

Independent Asylum Commission

CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **CITIZEN** ORGANISING FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

01/06/07

CITIZENS' ENQUIRY HEADS TO SCOTLAND TO LISTEN TO EVIDENCE ON THE REMOVAL OF REFUSED ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Independent Asylum Commission is visiting Scotland to collect evidence for an impartial citizens' enquiry into the UK asylum system. The Commission will publish a report in 2008 that is expected to produce recommendations for reform of the asylum system that are fair as well as forceful, and realistic as well as humane.

The Glasgow Hearing is the fourth of seven public hearings across the UK. An august team of Commissioners, including former High Court Judge Sir John Waite, Canon Theologian at Westminster Abbey Rev'd Nicholas Sagovsky, and Jacqueline Parlevliet, Deputy Representative for the UN refugee agency in the UK, will hear first-hand testimony from:

- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Kathleen Marshall;
- A spokesperson for the Scottish Executive's Refugee Integration team;
- Sally Daghlian, Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council;
- A representative of the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum;
- Patricia Coelho, European Council of Refugees and Exiles;
- Social workers and trade unionists;
- Community campaigners and activists;

The Glasgow Hearing will take place at the Scottish Trades Union Congress headquarters in Woodlands Road.

Asylum seekers and refugees will have the opportunity to tell their story on video, in order to inform the Commissioners' final report. There will be a recording booth set up at the event to capture their testimonies during the Public Hearing from 14:30 and the Roadshow in the evening.

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The Independent Asylum Commission was set up following an enquiry into Lunar House, the headquarters of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, by *South London Citizens*, whose report, "A humane service for global citizens" was published in November 2005.

Sir John Waite, a former Judge of the High Court and Co-chair of the Commission said:

"The issue of the removal of refused asylum seekers is one of great importance to asylum seekers and to the public. At the Commission's hearing in Glasgow we shall be hearing evidence about the impact of removals, and whether the current system is humane and effective. I shall look forward to learning more about the situation of asylum seekers in Scotland."

Ifath Nawaz, President of the Association of Muslim Lawyers and Co-chair of the Commission said:

"As we embark on our fourth public hearing, we look forward to receiving evidence relating to removals. Whilst having heard the points of views of Government representatives and the NGOs, the Commissioners are particularly keen to hear from those with personal experiences of the asylum system and how it has affected them."

Jonathan Cox, Co-ordinator of the Independent Asylum Commission, said:

"This is the first independent review of asylum policy. We are going out of our way to listen to all sides of the debate, all around the country. But the public hearings are just the tip of the iceberg. We are already receiving dozens of written submissions - from asylum seekers reporting inhumane treatment right through to citizens reporting abuses of an asylum system which they perceive to be too generous. I encourage anyone who wishes to report an abuse of the asylum system or has examples of inhumane treatment of asylum seekers to respond to the call for evidence on our website: www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk or write to IAC, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA."

- Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA. □
- 020 7375 1658 □ jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk □
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The Glasgow Public Hearing begins at 14:30 on 5th June and the Independent Asylum Commission Roadshow – a promotional event for the Commission featuring music, drama, interviews and advice on how citizens can contribute to the Commission – begins at 18:45 on the same day at the same venue.

For further details contact Jonathan Cox, Co-ordinator: 07919 484066.

Notes for editors:

- Event: **Independent Asylum Commission Public Hearing and Roadshow**
Date: **5th June (Public hearing 14:30-17:30; Roadshow 18:45-20:30)**
Location: **Scottish Trades Union Congress, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6NG.**
- The Independent Asylum Commission is conducting a nationwide review of the UK asylum system.
- The IAC is independent of government and the voluntary sector, and is accountable to citizens.
- Commissioners and the Commission's Co-ordinator will be available for comment, as will some of those giving evidence. Journalists are welcome to attend either event. Please contact Jonathan Cox 07919 484066 or jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk to book a place in the media gallery or to arrange an interview.
- For information on the Commission's previous Public Hearings and Roadshows see the News and Media section at: www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk.
For more information about the Commission contact chris@cof.org.uk or see www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk.