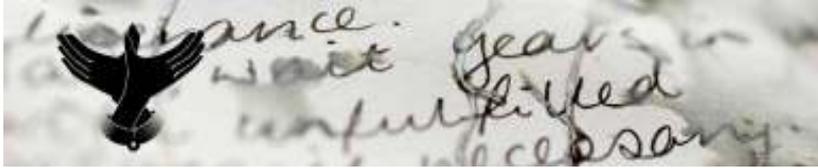


# Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group Newsletter

Autumn 2006



## JOINING FORCES ACROSS THE GLOBE AN INTERNATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DETENTION

In June, the International Coalition on the Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ICD) was launched. It is an exciting initiative - a necessary step to battle the growing trend of governments using detention as a migration control tool.

In a rate unprecedented in human history, the movement of people is scrutinised and restricted according to nationality and ethnic origin and final destination. With the help of modern communication technologies and hi-tech surveillance systems governments are able to monitor the movement of individuals, grant themselves access to people's personal information and prohibit their freedom of movement accordingly. In recent years and in an effort to further criminalize migration, governments have introduced detention as a means to deter and punish.

Regional governmental bodies like the EU are working together to ensure that their external borders are safe from unwanted guests. We find similar practices in the United States and Australia. The hypothesis then is: If government are able to maintain cooperation and communication on the issues of migration on a global scale, then why cannot non-governmental organisations, faith or religious groups and individuals do the same?

The International Coalition on the Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants comprises more than 100 member organisations (including GDWG!) in 41 countries around the world. The overall purpose is to raise awareness of detention policies and practices and promote the use of international and regional human rights standards and principles as they relate to the detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

A brilliant way to get to know the ICD and what they do and how they do it is to visit their web site [www.idcoalition.org](http://www.idcoalition.org). You can find information about their campaigns and they have a really useful database full of resources on groups like ours in different countries around the globe.

**If governments are able to maintain cooperation and communication on the issues of migration on a global scale, then why not NGOs?**

Evie Papada

## News

### **Tour of Tinsley House**

Please let us know if you have not yet been on a tour inside Tinsley House. The security company have agreed to take round a small group of volunteers sometime in October.

### **Staffing Update**

Pascale is off on maternity leave on the 13<sup>th</sup> October (if she makes it that far!) She'll be away for 6 months and Evie will be stepping in as Acting Co-ordinator. Anna Pincus (former Crawley group volunteer) will be providing additional cover in the office during this time.

### **Fundraising Update**

In the last newsletter Crawley volunteer Doreen Johnson wrote about her Ebay fundraising project. She enlisted 22 celebrities to create works for us to auction and the final total raised was £3,419. A big thankyou to her for her efforts.



Antony Gormley's beautiful watercolour 'Glad Day' (left) sold for over £800

The next fundraising venture takes the group to the House of Lords. Patrons Shirley Williams and Lord Dholakia have agreed to host a fundraising event at the end of November. Anyone with connections to the well heeled and politically aspiring is urged to come forward!

This is a critical time in terms of fundraising. The Big Lottery grant which currently pays the salaries of our 2 full-time staff members expires in June 2007, and with the new detention centre at Gatwick projected to open in 2008, the next 12 months could be a time of big changes.

### **Expenses**

Visitors are encouraged to claim their out-of-pocket expenses so we can keep a track of how much it costs to run the charity. If you are in a position to then donate back what you have claimed we would of course be grateful! Please remember to sign a gift aid form allowing us to claim back from the Inland Revenue 28p in every £1 you give. These, and guidelines on what you can claim for, are available from the office.

# Why women become refugees - GDWG training day

*GDWG and the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid organised a one-day training session for volunteers aimed at gaining a better understanding of the issues women face in detention.*

Over twenty volunteers attended the session, which is a very good response. The day focused on the special needs of women who apply for asylum, and their particular problems in detention.

Women seek asylum for the same reasons as men - such as political and religious persecution, poverty - and for additional ones such as for example domestic abuse, forced marriage, rape and/or sexual violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and the list continues. Women are discriminated against in many aspects of life and in almost every part of the world. People with different sexual orientation are also vulnerable to mistreatment and unfair laws. Gender related persecution is widespread. The Geneva Refugee Convention, however, does not include gender as one of the grounds for establishing refugee status.

Throughout the process of claiming asylum - from the moment women flee home, to their journey and arrival in the UK, their interview with the Home Office representatives and their subsequent detention, they often go through experiences that aggravate their traumas. They frequently receive little sympathy for the hardships and difficulties that

Women claim asylum for the same reasons as men and for additional ones such as:

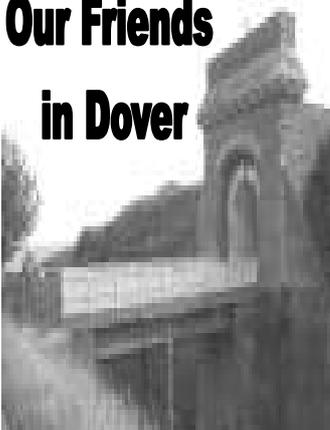
- √ Sexual violence or rape
- √ Being forced to dress/behave in a specific way
- √ Female genital mutilation, honour killing, domestic violence
- √ Sexual and domestic slavery

they have been through in their home country.

In 2002 the UNHCR issued guidelines on gender related persecution within the context of the 1951 Convention. The Home Office in turn issued an Asylum Policy Instruction (API) on 'gender issues in the asylum claim'. The UNCHR gender guidelines state that the Refugee Convention has historically been interpreted through a framework of male experiences. In looking at evidence, authorities need to take into account such factors as women's low political activity and discrimination enforced through law. When it comes to procedures, women should be allowed to request female interviewers, and caseworkers should be aware that sexual assault could cause trauma resulting in memory loss or distortion, difficulty in concentration, self-blame and others.

The Home Office Gender Guidance (2004) is being put under scrutiny in a study released by the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid in 2006. Copies of handouts and overheads which were given out on the day are available upon request from the office.

## Our Friends in Dover



The Dover Detainees Visitors Group (DDVG) was set up in 2002. It has a similar organisational structure to ours and is dedicated to helping Immigration Act detainees in Dover Removal Centre (IRC).

Hit by the similarities between our groups we decided to get together and share our knowledge, expertise and ideas. The DDVG group visited our offices and attended a tour of Tinsley House. We then discussed our work and ways we respond to the challenges we face in delivering our services. We talked about the possibilities of doing joint training sessions and enhancing communications. A week later, we were received in their offices, observing their work before taking a tour of the Dover IRC.

It's an impressive building that used to be a youth offender's institute, and the prison-like structure is evident throughout. It was intended for use as a short-term centre prior to removal but some detainees are there for up to two years. It is run by HM prison officers, who have been retrained to meet the demands of their new clientele.

Dover IRC consists of an listed reception building and five others including an education department, a sports hall, and food preparation and dining area. Outside there are a football pitch and basketball courts all fenced up until the barbed wire meets the clouds. A look inside the dormitories is telling: most of the furniture is old. Time has left its yellow stains in all corners; mattresses are shaggy and bedding is minimal. A modern TV set is sitting on top of the buckled desk. That building in particular made a huge impression on me. I'd never been inside a prison you see, (apart from when I log in to computer games as a martial arts character slaying all the baddies) and I had never sat under a barbed wire roof. About five big pool tables were laid across this long hallway and a few fellows, looking very miserable, were hitting the white ball aimlessly, obviously bored and demotivated - a cinematographic reality, a modern tale unravelling the fates of those who 'do not belong', who do not feature in the 'most wanted' lists of the EU fortress.



*GDWG and DDVG Staff Members  
From left to right: Pascale, Dilshad, Veronika,  
Evie, Marienela, Tanvier and Vebi*

### Contact Details

Co-ordinator: Vebi Kosumi

Tel: 01304 242755

[www.ddvg.org.uk](http://www.ddvg.org.uk)

### Useful to know...

√ DDVG lend longer-term detainees personal CD players

√ Mobile phones are allowed at the detention centre and the group has funding to give destitute detainees a phone they can use during their stay

√ DDVG gives out telephone cards to detainees who are being visited, at about the same intervals as GDWG

Evie Papada

# Asylum and Detention: The case of Greece

**We are coming across increasing numbers of detainees facing removal to Greece under the Dublin Convention. With the Greek government struggling to tackle the issue of rising refugee numbers, we ask what future awaits them on arrival?**

Greece's geographical position as a European border state and Europe's gate to the Oriental world, as well as its inability to comply with international and European legislation concerning the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in its territory, has attracted a lot of attention.



## The Asylum Process

Legal entrants are deemed those who possess a valid passport or visa. If someone wishes to apply for asylum in Greece, either at a border point or within the country, his or her removal from the country is not permitted until a final decision on their claim has been reached. Whilst in principle all asylum seekers should be granted access to the procedure, in practice this does not occur and those applicants who make applications for asylum at a land border checkpoint are rarely granted entry to Greece in order to apply for asylum. The vast majority of all asylum seekers enter Greece illegally from Turkey and so most applications are made in country. All those applications lodged at a port of entry are dealt through an accelerated procedure. The people concerned are held in special surveillance areas.

Theoretically the police interview asylum seekers within a maximum period of three months after submission of their claim. In practice this period is usually extended to anything from three months to over a year. Negative decisions can be appealed. In 2002, 1,545 asylum claims were rejected, out of a total of 1,615 decisions made. In the case of accelerated procedure, the decision (which is based on interviews by the police security department of the airport) is supposed to happen within 24 hours. In practice however, this could take up to three months.

The lack of qualified interpreters and access to legal aid both in applications made within the country and at the borders leads to longer processing times and seriously undermines the asylum process. In 2001, only 345 cases out of a total of 1,114 applications were represented before the Appeals Board by the Legal Unit of the Greek Council for Refugees.

## Detention

Asylum seekers who were arrested as illegal entrants prior to lodging a claim for asylum are usually detained in special detention centres or at police stations. Some rejected asylum seekers who are subject to a deportation order are detained in mainstream prisons. In May 2001, the UN Committee Against Torture criticized Greece for its use of harsh detention conditions for asylum seekers, particularly for those held in police stations, which lack adequate facilities, and in prisons, which are overcrowded.

## Supporting those being returned to Greece

We are in the process of writing a 'third country pack' to give to those being returned to Greece under the Dublin Convention. The pack will include details of organisations who can assist asylum seekers on arrival, plus a phrasebook of basic Greek. However in the meantime, please contact our resident Greek expert (Evie!) who may be able to give some useful advice.

## WELCOME TO TANVIER!

Tanvier Hussain is the GDWG's new detainee support worker, replacing Jessica Gustavsson who left in May. He has already had a long association with Tinsley House. He lives in Crawley and speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

*I have been involved with the Tinsley House religious team since 1999. At the beginning I used to visit Tinsley House on a weekly basis and this increased to twice a week and then to three times a week.*

*My visits to Tinsley House have enabled me to meet a wide range of people. These people have included the most vulnerable and those who did not know why they were being detained. I have been in contact with people who were placed in isolation, people who were contemplating suicide, people who had gone on a hunger strike, and people who were mentally ill.*

*My welfare work is not only specific to Tinsley House. As an individual one has to do whatever he can to help others. This might be in one's personal, social or working life. If everyone endeavours to do just a little bit more the world would be a better place.*

## Did you know...

It costs £812 to hold a person in immigration detention per week

It costs £5.1 million a year to run Tinsley House

The total cost of running all the detention centres run by private contractors is... £63.3 million a year (this figure doesn't include Haslar, Dover or Lindholme which are still run by the prison service)

In the 12 months April 2005 to March 2006 - 231 detainees self-harmed and needed medical treatment, 1,806 were put on self-harm watch

## News from the Management Committee

This is the first in a new series of articles, which will update you on what is going on in the Management Committee.



**At the AGM in March, two new officers were elected:** John Barrett as Vice-Chair, and Roger Baker as Secretary. Felicity Dick, Adrian Radford and Anna Seddon were re-elected as Chair, Treasurer and Training Officer. The other committee members are Irene Balls, Iyadh Daoud, Kaltun Hassan, Mary Lean, Doreen Johnson (co-opted) and Yasser el-Hammad (co-opted).

**Each MC meeting includes a report from the Chair, Office, Treasurer and Training Officer.** Much of the information in these reports (new staff

members, the successful Easter Egg appeal, plans for a new detention centre, upcoming training events) are covered elsewhere in this newsletter or in mailings from the office.

**In the last few months the MC has been concentrating on a number of ongoing issues concerning the way the charity is run.** We had an entertaining and challenging training day on governance in February, run by the CVS, which focussed on such issues as what skills we need represented on the MC. For instance, we have people with experience in training, fund-raising, charity administration, human resources, refugee issues and, of course, visiting, but would it be a help to have an immigration lawyer? And how long should MC members and officers serve?

**The AGM voted for GDWG to become a charitable company, limited by guarantee.** This involves drafting a new constitution, which means we can address some of these issues. Once the constitution has been drafted and agreed by the MC, you will have a chance to approve it at an All Visitors Meeting or the AGM, and it will be posted on the website.

**We have also spent a lot of time recently on developing new policies**

**and procedures, some of them required by funders and some because the group has grown and best practice has progressed.** In the last three months we have agreed a child protection policy (which requires all volunteers to be CRB checked) and a 'comments, compliments and complaints' procedure for volunteers. Disciplinary and capability procedures and a media policy are in the pipeline. If you would like to see any of these documents – once they are finalised – please contact the office.

**We have added a new 'feedback to management committee' item to the agenda of the area groups, and of the MC itself.** This has already led to a number of helpful suggestions: including renewing the offer of a 'buddy' to new visitors and putting documents related to the group's governance up on the website. We hope that this system will increase communication between volunteers and the management committee. It will be reviewed in six months to see if it is working. So if you have issues to raise, please take them along to your area group – or feel free to contact any of the committee direct.

Mary Lean

### Dear loved ones,

I just want to say thanks so much for all the help you rendered to me when I was held up at the Gatwick Detention camp in May 2006. Your love, care, visits, gifts and all the concerns made me bore the period with joy.

The fact that we never met but you still shared your love and my pains with me gives me great joy. The only thing I have is the prayer I offer always to the Almighty God, who is the rewarder of all good works. You will never lose your

## FREE AT

Great news this month that long-term detainee, Joshua Rwagese from Rwanda, was finally released from detention. Far from turning his back on Tinsley House, Joshua immediately signed up to join us as a volunteer visitor. He speaks over ten languages including Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Kiganda, Runyankole, Rotooro, Runyoro, Rukiga and Rosoga.



Whilst awaiting a date for his case to be heard in the high court Joshua is not entitled to any state benefits or permitted to work. Thankfully he has good friends he can rely on to meet his basic needs but he would really like to continue his studies with the Open University having already

### Welcome...

to new volunteers who joined us over the summer:

Abdoulaye Diomande & Jim Howley (Reigate), Sister Tarasai Zata (Crawley) Samuel Pehrson (Brighton)

### Wanted!

We're currently in need of men's clothing (all sizes), shampoo, travel bags/suitcases and flip flops.

Please contact the office if you can help!