best interests of the child into account and improving the rights of refugees and other beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in particular regarding the duration of residence permits, access to social welfare, health care and the labour market. The European Council is also expected to approve the recast Directive by the end of 2011.

The UK has noted its intention to opt-out of the recast Qualification Directive and will therefore continue to be bound by the existing Directive.

⁹ <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2011/jul/eu-council-qualification-tcn-12337-rev1-11.pdf>.

¹⁰ <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2011/jul/ep-qualifications-orientation-vote.pdf>.

For more information, see ECRE Weekly Bulletin 28 October: <http://ecre.org/media/news/weekly-bulletin.html>.

Myanmar: Activists speak out about rape of Kachin women by government forces

Incidences of rape against Kachin women have increased since government forces ended the 17-year ceasefire in areas of northern Myanmar. The Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) have released alarming figures; they claim in Kachin State alone, 18 women were raped in an 8 day period in June. Some of these women went on to be murdered. Across Kachin areas in September 37 women are reported to have been raped. The victims include two 15-year-old girls and a 50-year-old woman who was murdered following the killing of her granddaughter. The Burmese government claims that the purpose of the escalation of fighting in Kachin areas, as well as in Shan and Karen areas, is to bring their various armed ethnic forces under the banner of a centralised Border Guard Force (BGF). However, the rationale put forward by many analysts is in fact that the government wants to harness the areas' multiple energy resources. Benjamin Zawicki from Amnesty International has said that the KWAT report matches their findings from previous internal conflicts in this area, including their 2008 report *Crimes Against Humanity in Eastern Myanmar*. Jam Thong, from Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) agrees that sexual violence has been committed by Myanmar's military regime 'with impunity'; a report from 2004 to which SWAN contributed, entitled *Licensed to Rape*, detailed 625 separate incidents of sexual violence against girls and women carried out by the army. Kachin fighters claim that state soldiers do not report these sexual attacks to their commanders. Certainly few have been charged or convicted by the government. But all activists working in the area agree this is going on and that the world should know.

To read the full article, see: <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=93822>.

Pakistan: Women suffer at the hands of tribal 'justice'

Across Pakistan's remote rural areas women are being mutilated, tortured and murdered by relatives intent on 'defending' their family name and honour as men. According to a survey by the Thomas Reuter's Foundation, Pakistan is the third-most dangerous country for women, after Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan confirms this interpretation, noting that in 2010 800 women were the victims of 'honour killings', while 2,900 reported being raped for the same reason. The majority of these rape cases, an astonishing 2,600, were reported in one province alone: Punjab, the most densely populated province in Pakistan. Furthermore there have been media reports that suggest that crimes against women have increased by 18% up to May 2011 and that the reported figures represent only a fraction of the true number of crimes. In rural areas the resort to tribal justice, such as 'jirgas' or 'panchyats' (gatherings of elders) which hand out violent punishments, occurs because the official justice system is not accessible for most people, dominated as it is by landowners and feudal lords. Therefore they are favoured not only because they reinforce the patriarchal culture but because the solutions they offer are more timely and efficient.

To read the full article, see: <http://news.yahoo.com/rape-mutilation-pakistans-tribal-justice-women-220827206.html>.

Thailand: UN expert urges Thailand to lead the way in tackling human trafficking

A UN Special Rapporteur has called on the Thai government to strengthen their attempts to fight trafficking within Thailand and across its borders. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, UN Special Rapporteur on

Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, made these comments at the end of her 12 day mission in Thailand from 9 to 18 August. She commended the introduction of anti-trafficking legislation in 2008 but called its implementation and enforcement “weak and fragmented.” She highlighted the role Thailand plays as a ‘source, transit and destination’ country for trafficking and acknowledged the challenges it therefore faces. She drew particular attention to the increase in trafficking in forced labour in the agricultural, construction and fishing industries and the alarming widespread occurrence of internal trafficking of children. Migrant, stateless and refugee children are notably vulnerable to this. With regards to migrant workers generally, Ms Ezeilo commented that they were victims of the lack of effective measures to tackle one of the root causes of trafficking, the demand for cheap and exploitative labour. The problem of trafficked persons being misidentified as irregular migrants who are then subject to arbitrary arrest and deportation was also a definite cause for concern, Ms Ezeilo said. The solutions that she proposes for the Thai government include strengthening the level of enforcement of the legislation already in place. This includes the eradication of corruption at all levels, and providing capacity building training for all involved in the processes of combating trafficking, including police officers, immigration officials and labour inspectors. She called for the introduction of ‘safe’ migration options and a review of current labour and immigration legislation in order to prevent the vulnerability of migrants being exploited by traffickers. Finally, she urged the Thai government to pursue a strategy of cooperation with its immediate neighbour states in order to more effectively tackle cross-border trafficking. A full report on the mission will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council on June 2012.

To read the full article, see:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11323&LangID=E>.

New Publications

Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) 1st round of reports

GRETA, September 2011

GRETA is responsible for monitoring the compliance of the 34 State parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. GRETA has now published reports on Austria, Cyprus and Slovakia.

In the reports, GRETA commends both the Austrian and Slovak governments for measures they have taken to combat trafficking in human beings. These measures have included the setting up of a co-ordinating body to combat trafficking in Austria and an Expert Group in the Slovak republic as well as efforts to raise public awareness and train professionals, seen in both countries. Austria was particularly commended for the special procedures it has introduced to prevent trafficking for the purpose of domestic servitude in diplomatic households. However, GRETA considered that both countries need to improve the systems they have in place for identifying victims of trafficking. The Austrian government was recommended to pay more attention to certain categories of victims of trafficking such as irregular migrants who are a group vulnerable to trafficking. The Slovak government is asked to target more information at vulnerable groups, as well as further investing in research and providing effective social and economic support to victims. Both countries were urged to establish national mechanisms for the identification of victims, particularly children. The report asks the Austrian authorities to carry out a thorough examination of criminal justice provisions relating to trafficking with a view to improving conviction rates.

In its report on Cyprus, GRETA praised the government for introducing comprehensive anti-trafficking laws and abolishing so-called “artiste visas”, which favoured trafficking of women for the purpose of

sexual exploitation. However, they felt there was significant need for improvement in the enforcement of these laws as there has not been a single conviction for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings and no victims have received compensation. It strongly recommended that Cyprus introduce measures that reduce demand for the services of trafficked persons and improve services that provide support to victims of trafficking.

To read the full reports, see: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/trafficking/default_en.asp.

'This is what we demand. Justice!' Impunity for sexual violence against women in Colombia's armed conflict.

Amnesty International, 2011

This report is the result of a two-year investigation by Amnesty International into impunity in cases of conflict-related sexual crimes in Colombia. Women and girls have been subjected to widespread and systematic sexual violence by all the parties to the long-running Colombian armed conflict – paramilitaries, members of the security forces and guerrilla combatants. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war and to dominate communities. Women have also been targeted in their role as human rights defenders. Very few of those who have committed crimes of sexual violence during the 45-year-old conflict have been brought to justice. Rape brings with it such stigma and shame for the victim that, as in many countries, it remains under-reported in Colombia. During the four decades of conflict in Colombia, the government has shown neither the ability nor inclination to investigate or prosecute the many instances of crimes against humanity or war crimes that have occurred there. Colombia's state institutions – including the criminal justice system – are failing survivors of conflict-related sexual violence at all stages – by denying them protection, justice, reparation and much needed care and support services. This is especially true of women and girls from Indigenous, Afro-descendent and peasant farmer (*campesino*) communities; forcibly displaced women; and women living in poverty. This report examines what, if any, progress has been made by the authorities since Amnesty International's 2004 report *Colombia: "Scarred bodies, hidden crimes": Sexual violence against women in the armed conflict*, and particularly since the 2008 Constitutional Court ruling, which focused on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, in addressing sexual violence and impunity. The report ends with a series of recommendations, calling on the Colombian authorities to fulfil their international obligations to ensure respect for the right of survivors to truth, justice and reparation.

To read the full report, see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR23/018/2011/en/d4396a83-c078-46f0-96ff-94f6d667b6bc/amr230182011en.pdf>.

Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked: Practice Guidance

Home Office/Department of Education, 2011

This document includes non-statutory guidance for agencies in England who come into contact with children and young people who may have been trafficked. It is intended to be supplementary to, and used in conjunction with, the Government's statutory guidance document *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010).

It outlines some of the data held on child trafficking. The National Referral Mechanism states that between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2011, 390 potential child victims of trafficking were identified. It also points to evidence from The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) that around 300 child trafficking victims are identified in the UK per annum. Information on how and why children

are trafficked to and within the UK is provided and the negative impact of trafficking on children's health and welfare is discussed, including the impact of physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

The role of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB) in dealing with trafficking is highlighted. Some recommendations include the setting up of LSCB sub-groups on trafficking and ensuring that local training programmes for practitioners and other professionals cover any relevant trafficking issues in their area. The guidance suggests that LSCBs should consider developing local inter-agency protocols in order to ensure that concerns regarding a potentially trafficked child are shared and recorded with all appropriate parties. The London Safeguarding Children Board's *Trafficked Children Toolkit* is recommended as a particularly useful document. Finally, it recommends that LSCBs appoint Trafficking Coordinators to oversee effective information sharing between local agencies.

The links between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sectors are stressed as very important when safeguarding trafficked children. The guidance makes specific recommendations on the roles of each of these agencies, including local authority (LA) children's social care teams, LA missing education teams, education and health services, youth offending teams, police, the CPS, the UKBA, the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), the CEOP, community groups (including faith groups) and the voluntary sector.

It includes an extensive list of possible indicators that a child may have been trafficked as well as guidance for how initial assessments and further enquiries should be conducted. Services identified as potentially necessary for addressing a trafficked child's needs include: appropriately trained and CRB checked interpreters, counselling, child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS), independent legal advice, medical services, sexual health services, education and family tracing and contact (if appropriate). Other considerations include the location and method of contact.

The guidance includes useful case studies illustrating how agencies have dealt with certain situations and finally discusses how National Referral Mechanism's processes work. There are Appendices on policy and legislation, appropriate responses, agency by agency, for safeguarding trafficked children, and useful contacts.

The guidance can be accessed at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/human-trafficking-strategy/>.

Kuwait: Gender Discrimination Creates Statelessness and Endangers Families

Refugees International, October 2011

This report looks at discriminatory nationality legislation in Kuwait and the resulting increases in statelessness it has created. Kuwaiti women who marry Bidoun men are denied the right to pass on their nationality to their children, therefore making those children stateless. Though entitled to attend state schools until the age of 18, these children are then suddenly treated as "illegal residents" losing their right to higher education and placing them at risk of deportation until a work permit and employment can be obtained. The advice given by officials is that women wishing to pass on their nationality should divorce their husbands, as this would then permit them to pass their nationality on. Whatever the basic problems some women have with this advice, such as not wanting to break up their families, the truth of this is that many women interviewed by Refugees International who had taken such advice, failed to see their children granted Kuwaiti citizenship. Citizenship in these cases is actually only granted on a discretionary basis. The advice therefore is guilty of being both deeply unfair and offering false hope to women.

The report also details other ways in which Kuwaiti women married to Bidoun men, Bidoun women and children of Bidoun fathers suffer in Kuwait. For example, Kuwait women married to Bidoun men

and Bidoun women are more likely to suffer sexual harassment from government officials when applying for documents either for themselves or their children. These officials can exploit the power over these women that the discretionary ability to issue documents gives them. Bidoun women can be exploited by their dependence on marrying Kuwaiti men and are denied the right to give birth in public hospitals as they are unable to gain the marriage certificates demanded by such hospitals in order to make the birth legal. Bidoun children can receive an inferior education; unless they have a Kuwaiti mother they are not entitled to a state education and any financial assistance offered to cover private education only goes a small way towards covering these costs.

The report makes a number of recommendations and calls on the US and EU governments to press the Kuwaiti government to carry out the relevant ones. Firstly, the Kuwaiti government should ensure the right to pass on nationality to children is given to both men and women on an equal basis. This would ensure no child ever be born stateless. Any individual denied naturalisation or official documentation should be informed of the reasons for this rejection and individuals should be permitted to contest this. The Kuwaiti National Assembly should ensure that the eleven "civil, social and humanitarian facilities" or rights that it was announced in April 2011 would be granted to Bidoun men and women actually be codified in law. These should then be strictly enforced. Currently there appears to be very patchy implementation of these 'facilities'. They call for the UNHCR to provide an effective remedy for stateless people in Kuwait including registering complaints, researching the specific needs of Bidoun men and women and taking on individual cases of stateless people looking for protection.

To read the full report, see: <http://refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/kuwait-gender-discrimination-creates-statelessness-and-endangers-families>.

CEDAW Statement on the Anniversaries of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

50th Session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), October 2011

On the anniversaries of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the CEDAW Committee has called on all State parties to the CEDAW convention to recommit to their pledge and ensure that their respective laws, policies and practices are not discriminating against refugee and stateless women and girls.

The Committee highlight the role that forced displacement and statelessness can play in intensifying gender inequality and discrimination against women. They ask States to ensure that women have equality of access to all stages of the asylum process and to recognise gender based persecution as grounds for an asylum claim. States should protect refugee women and girls from sexual and gender based violence within the refugee setting.

They emphasise CEDAW's role in preventing and reducing statelessness by reminding States that the convention insists on women's equality in nationality matters. In particular that they should not be rendered stateless by marriage and should have equal rights as men to transfer their nationality to foreign spouses as well as their children.

They commend recent changes but call for all States to continue vital work in ensuring gender equality is achieved. They call on those states who have not yet done so to sign the many Conventions which seek to protect refugee women and girls from harm, discrimination and statelessness, and to do so without reservations.

To read the full statement, see: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ea13f012.html>.

Asylum and Humanitarian Protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Stonewall, October 2011

A guide designed to provide an overview of asylum law and humanitarian protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people follows on from Stonewall's 2010 report *No Going Back: lesbian and gay people and the asylum system* which found systemic failures in the UK's asylum system resulting in lesbian, gay and bisexual asylum seekers regularly being refused asylum in the UK. The guide discusses the legal basis for LGB people to make asylum claims including proving a well-founded fear of persecution because of their sexuality and a failure of their state to provide protection from this persecution. The guide provides useful case law examples and scenarios to illustrate its points. It also discusses the scenarios in which Humanitarian Protection might be granted rather than Refugee Status. It provides a clear demonstration of the asylum process, stage by stage, as well as advice on how to appeal. Its section on practical considerations gives advice for asylum seekers on how to deal with their legal representatives, the types and quality and evidence they will need to provide and the importance of witnesses in making successful claims. The guide also touches on the changes in UK immigration law for those looking to reside with their same-sex partners here. However, since this differs from the report's main focus on asylum, the advice is mainly focussed on signposting to organisations who have more detailed knowledge on this subject. This signposting is included in the final section which details numerous other sources of further help and information.

To read the full report, see:

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/immigration_asylum_and_international/2665.asp.

UK Training and Events

Fostering for Refugee Women and Families

Date and Time: **29 Nov 2011 - 10:00 - 13:00**

Venue: **Hackney Carers' Centre 96 – 102 Springfield House, 5 Tyssen Street, Hackney E8 2LZ**

This Refugee Women's Association fostering event will allow participants to get information and advice on fostering from Hackney Fostering Team and the staff from the Learning and Refugee Families project. Admission is free. To register your attendance please contact: Hindu Matata on 020 7923 2412 or email: hindu@refugeewomen.org.uk.

The event will be followed by a lunch. To view invitation, see:

http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/files/event/Fostering_Event_in_Hackney_doc_final.pdf.

Silenced voices speak: strategies for protecting migrant women from violence and abuse

Date and Time: **7 Dec 2011 - 18:00 - 19:30**

Venue: **The Human Rights Action Centre, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA**

In April 2011, Rights of Women launched a new immigration and asylum law legal advice line. Their latest research analyses six months of calls to this line, identifies and analyses the key barriers and issues for women seeking safety and protection in the UK. Join them for the launch of the report and to discuss with the panel of experts strategies for protecting women who are currently falling through the protection gaps in UK immigration and asylum law policy.

Speakers:

- Catherine Briddick, Senior Legal Officer, Rights of Women
- Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters
- Debora Singer, Policy and Research Manager, Asylum Aid
- Adam Weiss, Director, the AIRE Centre

Invited: Matthew Coates, Gender Champion, UK Border Agency

Chair: Emma Scott, Director, Rights of Women

Wine and refreshments will be served. The event will also give you the opportunity to see Women Asylum Seekers Together London's photography exhibition 'Home Sweet Home', to visit stalls run by Asylum Aid and the Asylum Support Appeals Project, to network and discuss with panellists and co-activists legal and policy concerns.

This event is CPD accredited by the Bar Standards Board and Law Society for 1.5 CPD points. To secure a place at the launch please complete the booking form and email it to events@row.org.uk.

For more information and the booking form, see: <http://www.row.org.uk/current.php#b1>.

PICUM's International Conference: "Undocumented Women in Europe: Bringing Local Realities to EU Policy Level"

Date and Time: **12 Dec 2011 (All day) - 13 Dec 2011 (All day)**

Venue: **Residence Palace, 155 Rue de la Loi/ Wetstraat, 1040 Brussels, Belgium.**

The conference marks the culmination of PICUM's research on undocumented migrant women in Europe¹¹ and will bring together a broad range of civil society, professional, and institutional actors involved in the support and protection of undocumented women's rights across the region.

Addressing the multiple discrimination facing undocumented migrant women in terms of i) Sexual and Reproductive Health Care, ii) Workplace Rights, and iii) Gender-based Violence, the event seeks to foster joint action and policy change at European level.

The agenda is available at: <http://picum.org/picum.org/uploads/attachement/Draft%20Agenda%20-%20Conference%20on%20undocumented%20women%20in%20Europe%2012-13%20December%202011%20Brussels.pdf>.

This is a public event, open to all interested participants. Online registration is now open via the PICUM website.¹² **The deadline for registration is Monday, 5 December 2011 at 6pm (GMT +1).**

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact PICUM at the following address: alex@picum.org

¹¹ <http://picum.org/en/our-work/projects/women-s-strategy/picum-s-strategy-on-undocumented-migrant-women/>.

¹² <http://picum.org/en/our-work/projects/women-s-strategy/workshop-registration/>.

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum



Endorsements: 285

Google group membership: 150

Refugee women take a leading role in Scottish Refugee Council's Annual Conference

Charter signatories, the Refugee Women's Strategy Group (RWSG), a group of refugee and asylum seeking women working together to address policy issues impacting on their daily lives in Scotland, played a key role at Scottish Refugee Council's Annual Conference, *Raising Refugee Women's Voices*, in Glasgow on 3 November.

RWSG member and Scottish Refugee Policy Forum Women's Officer, Ahlam Souidi, delivered a keynote speech, drawing on the personal experiences of women going through the asylum process, and focusing on gender sensitivity in the asylum system, destitution, employment and mental health.

Several RWSG members in the audience raised important questions with keynote speakers asking Emma Churchill, UKBA's Director of Asylum, whether she felt it was acceptable for women in the UK to be bringing up their children without access to cash and what UKBA's justification was for putting vulnerable women through the detained fast track process.

The RWSG launched their newly published report, *The Struggle to Contribute*, at the conference. This highlights the barriers encountered by refugee women on their journey to employment in Scotland describing a lack of specific and appropriate employability services for refugees and access to childcare, racism and discrimination, deskilling and issues with recognition of qualifications.

Key recommendations the RWSG proposes include the right to work for asylum seekers; improved employment information strategies; coordinated employability services for refugees; a government-sponsored scheme to recognise qualifications and more statutory funding for work preparation programmes for asylum seekers.

The conference ended on a positive note with women's project leads Debora Singer, Rosalind Bragg, Anna Musgrave and Nina Murray of Comic Relief investment partner agencies Asylum Aid, Maternity Action, Refugee Council and Scottish Refugee Council respectively, rounding off the day with a plenary session at which they highlighted the key issues raised at the conference and ways these issues could be tackled.

For a copy of the report and/or more information about the Refugee Women's Strategy Group and their work, please contact Fiona Ballantyne Fiona.ballantyne@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk or Nina Murray nina.murray@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk at Scottish Refugee Council (Tel. 0141 248 9799).

For more information on the Charter and the Every Single Woman campaign, please go to www.asylumaid.org.uk/charter.

If your organisation would like to endorse the charter, please send an email simply stating the name of your organisation to charter@asylumaid.org.uk.

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.

Please support us

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

You can make a donation via our website:
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