



# Jesuits oppose refugee detention centre plans

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The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Ireland has come out against the proposal to introduce detention centres in Ireland for people refused permission to enter the country or remain in it. The JRS is an international Catholic organisation working with and on behalf of refugees.

The proposal is made in a discussion document from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on a new Immigration and Residency Bill.

The JRS launches a report today on detention centres in Europe for "irregular immigrants", and its Irish director, Eugene Quinn, said this report "presents a compelling legal and ethical case against this proposal, supported by emerging international evidence".

The report is based on a number of visits to detention centres in Europe by the JRS, and on

an examination of the law in the EU relating to the detention of asylum seekers.

The JRS is sponsoring a visit today by five Irish MEPs to Cloverhill Prison, where failed asylum seekers and illegal immigrants are detained prior to their deportation. The MEPs are Simon Coveney, Proinsias De Rossa, Bairbre de Brún, Mairead McGuinness and Gay Mitchell.

Fr John Dardis, the Irish Jesuit Provincial, and Renaud de Villaine, the JRS Europe policy officer, will accompany them.

Mr de Villaine said the MEPs will be asking whether vulnerable people such as unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, elderly people and victims of torture are among those detained in Cloverhill.

The JRS report comments that "justice" is now considered to be of lesser importance than "security" in relation to the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe, and that detention has become one of a number

of repressive and restrictive policies in this area.

It points out that, in some countries, failed asylum seekers are detained in the same prisons as criminals, while in others they are held in what are called "reception centres". For the JRS, the crucial characteristic of these centres was that the inmates were not permitted to leave.

The report finds that across the EU people are often detained without adequate legal justification; that often detainees have no access to adequate legal representation or healthcare; that they are often held in quasi-prisons and denied meaningful activity; that visits are often limited; that the detention of minors is the rule not the exception; and that families are often separated.

It also found detention was expensive. For example, in Bologna in Italy it costs €89 a day to detain one person in a detention centre, or €2,670 a month. The average monthly household income in Italy is €2,000.