

PRESS RELEASE

INVITATION TO LAUNCH OF REPORT

“We Are Dying Silent” – Prisoners of Destitution

JRS Europe Launches Report on Destitute Forced Migrants

Tuesday 15th May, 2007 - 9.30–11.30 a.m.- Residence Palace, Brussels

Forcibly displaced migrants refused permission to remain in Europe frequently never return home. Courts rule it is too dangerous for some migrants to return home. Others lack travel documents or their countries of origin refuse to accept them back. At home they fear persecution, arbitrary detention or civil war. Without state support they regularly become destitute.

JRS Europe Regional Director Jan Stuyt SJ stated

“These undocumented migrants live in a legal no man’s land. They fall through the cracks of the system. They are not allowed to stay but they cannot return home. Government policies limiting access to healthcare, housing, education, employment and social benefits has forced many undocumented migrants into destitution. Alarming levels of poverty and social exclusion aggravate the mental and physical health of migrants leading to depression and disorientation”.

These are the findings of JRS Europe’s latest research report on destitute undocumented migrants in 10 European countries.

Fr Stuyt added

“Research on destitute forced migrants has been undertaken in many different European countries. But this JRS study has identified it as an EU-wide problem associated with the EU returns policy.”

In-depth research into the situation of destitute forced migrants was carried out in Portugal, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Italy, Romania and Malta. A concise analysis of the circumstances facing destitute forced migrants was also undertaken in Ukraine, Slovenia, Ireland and France.

JRS researchers carried out detailed interviews with 54 destitute migrants looking at a variety of aspects of their lives. These cases provide examples of typical situations encountered by destitute migrants living throughout Europe. This information was complemented by numerous interviews with NGOs and organisations active in this area, under themes of material deprivation, autonomy and social exclusion.

On 15 May, JRS will launch the study at a press conference held in the Residence Place in Brussels. The conference will be addressed by a number of important speakers including a testimony from a person who witnesses the destitution of a close friend, and a representative from the British Refugee Council will explain how UK policies are causing destitution of

thousands of forced migrants and offer policy recommendations to protect this vulnerable population.

Martin Schieffer, head of the immigration sector in the asylum and immigration unit of the Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security, and Jan Jarab, member of the cabinet of the Commissioner on Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir Spidla, will also be present to comment on the findings of the study.

A copy of the study will be offered to Ms Constança Urbano de Sousa of the incoming Portuguese presidency of the European Union.



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Notes to journalists and editors

For further information and interviews on the findings and recommendations in the report please contact JRS Europe Media officer Elizabeth Underhill, press.europe@jrs.net, Tel: +32 2 250 3227, +32 486 910 626; Fax: +32 2 250 3229

Ms Anne Weernink, author of the report, will be available for interviews during the entire day of 15 May. After 15 May 2007 JRS Europe staff members based in Brussels will be willing to participate in interviews upon request: Michael Schöpf (Assistant Regional Director), Cornelia Bührlé (Policy and Advocacy Officer) and Jan Stuyt (Regional Director for Europe).