

English Supplement

Al-Muntada

of the Iraqi Association

www.iraqiassociation.org

IRAQI ASSOCIATION

PALINGSWICK HOUSE
241 KING STREET
HAMMERSMITH
LONDON W6 9LP
TEL: 020 8741 5491
FAX: 020 8748 9010

E-mail: info@iraqiassociation.org

Issue No. 97

English Supplement

February 2009

Earned Citizenship, a Spasm of Hysteria



Do those who come to live and work in Britain not already "earn" their citizenship by contributing to our economy and obeying the laws of the land?

The British government set out moves to introduce an "earned citizenship" system for migrants, and refugees from outside the European Union who want to become British. Then, it might take 10 years to become a British citizen, which is a quarter of a typical working life. Migrants become easy targets at times of economic difficulty but introducing yet more tough measures to exclude people could damage our prospects for economic recovery.

At present they are first eligible for a passport five years after they arrive in this country. Under the new move, they will have to serve a further probationary period of one to three years. They will also face more tests to prove their worth.

United Kingdom is one of the very few countries who respect human rights and condemned third world dictators for their human rights violations. But look at how the Home Office treating non-European immigrants whose sin was only to be born in the wrong place on Earth! After all, we don't all need to be alike in order to live together. We just need to respect the principles on which this society is based, such as freedom within the law,

equality before the law and tolerance of differences.

The earned citizenship will breed second class citizens, it's driven by doubt and uncertainty that we, exiles and refugees, are potential

benefit-cheats and criminals, rather than overwhelmingly decent, hard-working and law-abiding people who already make - and want to continue to make - a big contribution to British society. That is xenophobic prejudice - and hardly conducive to fostering the sense of British values that the government claims to aspire to.

The former Home Office minister Fiona Mactaggart, MP for Slough, warned that the Earned citizenship would damage race relations: "One of the reasons we have such excellent race relations in Britain is because migrants to this country relatively quickly achieve permanent residence, unlike other countries in Europe,"

Making non-EU comers prove their commitment to Britain will do nothing to address divisions in our society, because many of those divisions are only tangentially connected to immigration, if at all. In fact, earned citizenship will disconnect us from this society with a culture of fear and uncertainty which would complicate the process of integration, and further alienate and marginalised exile communities. What next? Paying double taxes, become second citizens in this country, and no opportunities but barriers to isolate and demonise refugees and exile communities.

Canon Andrew White, the Vicar of Baghdad Appeals on behalf of Iraqi Association



Canon Andrew White

Canon Andrew White the vicar of Baghdad appeals on behalf of Iraqi Association to raise money for IraqChild project on 8th March 2009.

The Reverend Canon Andrew White, 45, is the Vicar of Baghdad. He spends an average three days a month with his wife and two young sons in the UK. St George's - the only Anglican church still standing in Iraq - is located a mile outside the green zone. He is clearly adored by his 1,500-strong congregation, who call him their "abouna" - father. "I do God on Saturday and Sunday. The rest of the week, I work on reconciliation," he says.

He is also President of the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East. He was previously Director of International Ministry at the International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral, England. At the age of 33 years he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He studied at St Thomas' Hospital, London and qualified as an Operating Department Practitioner in 1985. He worked in anaesthetics and was a member of the cardiac arrest team. One day he realised that he had done everything he had set out to achieve and asked himself, "what next?", and then decided to join the Church. He studied theology, training for the priesthood at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, where he decided to learn about Judaism and Islam. He also spent time at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was ordained in 1990, and became a curate at St Mark's, Battersea Rise in the Diocese of Southwark. He first saw his wife from the pulpit when she was in the congregation, and

when six weeks later he asked her to marry him, she initially said "maybe". He later became a vicar of the Church of the Ascension, Balham Hill in the same diocese.

In 1998, at the age of 33 years, White was appointed a canon at Coventry Cathedral, and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis about six weeks after moving to Coventry. He became the Director of International Ministry there - his role headed up the International Centre for Reconciliation, promoting reconciliation in conflicts (mainly religious) across the globe. He concentrated on the Middle East, because he thought that the church needed to be involved there. He remained in this post until 2005, when he moved to Baghdad to become Anglican Chaplain to Iraq. In 1997 - his final year as vicar of the Church of the Ascension - he was a Wandsworth Borough Councillor and served as Deputy Chairman of Social Services in London.

His main aim has been to try and maintain communication between Shia and Sunni leaders, and to "gain trust of key religious leaders on both sides in various conflict areas". He sees his role as trying to mediate and re-establish the dialogue between conflicting groups.

White's lay pastor was kidnapped in April 2007; however, he managed to raise the \$40,000 ransom necessary to secure the pastor's release and soon returned to Iraq where he stays most of the time. On 11 July 2007, White arrived in Britain after having fled Iraq following warnings of threats to his life, but returned later on. He is no stranger to danger, having been "hijacked, kidnapped, and locked up in rooms with bits of finger and toe and things." He has "been held at gunpoint, been attacked - the usual thing"! Many of his staff have been kidnapped or killed, with up to 11 killings of staff in a single year.

He is currently Vicar of St George's Church, Baghdad, Iraq and his other post includes: President and Chief Executive - Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME), Special Representative to the Alexandria Process - for the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Revd. and Rt. Hon. Rowan Williams, Eric Lane Fellow - Clare College, Cambridge and Harvard University Fellow. His selected publications include Iraq: People of Promise, Land of Despair (2003), Iraq: Searching for Hope (2005), By The Rivers of Babylon (2008), and The Vicar of Baghdad (2009). Canon White has also written widely on issues of inter-faith activity, conflict resolution, Middle East affairs and relations between Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Detention Costs Millions of Taxpayers' Money



Alternatives must be sought instead of dumping asylum seekers indefinitely in detention centres. Taking Haslar Removal Centre's weekly costs as the measure, the independent research by South Bank University, which monitored 98 asylum seekers, would suggest that the Home Office spent some £430,000 detaining 73 people who would have complied anyway under alternative restrictions (reporting requirements to the police, etc.). It has long been acknowledged that the UK detention regime is extremely expensive. According to the latest Home Office statistics, 2,415 people were held in the UK's ten immigration removal centres.

There is no Home Office evidence that asylum seekers living in the community commonly abscond before completing the asylum procedure, despite that risk being the most common grounds for detention orders. The UK Immigration Service has not commissioned any research or pilot

studies on either alternatives to detention or appearance/compliance rates in the past twelve years. As a result, adjudicators are making decisions at bail hearings without any sense of what a 'normal risk' of absconding may be, though they are supposed to refuse bail only where there is a 'materially greater than normal risk of the appellant absconding.' Another research study by BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees) documented the reasons why families with children in the UK are even less likely to abscond. It found that receiving and understanding information about conditions of 'temporary admission' was crucial in raising the level of compliance. It also collected testimony that the educational and health care needs of children are a key incentive preventing families from absconding. Non-compliance is simply not an option for a woman with a new baby and no money. The study recommended that

the Home Office should recognize these natural incentives and disincentives, and so refrain from ordering detention of families with children. The few independent studies on absconding in the UK acknowledge the possible need to detain people who have exhausted all appeals, though only after travel documents are secured and removal is imminent. As described above, evidence suggests that alternatives to detention, such as reporting requirements, are almost always sufficient to ensure the availability of asylum seekers right up to receipt of a final rejection. Projects geared towards encouraging failed asylum to examine their choices and return voluntarily, can reduce the frequency of pre-removal detention during the period when travel documentation is being obtained. Researchers also recommend that there is a need to track the rate at which failed asylum seekers depart the UK voluntarily, without assistance and without notifying the Immigration Service. It is believed that this would show many 'absconded' failed asylum seekers have in fact gone home.

Alternatives methods are cost effective and serves the purpose, for example, community reception centre could be used instead of detention. It is cost effective to run and its users can easily be monitored. Every resident would benefit from an individual casework plan. This would include an 'appraisal element, including recording the client's compliance with the requirements of their residence in the centre. This will avoid: high capital costs, including high security costs; high management risks, high insurance costs; local opposition; excessive staff emphasis on control; the likelihood that residents will become institutionalised; isolation from local

services, especially local schools for children which would also save costs; the likelihood of bullying and exploitation in large-scale centres; difficulties ensuring safety and child protection within large-scale centres; and unnecessary disruption of the reception-to integration process for those ultimately allowed to remain in Britain. It is argued that smaller centres would reduce the financial and social impact of the new reception system on any single local government authority. The social costs for asylum seekers themselves would be reduced by virtue of the supportive case-management structure. As a small charity working directly with destitute and vulnerable people, Iraqi Association experience is driven by its clients' desire and needs. We are aware that many failed Iraqi asylum seekers are being held in detention centres for indefinite periods. Ali, who had arrived here in year 2000, was detained briefly and released and detained again, finally he was deported back to Iraq in February 2009. Ali was living in Leeds and during those years, he had received different messages and communications from the Home Office. It is a tragedy for many asylum seekers that fear and uncertainty dominates their lives here, Ali has lost 9 years of his precious life. We call on the Home Office to adopt a maximum time limit for detention. Detention should only be used as a last resort for the shortest possible time pending removal, in line with the requirements of the 1971 Immigration Act. All decisions to detain should be evidence-based and subject to regular and thorough reviews. Where no imminent deportation is possible, detainees should be released and allowed to live with dignity and participate in the community.

European Parliament calls detention "intolerable"



Ms Martine Roure MEP

In February 2009, the European Parliament

adopted an own-initiative report, by 483 to 39 with 45 abstentions, that severely criticised the administrative detention of asylum seekers in Europe. The report Ms. Martine Roure, is a French politician and Member of the European Parliament for the south-east of France. She is a member of the Socialist Party, which is part of the Party of European Socialists, and sits on the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home. Ms Roure's highlights detention centre conditions as "intolerable," and deplores the lack of legal aid and adequate reception conditions in Member States. The report sums up the Parliament's findings after a series of detention centre visits by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). The committee inspected conditions in 2007 and 2008 in centres located in Greece, the UK,

Spain, France, Malta, Belgium, The Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Italy and Cyprus. On 9 October 2008, JRS-Europe attended the NGO consultation organised by Ms. Roure in order to discuss her report and provide further evidence of practices in detention centres. In its comments, JRS-Europe highlighted the severe physical and mental impact detention has upon asylum seekers, and the poor state of medical care found within many centres. The adoption of Ms. Roure's report marks the official word of the Parliament towards the Reception Conditions Directive, which was amended by the Commission in December 2008. The Commission's proposal amendments will be debated under the Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council during this year. A final decision will be reached under the co-decision procedure with the Parliament.

Reach out and help an Iraqi Child.



£10 will feed an orphaned child for a week.

You can donate online using our secure website:
www.iraqiassociation.org or post to:
IraqChild, Freepost 21599, London W6 9BR.

Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Charity No. 1101109

Our Charity's Recent Activities

During the last three months, the main ongoing challenges facing IA include the level of destitution and uncertainty that faces many of Iraqis newcomers, those who sought sanctuary here. As a charity we are determine to provide comfort and support including advice in their languages and other available statutory support. The other trend is the increase in settled clients with the level of debts, such as mortgage arrears and utility bills. It is obvious that the recession is hitting the sector and makes some our clients further marginalised. However, we also have had a busy period with referral from other agencies as well as our daily planned work. We are extremely grateful for Canon Andrew White, the Vicar of Baghdad, who accepted our request to appeal on behalf if Iraqi Association on BBC Radio to raise money for Iraqi children. The appeal will go live on 8th March.

Our frontline work includes

achieving successful intervention by IA with the Home Office to clear the delay of granting 6 clients their entitlement of Indefinite Leave to Remain. We successfully assisted 2 families with their complicated cases of family reunion appeals. It is worth mentioning that 2 refused visa were overturned by IA representation letters. Furthermore, we have restored government support through NASS scheme to continue

assisting 2 destitute clients. IA traditionally has been working with and for vulnerable people, particularly in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, providing cost effective service which saves the local authority thousands of pounds. For example, our elderly day centre has had new 9 users and we provided 4 tailor-made elderly outing activities. We are very pleased to receive a new elderly client, she is 74 and arrived under the UNHCR

settlement programme, she has no one here. We found her accommodation and assisted her with other settlement needs and put her in touch with other local elderly people. Other key services includes clients with mental health and depressions, we had 2 cases, mainly they suffer from isolation and severe depression, our trained volunteers provides outreach work to offer them necessary support. IA other services in the last three months,

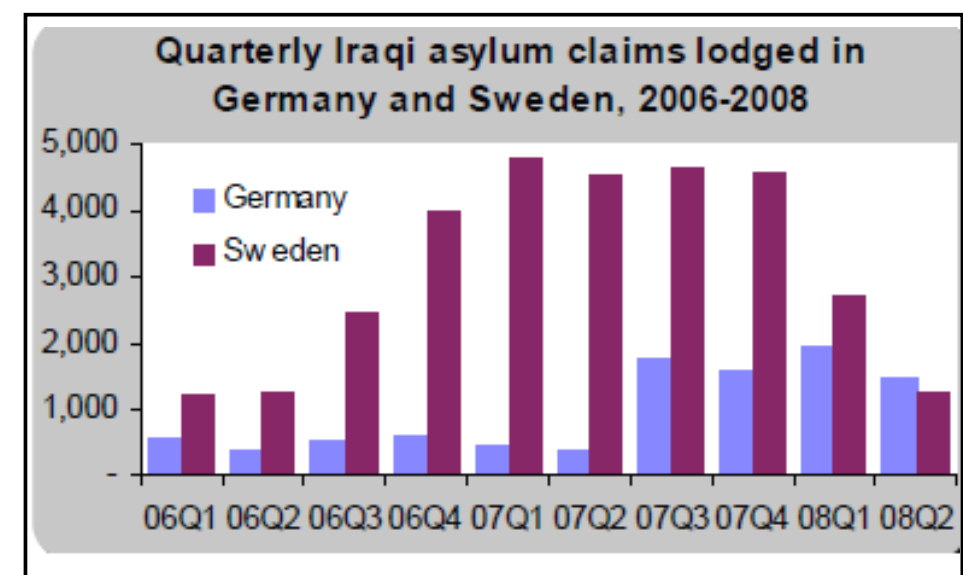
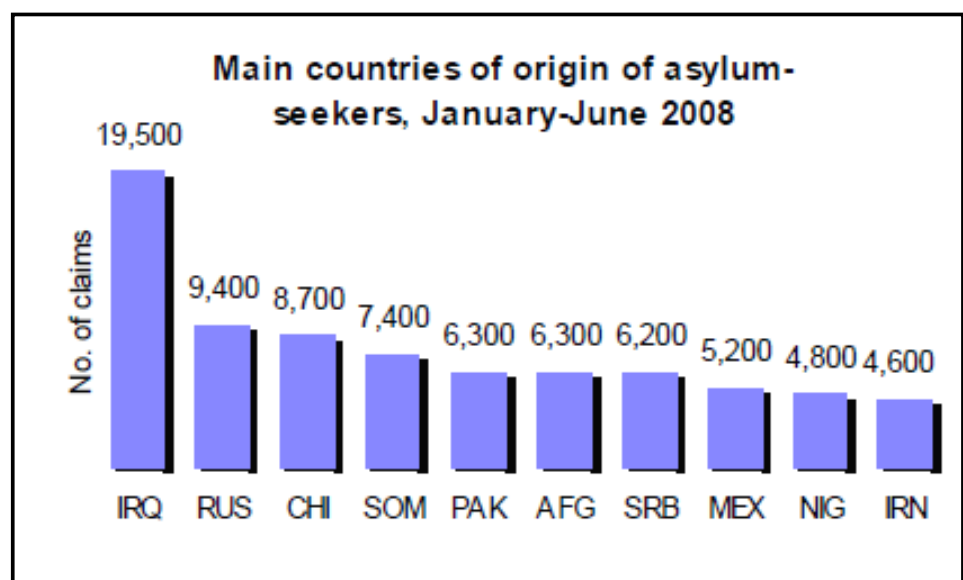
includes:
 2 group meetings for our users
 25 public health advice sessions,
 15 education and training guidance to young people
 3 families with children's activities
 8 daily average telephone call enquiries
 5 meetings attended with other agencies
 22 media enquiries
 10 immigration cases
 8 welfare rights cases

Associations clients	November 2008	December 2008	January 2009	Total
Employment & Training	17	11	27	55
Welfare Advice	84	69	80	233
Healthy Lifestyle Advice	42	28	33	103
Family Reunion	9	5	11	25
Immigration Advice	89	47	63	199
Media Enquiries & Case studies	6	2	14	22
Telephone Advice & Enquiries	122	94	108	324
Regular Volunteers	12	9	10	31
Elderly Services	118	59	94	271
Referral from Agencies	13	4	11	30
Referral to Agencies	29	15	23	67
Education Guidance	39	13	18	70
	580	356	495	1431

Iraq is still the leading country of origin of asylum seekers

Iraq remained the leading country of origin of asylum applicants during the first six months of 2008. Despite fewer of its citizens lodging asylum claims in the 44 industrialized countries, the number of Iraqi claims was twice higher than of those submitted by asylum-seekers originating from the Russian Federation, the second most important source country. Other important source countries of asylum-seekers are China, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Serbia. During the first half of 2008, Iraqis lodged 19,500 asylum claims or 12 per cent of all applications in the 44 industrialized countries. This constitutes a significant decrease compared to 2007: 18 per cent compared to the last six months of 2007 (23,500; excluding Italy) and

almost 10 per cent compared to the first half of 2007 (21,400; excluding Italy). The decrease in Iraqi claims was particularly significant between April and June of 2008 when 8,800 Iraqis applied for asylum in the 44 industrialized countries, the lowest quarterly level since the fourth quarter of 2006. One in five of the 19,500 Iraqi applications were submitted in Sweden (3,900), the latter having attracted the highest number of Iraqi asylum-seekers for some time. Germany registered 3,400 Iraqi asylum claims, the same level as in the preceding six months, but four times more than in the first half of 2007 (820). A change in Swedish decision-making on Iraqi asylum claims following the Migration Court's determination that the situation in Iraq is not one of "armed conflict" led to a significant fall in recognition rates and a shift in flows. Arrivals in Sweden thus dropped but rose in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. Greece recorded some 1,200 Iraqi claims between January and June 2008, as compared to 3,500 during the same period of 2007, while the Netherlands and Turkey⁹ recorded 2,400 and 2,700 Iraqi applications respectively during the first semester of 2008. Some 285 Iraqi asylum claims were



submitted in Italy during the first six months of 2008 compared to 190 in 2007.

Given the relatively low number of Iraqi claims in Italy, the trend remains unchanged.