



RCD Women's News

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Women asylum seekers – detention and denial of justice

“Fast track is just a system to refuse people. There is no time to listen to you. Even the judge didn't listen. When they put you in fast track there is only a very limited small chance to get out. I never heard of one person who won a fast track case in a year. How can everyone be lying?”

N, a woman detained in 'fast track' for eleven months, cited in Bail for Immigration Detainee's (BID) research, *Refusal Factory*

The government has heralded the New Asylum Model (NAM), in which case owners process all asylum applications from 'end to end', as the beginning of a new era of fair and fast asylum decisions.

The five year strategy, *Controlling our borders: making migration work for Britain* published in 2005, before NAM was set up, commits the government to processing 30 percent of new asylum claims in detention. However, since May 2005 when Yarl's Wood fast track opened, hundreds of women's cases have been turned down in detention.

The detained fast track at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) for single women and Harmondsworth IRC for men is a key part of NAM – a process the Refugee Council believes must end.

The Refugee Council opposes depriving people of their liberty for the convenience of the state to make a quick decision on a case deemed to be 'straightforward'. The speed of fast track appears to make it almost impossible to succeed in an asylum claim: 99 percent of cases are refused at initial decision and between three and six percent win at appeal, compared to success rates in the non-detained process of around 75 percent refusal at initial decision, and 20 to 25 percent success rate at appeal.

'Refusal Factory' Women's experiences of the Detained Fast Track at Yarl's Wood IRC, by BID, published in August 2006 highlights how women rape and torture survivors are detained in violation of the fast track rules, and are expected to disclose their traumatic experience within two days of claiming asylum. The whole process of interview and appeals is over within twenty days.

Research by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) into 34 states published in 2006, showed that asylum seekers generally do not abscond in the country where they wish to claim asylum¹. The Refugee Council believes it is unjust and unnecessary to detain women who have arrived to claim asylum.

We are lobbying officials and pushing for an end to fast track through the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum, and will continue to work with other organisations in the sector to highlight the unnecessary injustice of detained fast track. The UNHCR have been conducting a review of the decision making by fast track case owners, due to be published in 2008. We anticipate that this review will be an important opportunity to seek change.

For more information, see BID's report at

www.biduk.org/pdf/Fast%20track/BID_RefusalFactory_07.pdf or contact **Richard Lumley**, Protection Adviser at the Refugee Council at richard.lumley@refugeecouncil.org.uk

¹ Field, O and Edwards, E (2006) Alternatives to the Detention of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Legal Protection Policy Research Series, UNHCR.

Funding

The **Global Fund for Women Grants Programme (UK)** is an international network committed to equality and social justice and to defending women's rights by giving grants to organisations which promote women's equality and female human rights, and are primarily governed and led by women.

They offer small and flexible grants of \$500- \$20,000 for organisations' operating and programme expenses who are based outside the United States.

To make an application go to www.globalfundforwomen.org/cms/apply-for-a-grant/europe+former-soviet-union.html
For more information call **(415) 202 7640** or email ecis@globalfundforwomen.org

Comic Relief Red Nose Day Programmes for 2005-2008 has announced the deadline for funding applications for amounts over £5,000. Completed applications must be received by **29 February 2008**.

Funding is available for registered charities and constituted community and voluntary groups. There is no maximum grant size but most are £15,000-£40,000 a year and are made over one to three years. Grants under £5,000 have no deadline.

For further information go to www.comicrelief.com/ukgrants

New London RCO women's project

The Reaching to Community Project is a new initiative by the **Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation**. The project aims to provide support to Kurdish, Arab and Iranian women who have suffered from domestic violence or mental health problems to reduce their isolation, improve education and vocational opportunities and provide information and training.

The project is keen to receive information from any other groups or projects that assist Kurdish and Middle Eastern women as this will help them to provide better support.

Telephone: **020 7561 9594**
Email: waviolence@ukonline.co.uk

New publication

Why Women-only? The value and benefits of by women, for women services is a new publication from the Women's Resource Centre.

This report investigates the value and benefits of services which cater for women in the third and private sectors, including organisations which work with women refugees. Often funders and decision makers ask for justification for why these services are needed and this report explains that women need these services for their physical and psychological safety.

Women's services are preferred by women from all walks of life and the Women's Resource Centre argues that these precious resources should not be put at risk due to a lack of funding and support.

The publication can be found at www.wrc.org.uk/downloads/Polycystuff/why_womenonly.pdf

It is also available in other formats, please contact the Women's Resource Centre on **020 7324 3030** or email info@wrc.org.uk

Training

Training day on **Cultural and Religious Awareness** on **25 January 2008** at

This is run by Ashiana, a group which is committed to the safety of women from Asia, Turkey and Iran. They provide information and support in order to empower women and young people to make choices about their lives.

The training will explore:

- domestic violence from a cultural perspective
- Islam, Hindu and Sikhism
- differences between culture and religion
- family structures within the South Asian Community
- knowledge of domestic violence
- the support of clients from the South Asian Community.

Price: **£90** (including the cost of training materials, buffet lunch and refreshments)

For more information email info@ashiana.org.uk or call **020 8539 0427**

To submit any articles about women's asylum issues, email cdt@refugeecouncil.org.uk