

women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

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Please send any information that you would like to see published in our next edition by 7 August 2006 (see email or postal address on back cover).

FGM: Mother and baby at significant risk of dying, medical study finds

The first large medical study of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) shows the harmful medical effect of the practice on reproduction conclusively:¹ A mother who has undergone the practice or her baby are at significant risk at childbirth, with more than a 50 percent chance of dying. The degree of severe complications or the risk of dying for mother and baby increases with the severity of the genital mutilation performed.

The study is the first that provides consistent and reliable medical evidence of the long-term physical harm of FGM. Written by members of the WHO Study Group on FGM and Obstetrical Outcome, it was based on the follow-up of more than 28,000 mothers from six African countries where FGM is commonly practised, from 2001 to 2003. However the study only followed women who had delivered in hospitals and the authors warn that the results are likely to underestimate the risk of death and complications as many women give birth at home.

¹ WHO, 'New study shows female genital mutilation exposes women and babies to significant risk at childbirth,' Geneva, 2 June 2006, at: [Hwww.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr30/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr30/en/index.html)H

According to FORWARD, it is estimated that between 100 and 132 million girls and women around the world are affected by FGM. Each year, a further 2 million girls are estimated to be at risk of the practice, mostly in Africa but also in parts of the Middle and Far East and among African immigrants in the West. WHO states that FGM consists of '*the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other deliberate injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or non-therapeutic reasons.*' It adds: '*It is in direct violation of young girls' rights, has both short-term and long-term adverse health consequences, and is an unnecessary procedure.*'

For further information on the study, contact: Mr Christopher Powell, Communications Advisor, WHO/Family and Community Health, Telephone: +41 22 791 2888, Mobile: +41 79 217 3425 Email: ppowellc@who.int or WHO FGM study group, Telephone: + 41 22 791 3374, Fax: +41 22 791 4171, Email: FGMstudygroup@who.int.

UK News

Fresh inquest into death of woman asylum seeker at Dover rejected

A judge has rejected an application for a fresh inquest into the death of Elmas Ozmico, from Turkey, who had to wait twelve hours to see a doctor while detained at Dover, Kent, after complaining of being unwell hours after arriving in the UK and claiming asylum.²

² Source: BBC News, 'Judge refuses new inquest into asylum seeker's death', 7 June 2006, online at:

Despite her complaints, a chief immigration officer refused to take her to hospital. Instead the port police sent two first-aiders but the port medical officer refused to examine her. The 43-year-old mother was eventually taken to hospital when she collapsed and underwent three operations before she died. The Immigration Service admitted it had failed to get her to hospital but she was diagnosed with the flesh-eating disease necrotising fasciitis and at the end of a two-week inquest the jury said she died from natural causes. Her husband claimed the coroner had failed to direct the inquest jury properly. The judge said the jury was entitled to come to this conclusion and refused the application for another inquest.

New appeal on destitution

The Refugee Council launched a new appeal this week, aimed at bringing an end to the appalling levels of destitution faced by thousands of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK who exist in a vacuum, refused help from this country, and unable to return to their own.³

For more information or to donate go to: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/supportus/index.htm.

Home Office API on Medical Foundation cases amended

The Home Office Asylum Policy Unit has amended its Medical Foundation Asylum Policy Instruction. The amendments

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/5055778.stm>.

³ Source: Refugee Council Newsletter, 19 June 2006.

place more onus on legal representatives to keep the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) Medical Foundation Enquiry Team informed in writing of the progress of claimant's appointments and the timescale for completing the report. The revised instruction is available on the IND website at:

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/6353/6356/apimedicalfoundation.pdf.

UK projects

Second update on the WASP project

The WASP project – Women Asylum Seekers from Pakistan who seek refugee protection against domestic violence – submitted its first progress report in the January 2006 RWRP bulletin following a successful launch in November 2005.

The project consists of a trans-national study of the complex issues which affect Pakistani women's ability to seek refugee protection in the UK against domestic violence. It aims to contribute to the development of more effective support and legal services for Pakistani women asylum seekers in the UK. It also aims to add to the body of evidence on the issues in their claims to improve their access to justice. In addition, the WASP project aims to establish appropriate links with NGOs and experts in Pakistan, to contribute to the development of effective services there and to build on the body of material available in the UK on the extent to which protection is available in Pakistan. Much of the preliminary work to make links in

Pakistan took place during the first field trip in the winter of 2005/6.

Since its last report in January, the project is nearing completion of its UK based '*scoping*' exercise having mailed nearly 1000 surveys to organisations across England and Wales in order to gather information about the types of organisations which work with Pakistani women asylum seekers and their areas of service delivery.

The findings of the exercise (to be published in the next update) will directly inform the development of extensive consultation with service providers across England and Wales towards the end of this year and the beginning of 2007. The WASP project aims to consult on a number of very specific issues which affect women's asylum claims in the UK, including the actual viability of internal flight and the actual role of the authorities in Pakistan vis-à-vis providing meaningful protection. These are some of the key issues which have influenced the Home Office and the courts in their decisions on women's asylum claims, and yet, these are the very issues over which there is conflicting evidence.

The scoping exercise has proved to be a positive way of publicising the project, and has also resulted in many calls for advice and support. Numerous calls have been from women or organisations supporting women who have left violent marriages in the UK during their probationary spouse periods, not exclusively from women wishing to seek asylum or women whose asylum claims have failed. What has clearly emerged from this is that both categories of

women are threatened with destitution on the grounds that both have in one form or another, no recourse to public funds.

This has effectively created a new area of work for the project workers as providing direct support and advice, both legal and non-legal, was not initially planned. Thanks to an Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme grant, the WASP project has been able to resource this additional area of work. Not only will the advice and support work enable the project to continue providing direct services, the project will be in clearer and stronger position to inform national policy developments on the issue of '*no recourse to public funds*' and its impact on women leaving violent marriages.

The WASP project has also embarked on its second field trip to Pakistan. During this trip the WASP field worker will consult with crisis centres, shelters, a broad range of domestic and international NGOs, the police and government officials across the four '*regions*' of Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Peshawar. The project hopes to gather reliable information about the actual situation on the ground regarding internal flight, the availability and sufficiency of state protection for women, the extent to which traditional customs, practices and structures influence decisions on women seeking protection against domestic violence and the actual roles of the various state authorities.

The field worker will also consult widely with Pakistani women across the four regions including women in some of the rural areas. This will enable them to

gather valuable material about their actual experiences of leaving their family homes, of seeking safety in shelters and their experiences of and opinions on the viability of internal flight.

The field trips to Pakistan have themselves generated an additional demand for advice and support from women there, which the project is hoping to meet too in some capacity. In addition to all of the above developments, the project is running, for the time being, four case studies which will be presented in more details in its next update.

Maternity services for Black and Minority Ethnic Women

The Reaching Out Project, currently housed with the national charity Medact, aims to improve access to maternity services for highly marginalised black and minority ethnic women, including refugees, asylum seekers, women with little or no English and women with insecure immigration status.⁴ The project is based in London and operates on a national basis.

The project consists of campaigning work and development of information resources and is characterised by a high level of user involvement. It commenced in 2005 and will be undertaken in two stages. The first stage is due for completion in March 2007, and the second in May 2007.

During stage one of the project, preliminary consultations were

⁴ All information below provided by the Reaching Out Project.

undertaken to identify priorities for campaigning and for development of information resources. Consultations were undertaken with women who were currently pregnant or had a young baby and were based in London. These included women from the following communities: Black African (Ugandan, Ivorian, Nigerian, Congolese (DRC), Sudanese), Moroccan, Eritrean, Pakistani, Bengali, Yemeni, Irish Travellers, Albanian, Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese. Consultations were also undertaken with workers who worked with highly marginalised black and minority ethnic women. These included advocacy workers, community group co-ordinators and other '*first point of contact*' personnel.

The consultation process found some evidence that highly marginalised women from Black and minority ethnic communities were being turned away from maternity services or deterred from using services because of requests for payment. The immigration status of some of these women meant that they were not entitled to free NHS care, however they were entitled to receive care without advance payment. These women did not have the resources to seek private health care, and it is not clear how they managed their pregnancy, birth and post-natal care.

In terms of entitlements, the campaigning work has three main elements. The project will print and distribute a poster providing information about entitlements to care for pregnant women, targeted at community groups. It will compile and disseminate further evidence about women being turned away or deterred from seeking care, and

the health consequences for these women and their babies. It will also campaign for changes to the deterrent practices of Overseas Managers working within hospitals so as to minimise the risk of women feeling unable to access maternity care to which they are entitled.

In addition, preliminary consultations identified direct access to midwives as an important mechanism for marginalised women to access maternity services. While this entitlement exists at present, there are many systemic barriers to women making direct contact with a midwife. Direct access to a midwife is particularly important for women who are not integrated into the community, including women supported under NASS, women with uncertain immigration status, women who are homeless including those who have been denied refugee status, travellers, and women with limited or no English. Changes to commissioning may create further barriers to accessing GP services, reinforcing the importance of direct access to midwives.

Thus the campaign work relating to direct access to midwives will include campaigning with health policy makers to address systemic barriers to direct access to midwives, and developing information about direct access to include on information cards to be distributed to marginalised women.

The preliminary consultations also established that many women had difficulty registering with a GP and in gaining access to a midwife. Small picture cards with information on the back about how to access care and

request an interpreter have been piloted with marginalised women and with community workers. The information to be included on the card will be determined in the context of the campaign work on direct access to midwives, and will be piloted with marginalised women and community workers

Lastly during the preliminary consultations, the women consulted expressed interest in obtaining information on a number of aspects of ante-natal, birth and post-natal care. A picture-based information resource on ante-natal, birth and post-natal care was for use by people working in the community, such as community group advisors and health advocates is currently being developed.

Stage Two of the project is the development of teaching resources to accompany the storyboards on ante-natal, birth and post-natal care. These resources are targeted at the community workers who will use the storyboards to inform and empower marginalised women about maternity services. The teaching resources will be developed with a high level of involvement from the workers who will be using the resources, and from the highly marginalised women that they work with.

The storyboards and teaching resources will be produced jointly as the Access and Advocacy Pack for Maternity Services and marketed through the Department of Health. For more information, contact Anna Gaudion, Project Officer, tel: 020 7324 4737 or email: anna.gaudion@medact.org. Reaching Out Project, Medact, The

Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT, United Kingdom.

Details of the Reaching Out Project can also be found online at:

www.medact.org/reaching_out_home.php.

Salvation Army referral project for trafficked women

The project called the Jarrett Community offers professional assistance for female, adult victims of trafficking for sexual purposes. The project has eight beds for any referred woman or transgendered individuals who consider themselves a woman from one of the 20 countries in Eastern Europe (including the Russian Federation) and who is over 18 or believed to be over 18.

To make a referral, agencies should call 0845 434 9159 asking for availability of beds.

New Domestic Violence Counselling and Support Services

Woman's Trust is launching these new services for East London on Wednesday 21 June. For more information, please contact 020 8522 7856/745 or email admin@wtrusteast.entadsl.com.

Our next edition will be a double issue for July/August 2006 and will be issued during August.

UK events

Launch of three tools for rape survivors, legal representatives and supporters

Black Women's Rape Action Project (BWRP) and Women Against Rape (WAR) in collaboration with All African Women's Group & Legal Action for Women have produced the three following tools to be launched on Friday 23 June:

- '*Claiming asylum from rape*' - A Rights Sheet
- '*Misjudging rape*' - A Dossier into adjudicators flouting international law and even their own guidelines when they consider the asylum claims of women and girls seeking safety and protection from rape.
- '*Asylum from Rape Petition*' - calling on the government to officially recognise rape as torture and persecution and therefore grounds for asylum, and to end the detention and deportation of rape survivors and their families.

The launch, which is open to all, will take place at 11am, Trinity United Reformed Church, Buck Street, Camden Town, London NW1. For more information about the tools, contact Crossroads Women's Centre, 230A Kentish Town Rd London NW5 2AB, Tel: 020 7482 2496 Fax: 020 7209 4761, email: bwrap@dircon.co.uk or war@womenagainstrape.net.

I will survive - melting the trauma with words

Refugee women speak out against rape and torture, and fighting for asylum from domestic violence.⁵ The event takes place on Friday 23 June 2006, from 7.30-9pm at the Friends Meeting House, The Friars, Canterbury, CT16 1DL. Speakers include:

- Nasrin Parvaz - The Medical Foundation, Write to Life Project
- Lucy Wake - Stop Violence Against Women Campaign, Amnesty International
- Delia Hazrati - Kent Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers
- Hubert Moore - Poet and Refugee Mentor, The Medical Foundation

Begum, a woman who led a campaign against her own deportation, was also due to speak at this event but she was deported last Saturday 17 June. A short vigil will be held prior to the meeting to pay tribute to her and her action in the UK. Begum's friends in Kent Refugee Action Network are currently trying to arrange legal support for her through Amnesty International in case she is detained at Mumbai Airport.

Play: *The Bogus Woman*

This internationally acclaimed play focuses on the experiences of a woman who had imprisoned in Campsfield Detention Centre. The play, by Kay Adsheed and directed by Kully Thiari, is shown at 7.30pm, Saturday 24 June, at the Human Rights Action Centre (Amnesty International), 17-25 New Inn Yard London EC2.

⁵ Source: IRR News Team weekly digest.

International news

DRC: Soldiers sentenced for crimes against humanity including mass rape

Six soldiers from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FADRC) have been sentenced to hard labour for life by the military court of Equateur province, DRC under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) ratified by the country in July 1998.⁶ The statute classifies rape as a crime against humanity.

The events that led to the successful prosecution took place in December 2003 when at least 119 women, some under 18 years, were mass raped in Songo Mboyo, in the North-Western province of Equateur. The soldiers, who were members of the former rebel movement *Mouvement pour la liberation du Congo* (MLC) before it joined the transitional government, faced charges of mass rape, crimes against humanity, robbery, incitation to arm, military plot, dissipation of weapons and ammunitions, and usurpation of command. The soldiers had rebelled against its commanders following a dispute over unpaid wages. The soldiers went on to rob almost all the houses in the villages of Songo-Mboyo and Bongandanga and raped the women and girls.

⁶ UN, '6 Congolese soldiers convicted of mass rape get life sentences,' un news centre, New York, 9 June 2006 (HUNNews@un.org). This was the second time the case was heard and the soldiers sentenced, after the tribunal who initially convicted the soldiers was found to lack jurisdiction in the district where the crimes were perpetrated.

The court also ruled that the DRC Government was responsible for the acts of its soldiers against civilians in the Songo Mboyo area in December 2003, and ordered it to pay \$10,000 to each family who lost a member because of the sexual assault, \$5,000 to each surviving rape victim and \$3,000 to each businessperson victim of the soldiers' looting.

This is the first sentence proclaimed against the country's military personnel for crimes against humanity and, according to the human rights division of the UN mission (MONUC) in the DRC, constitutes a significant step towards the fight against impunity in the country, in particular with regards to sexual violence. The prosecution followed investigations against the alleged mass rapes by inspectors from MONUC's human rights division in April 2004. The head of the division, Komlan Tchangai, and other human rights defenders took part in the hearing.⁷

Pakistan: Honour Killings said to be 'rampant'

According to news agency Reuters in Karachi, Pakistan, there are more than 1,000 honour killings reported in the country each year, many related to disputes over money or other matters.⁸ The actual number is expected to be higher. Reuters writes: '*The custom is*

⁷ See also Integrated Regional Network (IRIN), 'DRC: Soldiers jailed for mass rape', 14 April 2006, http://irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=52801&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=DRCH.

⁸ Source: Reuters, Karachi, circulated by *The Deccan Herald*, 'Honour killings rampant in Pakistan', Monday 29 May 2006, online at: www.deccanherald.com/deccanherald/May292006/fo reign1951312006528.aspH.

rooted in tribalism, although a strict interpretation of Islam's hudood penal code also rules that adulterers should be stoned to death.' Seventy percent of the population still lives in rural areas governed by tribal customs predating Islam.

A campaign to end honour killing has been launched recently. Oxfam's representative in Pakistan, Farhana Faruqi Stocker, indicated that 10,000 people have signed up to it so far. She said that the '*mindset of legislators*' needed to be changed if legislation was to change too but also talked of the need to engage with the clerics who have powerful influence on local rural communities.

Turkey: Female suicide linked to '*traditional*' practices

Women and girls in Southeast and Eastern Turkey are opting to suicide to escape traditional practices that control their lives, such as forced marriage, domestic violence and denial of reproductive rights.⁹ Despite existing domestic legislation and the fact that Turkey is party to all major international human rights instruments that address violence against women and provides for the equality and human rights of women, the authorities do not implement the law. These are the findings of the United Nations expert Yakin Ertürk, after a 10-day visit, who said, '*in practice, ... I have found that authorities too often lack the willingness to implement these laws and*

⁹ UN, 'Forced marriages, domestic violence contribute to female suicide in Turkey,' UN News Centre, 1 June 2006, online at: www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18706&Cr=Turkey&Cr1=H.

protect women from violence. Interlocutors in the region explained that politicians and administrators are often inclined to arrange themselves with local power structures and norms at the expense of women's rights.'

Without legal support, women are faced with a dilemma of choosing to adhere to traditional demands or being subjected to diverse forms of violence as a result of not abiding by traditional practices. Indeed, family and society in these parts of Turkey accept or tolerate the practices and offer no support to the intended victims. Yakin Ertürk pointed to the link between '*the patriarchal order and the human rights violations that go along with it.*' She added that there was an urgent need to address the problem of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a family member, which was found to be a key factor that led to suicide.

Nigeria: New Bill to prohibit homosexuality and same sex marriage

A new bill, expected to become law shortly, has been passed in Nigeria to ban '*sexual relationship between persons of the same sex, celebration of marriage by them and for other matters connected therewith.*'¹⁰ According to Uhuru-Wazobia, an African Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender organisation, the law will apply to civil or religious marriages and affect '*all persons who aid, assist, preside over, witness or even cater such an occasion. Marriages made and recognized by other countries will*

¹⁰ LGBT Nigerians, www.lgbtnigerians.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=2, May 2006.

become null and void in Nigeria.' Uhuru-Wazobia says that the law will also forbid gay people from forming associations. In addition, any work on gay or lesbian issues, whether in public or private, will be liable for prosecution. This includes people who advocate on behalf of gay and lesbians, or organisations working on or publishing materials on gay and lesbian issues.

Homosexuality is already prohibited in Nigeria, with penalties of 14 year's imprisonment if the accused is a Christian or death by stoning if s/he is a Muslim. The Archbishop of Nigeria has declared that homosexuality is '*un-Biblical, unnatural and definitely un-African*' and '*a perversion of the divine order, and sin.*'

Human rights organisations are urging the Nigerian government to withdraw the bill; guarantee safety and protection for all persons irrespective of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression of their sexuality or religion; respect its international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Colombia: Constitutional Court decriminalises abortion

On May 10, the Constitutional Court of Colombia ruled in favour of decriminalising abortion when a woman's life or health is in danger, the pregnancy is the result of rape, or when the foetus has malformations incompatible with life

outside the womb. The decision follows a suit filed by Women's Link in April 2005 to constitutionally challenge Colombia's penal code provisions, which previously outlawed the procedure under all circumstances. For more information, visit Women's Link Worldwide's website: www.womenslinkworldwide.org.

Afghanistan: Schools for girls face ongoing violence

Although the Taliban were overthrown by a US-led coalition in 2001, efforts to promote women's education continue to be sabotaged by fundamentalists.¹¹ Teachers and students have been targeted for killing by insurgents, 90 schools have been reported burned and as a result of continuing attacks, as many as 200 schools have been closed. In the midst of these ongoing threats, violence and persecution from the fundamentalists, Afghanistan women and girls have taken up the support being offered by the government and UNICEF to better themselves in terms of getting an education hence defying the Taliban convention.

But despite education being welcomed with enthusiasm in the community and people offering their living rooms, shops or houses for the classes to take place, many difficulties remain. Some families see no value in girls' education and are worried that the schools are too far from their homes as they fear for the lives of their children. Families also insist on female teachers for their daughters, a request that is difficult to meet as the

¹¹ SOWFI, Afghan girls fighting to learn, 22 May 2006, [Hhttp://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19213795-2703,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19213795-2703,00.html)

Taliban banned girls' education for five years.

According to statistics, only 14 percent of Afghan women are literate. In the southern Uruzgan province, only 10 percent of primary school-aged girls go to school. In Zabul, it is one percent and across Afghanistan, it is thought that only seven percent of high school-aged girls go to school.

Romania: Government Urged to Eliminate Multiple Discrimination against Romani women

The UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women on Romania's compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), convened in May to review Romania's sixth periodic report on measures to implement the Convention.¹² It has now released its concluding comments, including concerns about the '*multiple*' and '*intersecting*' forms of discrimination faced by Romani women and girls based on sex, ethnic or cultural background, and/or socio-economic status. The Committee states: '*Roma women and girls remain in a vulnerable and marginalized situation, in particular with regard to access to education, health, housing, employment, official identity documents and participation in political and public life.*'

The full text of the CEDAW Committee's conclusions and recommendations is available online at:

¹² Source: European Roma Rights Centre, 16 June 2006.

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ceaw35/cc/Romania_rev.pdf.

EU Commissioners fail to agree on 'safe' countries

European Union Commissioners failed to agree in May over a joint EU list of countries deemed '*safe*' for asylum seekers who claim in Europe. The formation of such a list is part of the development of a common EU asylum policy which is due to be completed by 2010. The list will be redrafted and if approved could be presented again to Commissioners in mid-June. The UK has currently opted out of this area of policy.

International actions & events

EWL reminds member states of their obligations to provide measures for women asylum seekers

The European Women's Lobby says there is an '*urgent need to have common EU gender guidelines similar to those produced by the UNHCR, to facilitate the interpretation of gender-based persecution and to recognise the legitimacy of claims by women in this context.*'

Marking World Refugee Day (20 June), the European Women's Lobby released a press release reminding EU member states that '*the right to asylum is an individual right based on the individual's own experience of persecution and this includes women's individual right to asylum.*'

EWL refers to the Council Directive on common criteria to qualify as a refugee in all the member states which was adopted in April 2004 and makes reference to gender in asylum claims, in particular violence and discriminatory acts perpetrated against women because of their gender or sex. The EU Directive also recognises that non-state agents can be the perpetrators of persecution. This is a key acknowledgement as many women are forced to flee their countries for lack of protection against traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour killings, often perpetrated by family or community members.

The EWL reminds member states that the directive ought to be incorporated into national law by 10 October 2006. At the same time, it also points to the fact that currently *'there are no EU sex disaggregated data on the number of women and men seeking asylum in the EU.'*

The EWL says it will closely monitor the transposition of the Directive at national level and launch a lobbying action in the near future to ensure that all Member States comply with the provisions of the Directive.

Annette LAWSON, EWL Vice-President, declared: *'Very often it is a problem of interpretation. Officials assessing claims from women do not necessarily equate the status of women in the country of origin with their real exposure to gender based persecution. We are referring to situations where women are in danger of being killed for 'dishonouring' the family, where they are in danger of being stoned to death; where they are raped in*

situations of conflict and war and along with their girl children are subjected to practices that are carried out in the name of 'culture', such as female genital mutilation or any other form of gender-based violence.'

For a full copy of the press release, contact: Maria Collins or Cécile Gréboval, tel: + 32. (0)2.217.90.20
collins@womenlobby.org
greboval@womenlobby.org.

Iran: Women Activists arrested

According to the Organisation for the emancipation of Women (www.rahai-zan.org), Iranian women gathered in Tehran on 12 June to demand that women's fundamental human rights be respected and, in particular, the repelling of laws that discriminate against women, especially in relation to court matters, employment and family issues (including the banning of polygamy). Women also demonstrated to demand an increase in the age of legal responsibility for girl and boy children to 18 years old. However the organisation also reports that the the Islamic republic's police brutally attacked women taking part in the event. About one hundred demonstrators were arrested and detained in prison.

You can send a message of solidarity to the Iranian women (see website address above). Amnesty International has urged the Iranian government to ratify, without reservation, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Conference on persecution against women

The Conference which will be an opportunity to examine persecutions specific to women in the context of exile, migration and international protection (see WAN issue no. 55 for more details) will take place in Paris on 14-16 September 2005. For full details of the programme, see online:

<http://terra.rezo.net/article415.html>.

Participants need to book in advance. Click on the following link and enter your email details:

<http://listes.univ-paris1.fr/wws/subscribe/terra-fem.pers>.

new publications

international

Not only the state: Torture by Non-state actors - Towards enhanced protection, Accountability and effective remedies

This latest report (May 2006) is published by REDRESS, the human rights organisation that seeks reparation for torture survivors. In his foreword to the report, Professor Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, writes that *'de facto regimes and armed groups continue to commit acts amounting to torture, causing untold suffering. However, this practice has received comparatively little attention if contrasted to torture committed by state agents.'* Despite progress by the international community, more should be done to address torture by non-state actors.

The Report was prompted by requests from those working on behalf of victims of torture committed by armed groups, who were struggling to get justice and reparation. REDRESS writes that *'the combination of a focus on states' violations, the lack of existing remedies and practical difficulties mean that there are a large number of unresolved cases and very little accountability.'* The Report, besides clarifying who is a non-state actor, provides an overview and analysis of the nature and prevalence of the practice of torture by non-state actors, through the description of actual experiences suffered by victims.

It also maps the applicable national and international framework and examines the main issues and challenges in regard to prevention, accountability and reparation at the national and international level. And it explores the creation and/or use of mechanisms and remedies to counter the torture by non-state actors more effectively.

The Report is aimed at international human rights bodies, states and others concerned with torture and/or non-state actors, but also and in particular at those working on behalf of victims of torture and engaging with non-state actors. It is also aimed at non-state actors themselves, by means of outlining existing obligations and responsibilities and indicating how best to meet these obligations with regard to the prohibition of torture.

The full text can be found at: www.redress.org/publications/Non%20State%20Actors%2009%20June%20Final.pdf.

Unspeakable Love, Gay and Lesbian life in the Middle East

This book by Brian Whitaker depicts the reality of people in the Middle East who are forced to live secretive and fearful life as homosexuality remains a taboo in the region and is publicly described as a 'heinous sin' by clerics. As a result, gay and lesbians are ostracised by their families or even referred to be 'cured' by psychiatrists, or imprisoned (Saqi Books Publishers, May 2006, £14.99, ISBN: 086356819X).

Safe as Ghost Houses: Prospects for Darfur African Survivors Removed to Khartoum

This new report published by the Aegis Trust can be found online at: www.irr.org.uk/pdf/khartoum_report_june_2006.pdf.

online resources

international & UK

Call for papers for publication on sexual violence in conflict and beyond

Forced Migration Review will be publishing issue 27, in November 2006, on the theme of '*Sexual violence in conflict and beyond*', exploring the challenges and opportunities for combating sexual violence in conflict, post-conflict and development recovery contexts. FMR is calling for papers to be submitted for this issue. To find out more see www.fmreview.org/forthcoming.htm

Forthcoming Booklet on sexual trafficking

The Refugee Studies Centre was commissioned to develop a booklet on sexual trafficking by Geneva-based NGO Women Defending Peace. The publication was circulated at a high-level conference on trafficking in January 2006 and will be launched officially later in the year. Source: RSC Update, May 2006 at www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/rsc_update_no3.doc.

UK Asylum Policy Instructions on gender

These can now be found at this new weblink in PDF:

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/6353/6356/6368/apigenderissues.pdf

notice board

Job vacancy Asylum Caseworker - RWRP

For this position, experience of providing legal advice on asylum and related immigration matters to level 2 of the OISC regulatory scheme and LSC accreditation at Level 2 is essential. Salary: £25,866 plus 3% pension contribution. Asylum Aid's Caseworkers provide free, high quality legal services to asylum seekers and refugees. These include casework, advocacy, training, telephone and outreach advice. They also contribute to Asylum Aid's policy and campaign work.

The RWRP Caseworker provides dedicated services to women asylum seekers and this post is open to women applicants only (section 7 (2)(e) of the

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 applies). Asylum Aid encourages applications from people with personal experience of being a refugee and applying for asylum in the UK. For further details, please download the recruitment pack from www.asylumaid.org.uk/Recruitment/vacancies_at_asylum_aid.htm Please do not telephone, email or send a CV. Applications must be received by 10.00am Wednesday 5th July.

ICAR seeks interns for 2006/7

ICAR, the Information Centre about Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK, will be recruiting several interns for the academic year 2006/7. The internships will initially be open for students enrolled on the MA Refugee Studies programme at City University; however ICAR expects to recruit more widely at a later stage in the year. Interns will be responsible for various areas of ICAR's work, including writing digests of relevant publications, researching areas for the Mapping the UK series, and other website content as appropriate. Further details of the internship programme, including how to apply, will be available on the ICAR website in September at www.icar.org.uk.

Grants available for academic refugees

CARA, the Council for the Assistance of Refugee Academics, is looking for people with refugee status who were involved in academic work outside the UK and wish to return to academia or related professional work in the UK. CARA can give grants to enable refugees to complete further study in order to be able to find employment or continue

their research. Grants can cover course fees and associated expenses including childcare costs. Women are particularly encouraged to apply. The next round of applications will be reviewed in early September 2006. To find out more, contact: Laura Wintour, Programme Officer, on 020 7021 0884 or at wintour.cara@lsbu.ac.uk.

Fee waiver for postgraduate refugee students

The MA Refugee Studies Programme, University of East London, is offering one fee waiver to a qualified part-time student who has been granted refugee status or has applied for asylum in the UK. It will be granted on the basis of strong academic and/or relevant professional experience and financial need. Interested candidates may apply for the MA Refugee Studies and the Pauline Ortiz Refugee Scholarship simultaneously; the deadline for both applications is July 10, 2006.

The MA in Refugee Studies links the study of forced migration to the lived experience of refugee communities. It offers specialist options in refugee and human rights law, migration and citizenship, refugees and racism, gender and psycho-social issues, and cultures of exile. For information on applying to the MA Refugee Studies Programme and the Pauline Ortiz Refugee Scholarship, please contact Diane Ball: d.m.ball@uel.ac.uk; Tel: 020 8223 2770 or visit online: www.uel.ac.uk/ssmcs/programmes/postgraduate/refugeestudies/index.htm

women's asylum news

Produced by RWRP (for more information on this issue, please contact Sophia Ceneda)
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Asylum Aid provides free legal advice and representation to asylum-seekers and refugees, and campaigns for their rights. We rely on the generosity of individuals to help us continue our work. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

A gift of just £5 each month could support our free legal advice line.

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