

Independent Asylum Commission

CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **CITIZEN** ORGANISING FOUNDATION

Dear all,

Welcome to the Independent Asylum Commission newsletter – the best way to keep up to date with all the latest news and developments from the Independent Asylum Commission. If you have been passed this email and would like to subscribe to regular updates and invitations to Independent Asylum Commission events, please email 'SUBSCRIBE' to chris@cof.org.uk. Please pass this email on to others who you think will be interested in our work.

1. **YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE COMMISSION'S PUBLIC HEARING ON DETENTION - IN WEST LONDON**
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YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE COMMISSION'S SECOND PUBLIC HEARING - IN WEST LONDON

The Commission is delighted to announce that it is to hold the second of its seven themed public hearings in the regions and nations. Sir John Waite and Ifath Nawaz and their team of commissioners will hear evidence from a range of people affected by or working in the immigration detention estate, and the impact of asylum on London.

The Public Hearing takes place between 14:30 and 17:30 on 29th March at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, 244 Acklam Road, London, W10 5YG (very near to Westbourne Park tube – on the Hammersmith and City Line).

The Public Hearing is open to all to attend, but we would encourage you to come along to the Independent Asylum Commission Roadshow from 18:45 on the same evening (29th March) at the same venue. The Roadshow will be a chance for the public to find out more about the work of the Commission in a relaxed and accessible way – and to find out how citizens can get involved in a citizens' enquiry. The Roadshow will be entertaining and accessible with music, drama, and interviews – like *Friday Night with Jonathan Ross* – except without the swearing! We would very much like you to join us - please email chris@cof.org.uk to let us know you are coming and how many people you are bringing with you.

And if you are coming – or even if you are not – please invite a friend, particularly if they don't know much about the issue of asylum. The Roadshows are part of the Commission's mandate to be accessible and engage with a whole range of citizens - from those who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated humanely to those who believe our asylum system is too generous.

THREE NEW WAYS OF GIVING EVIDENCE LAUNCHED

Following the launch of the Commission's call for evidence at the end of January, individuals and organisations are already giving evidence. In response to feedback, we have decided to

launch three new ways in which anyone who is interested can contribute to the work of the Commission.

The 'Submitting evidence' page on the Commission's website (www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk) now allows people to share their **personal stories** of the asylum system, produce **video testimony**, and offers them the opportunity to **report abuses** of the asylum system. This is in addition to the original call for parliamentary committee-style **written evidence** – and the Commission will still consider this evidence.

These new ways of submitting evidence make our work more accessible to a much wider range of people who are interested in getting involved. Please read the guidelines and use the templates as applicable. The call for evidence is open to anyone and we encourage you and your organisation to take advantage of the opportunity to have your views heard.

The closing date for evidence is 1st November 2007, but the sooner you submit evidence, the more chance you have of influencing the Commission's deliberations at an early stage.

N.B. Evidence should be submitted to evidence@cof.org.uk – not directly to Chris Hobson or Jonathan Cox. Please pass this information on to others who may like to give evidence.

FUTURE DATES FOR COMMISSION HEARINGS AND ROADSHOWS

The Commission will be holding six more themed Public Hearings and Roadshows. The dates have not been fixed for all of these yet (details will be on the website when they are definite), but we are following this provisional schedule:

1. Detention, London, 29 March 2007
2. Vulnerable Groups, Cardiff, 22 May 2007
3. Removals, Glasgow, 5 June 2007
4. Asylum Appeals, Leeds, September 2007
5. Asylum Support and Destitution, Manchester, October 2007
6. Miscellaneous, London, November 2007

Please contact jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk for more information.

HELP PROMOTE THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission is keen to hear from as many individuals and organisations as possible while it is gathering evidence – particularly those affected by the asylum system personally or those whose communities have been affected by the asylum system.

Please help us reach these people by circulating this information to individuals or networks who might be interested and encourage them to make contact with us.

If you would like to get involved in promoting the Commission's work more generally, please see the 'Getting Involved' section of our website or email jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk. Organisations will be holding People's Commissions in communities across the UK – we will be developing this concept in the next few months. If you would be interested in getting involved in this project, please let us know.

PERSONNEL CHANGES AT THE INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION

The Commission's Assistant Organiser, Roxanne Abdulali, has moved on, having accepted a new and challenging role at another charity. Though sad to lose Roxanne, we are happy to announce that she has been replaced by Chris Hobson, who as of 5th March took on all of her duties at the Commission. Chris graduated last year from the University of East London with an MA in Refugee Studies, and has a specific interest in the media aspect of refugee studies.

Please note that all enquiries should now be made to chris@cof.org.uk, as Roxanne's email is now out of use.

I hope you have found this Newsletter interesting – we will be in touch again soon.

Best wishes,

Jonathan.

Jonathan Cox

Co-ordinator

Independent Asylum Commission

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www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk

You have been sent this email because you have either asked to be kept informed of our work, or were invited to the launch of the Commission. If you would like to unsubscribe from this list please email 'UNSUBSCRIBE' to chris@cof.org.uk