

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IRISH MEPs INSPECT CLOVERHILL DETENTION FACILITIES

Five Irish MEPs will make an official visit to Cloverhill Prison detention facilities to assess the situation of unsuccessful asylum seekers and irregular migrants detained there and awaiting deportation. The inspection by Simon Coveney, Proinsias de Rossa, Bairbre de Brun, Mairead McGuinness and Gay Mitchell will take place on **Friday, 16th September 2005 at 10.30am** and will last approximately an hour.

The visit follows an approach by Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe to Irish MEPs asking them to inspect places of detention for migrants in Ireland. Over the last year, JRS has been engaged in a Europe-wide advocacy campaign to highlight the conditions of migrants detained in Europe. It has been involved with similar inspections in other European countries and in October 2004 issued a comprehensive report *Detention in Europe*.

Fr John Dardis SJ, Irish Jesuit Provincial and former Director of JRS Europe, will accompany the delegation along with Renaud DeVillaine, JRS Europe Policy Officer, who says, "There are many things the MEPs will want to find out: How many asylum seekers and irregular migrants are detained in Cloverhill? Do they include vulnerable people such as unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, elderly persons, victims of torture, families? Do detainees have special treatment? Are their rights respected? How long are they held in detention? What are the average and maximum durations of detention?"

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued a report in 2002 denouncing living conditions and overcrowding in Irish Prisons. According to John Dardis SJ, this visit is an opportunity to see whether the situation has changed since then. "Are detainees living in overcrowded conditions? Do they have proper hygienic conditions? Can they go outside to exercise or play sport? All these things we just don't know and we hope the MEPs will be able to tell us when they come out."

To coincide with the visit JRS Ireland will launch an updated version of the report, *Detention In Europe*. "We strongly oppose a Government proposal in the recent *Immigration and Residency Bill Discussion Document* to introduce detention for persons refused permission to enter. The *Detention in Europe* report presents a compelling legal and ethical case against this proposal, supported by emerging international evidence", stated Eugene Quinn, National Director of JRS Ireland.

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