



# JRS Europe

Serving Forgotten Refugees

Jesuit Refugee Service [www.jrseurope.org](http://www.jrseurope.org)

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## Facing the costs of detention in Europe



Celebrating refugees in Malta

On the 19th June JRS Europe held a breakfast for journalists at the Press Centre in Brussels. The main focus was on providing the media with an opportunity to meet face to face two refugees who had been detained in the European Union. They were able to reveal from a very personal perspective the human cost of detention.

One ex-detainee, who was held in the U.K. and The Netherlands, described the distress caused by the fire in Schiphol airport in October 2005, in which 11 detainees died. He also revealed that for ten months he did not see the lawyer who had been assigned to him.

These personal accounts were paralleled with facts on the financial costs of detention in the EU, revealed for the first time by Professor Anton van Kalmthout, Tilburg University, also a member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). Finally Ms Daphné Bouteillet-Paquet from Amnesty International (Europe) detailed the launch of a new International Detention Campaign (*more details on page 3*).

JRS Europe continues its advocacy work against the administrative detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. See page 4 for advocacy updates.



Daphné Bouteillet-Paquet, Amnesty International with Professor Anton van Kalmthout (right) and Fr. Jan Stuyt

***“Life in detention wasn't easy; it meant being crammed in a very small place with people coming from different countries, having different cultures, languages and religions. The most terrible thing is you spend all those months having nothing to do”.***

Refugee detained in Malta

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## World Refugee Day: Details from JRS events

### Portugal

“World Refugee Day was celebrated by JRS Portugal at its Pedro Arrupe Shelter. All the JRS staff, homeless immigrants and refugees were present, and were able to share a joyful lunch of Portuguese traditional food.

The day was also chosen to celebrate the birthday of a refugee living in the Pedro Arrupe Shelter, whose birth date is actually unknown.

In spite of the condition of these immigrants and

refugees, friendship and hope were the prevailing feelings, in a day that will surely be remembered as a day of happiness.”

### Malta

“JRS Malta initiated a joint effort with the Government of Malta and several NGO's to raise awareness about why people – particularly those in Malta at the moment – sometimes need to leave everything behind in search of a safer future.

Participating organisations set up information stands in the main street of

Valletta and invited passers-by to take a hand-woven bracelet proclaiming ‘HOPE’, made by detainees for the occasion.”

### Italy

JRS Italy organised a press conference: ‘*Foreigners not Strangers, the image of migrants in Italy.*’ Distinguished speakers talked about the crucial role of the media in reporting on migration, criticising sensationalist news and calling for a clear use of language. For full details see [www.jrs.net/dispatch/](http://www.jrs.net/dispatch/)

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For information on JRS' Detention Campaign see [www.detention-in-europe.org](http://www.detention-in-europe.org)

## Changes in the JRS South-East Europe region

On 3rd June 2006 the South-East Europe region of JRS was formally closed. Some projects have ended as a result of this, for example the scholarships available for students from Bosnia, the legal assistance offered in Croatia, and assistance to some collective centres in Serbia. However many other programmes continue, such as the assistance to land mine victims in Kosovo and the reintegration and reconciliation projects in Knin, Croatia. Social work programmes also continue to take place in Bosnia, Macedonia and Croatia.

The activities in former Yugoslavia began in 1993 under the leadership of Father Stjepan Kusjan S.J. Fr. Stjepan was originally the director of JRS Bosnia Croatia before he went on to become regional director. Now after 13 years he steps down, although he will continue his work on the council of the new area director.

The new area director of the West Balkans is Mr Josip Divkovic, who will be based in Zagreb. The activities that continue in this region will fall under JRS Europe.



JRS staff meeting in Ohrid, Macedonia

Metropolitane Timothee of the Orthodox church in Ohrid was the guest of honour at the ceremony in Ohrid, Macedonia, present alongside JRS International Director Fr. Lluís Magriñà S.J. Cooperation between different ethnic groups and religions has been an integral part of the strategy of JRS South-East Europe over the years.

## Front line Asylum Research

**Dr Richard Haavisto is the JRS Pedro Arrupe Tutor based at The Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. Here he explains the joint research he is undertaking for the National Asylum Commission, U.K.**

The National Asylum Commission announced on Wednesday, 21 June, that it has sufficient support and backing to launch an 18-month process of research this coming September. The aim of this initiative is to prepare the ground for a comprehensive, authoritative and independent review of the United Kingdom's asylum system and to make recommendations for reforms which can better serve the global and national common good together with the good of individual citizens. The Commission will make published recommendations to the political parties in

advance of the UK's next General Election after the 18-month research process.

The National Asylum Commission is managed by the Citizens Organising Foundation (COF), a registered charity whose mission is "to create a network of competent, informed and organised citizens who act responsibly in the public life of their communities and are able to influence for the common good decisions which impact on their communities." COF works closely with four broad based citizens organising networks in the UK: TELCO East London Citizens, South London Citizens, West London Citizens and Birmingham Citizens; UNISON, the UK's biggest trade union, and NGOs committed to upholding the right to seek and enjoy asylum.

The immediate background to the establishment of the National

Asylum Commission is located in the unique enquiry into the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) organised by the South London Citizens. This enquiry grew out of local concern with the provision of services by the IND. The publication of "A Human Service for Global Citizens" in October 2005 followed extensive research, public hearings, written submissions and meetings with relevant agencies. Implementation of the report's 28 recommendations is being overseen by a monitoring group of citizens, staff and users meeting with IND Senior Directors throughout 2006. Conclusion 12 of the Report recommended the necessary expansion of the enquiry from service provision to Central Government policy on migration, in particular national policies on immigration and asylum.

[www.rsc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk)

## Challenging the detention of children in Belgium

Over the last months, due to rising numbers of children in detention centres (more than 60 children are in detention centres in Belgium on a daily basis) different initiatives have arisen from the civil society, mostly through the launching of petitions. These different initiatives united to form a public action on the occasion of World Refugee Day and to coincide with a discussion in the Parliament on the whole reform of refugee and foreigners law, which should be voted on before mid-July.

On June 20, representatives from several organisations (UNICEF, Amnesty International, Jesuit Refugee Service, Ligue des Familles, among others) and catholic schools, together with some psychiatrists working with children, handed over petitions against the detention of foreign children, signed by 18,000 people, to the Ministry of the Interior.

Questions during the meeting with the head adviser of the Minister of the Interior covered in part the poor detention conditions, but the focus was on the lasting traumatic effect that detention has on children. A well known psychiatrist for children in Belgium, Dr. Jean-Yves Hayez, stressed particularly that detention may cause a confusion of values in children's minds: how, for example, might a child who is locked up, having committed no crime, distinguish between good and evil?

Due to this pressure from civil society, the Minister of the Interior had declared in the Parliament that he

would be ready to order a study about alternatives. The delegation urged the Minister to do so and in the meantime to declare a moratorium on the detention of children. The Head Adviser said that suggestions from NGOs on how this study should be made would be welcome, as well as possible alternatives.

After this meeting the delegation met the press to clarify their position. Journalists had the opportunity to question psychiatrists, NGO representatives and also two children who had been in detention centres. As a symbol of this situation some playmobil figurines were put in a bird cage.

**Christophe Renders S.J., JRS Belgium**



NGO representatives speaking out in Brussels against the detention of children



### International Detention Coalition

Jesuit Refugee Service is a founding member of a new International Detention Coalition, which was launched on the 20th June. The Coalition has a number of key messages to promote, including:

- Alternative non-custodial measures, such as reporting requirements, should always be considered before resorting to detention
- Detention should be for the shortest possible time.
- Children should not be detained
- There should be regular independent monitoring of the conditions in places of detention

Visit [www.idcoalition.org](http://www.idcoalition.org) for continued updates, publicity, campaigns and members.

### School Outreach Project, JRS Malta

At a time when news of unrest comes frequently from Malta, JRS in the country is engaged in crucial work with the future generations of the local population.

'Bridging Cultures' is the name of the school outreach programme, which organises activities to raise awareness about the hardships that immigrants can face. "Many young people don't know why people flee from their country, or how difficult the detention period is for detainees." says one JRS Malta worker. The activities can be time-consuming so that schools cannot always find the time, but the programmes can be very successful: "All the staff and the children enjoy it, and sometimes we get letters of thanks from the schools, and students who ask to do voluntary work."

JRS has so far visited 41 schools, youth centres and parishes since last September, and intends to carry on its work over the summer.

[www.jrsmalta.org](http://www.jrsmalta.org)

## Pope Benedict XVI speaking on the occasion of World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day ... is meant to draw the attention of the international community to the conditions of so many people forced out of their homelands, fleeing violence. These brothers and sisters of ours seek refuge in foreign countries hoping that one day they shall be able to go home or at least hopeful that they might find hospitality in their place of refuge. I assure them that they shall be in (our) prayers and that the Holy See's concern in their fate shall be constant. It is my hope that they will always be respected and I encourage Church communities to meet their needs.

*The Vatican, 18 June 2006*



## EU Directive on Returns – Pushing for recommendations

The legislative process of the last EU Directive concerning detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants (see JRS Newsletter April/March 2006) is now speedily moving on. In September 2005 the EU Commission had published a *Proposal for a DIRECTIVE on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals*, and subsequently the EU Parliament named MEP Manfred Weber (German, EPP) to be in charge of it as EU Parliament's rapporteur. In June 2006 Mr. Weber presented his draft report first to the EU Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), then to NGOs.

Mr. Weber's aim is to achieve approval of a joint text (EU Council and EU Parliament) as soon as possible, preferably under the Finnish Presidency in the second half of 2006. It is estimated that it is very difficult to come to a consensus: the EU Council would like to have a Directive making it easy to return illegally staying third-country nationals, whereas the EU Parliament stresses rights and safeguards of illegally staying third-country nationals.

JRS-Europe has been and is still engaged in a number of talks with political decision-makers, namely most recently Mr. Weber and the new

Finnish EU Presidency. So far, including Mr. Weber's amendments to the EU Commission Proposal, around 80 % of JRS-Europe's recommendations (see JRS-Europe Detention Document, number 20. on [www.detention-in-europe.org](http://www.detention-in-europe.org)) have been taken into consideration.

However, the legal maximum duration of detention remains a matter of disagreement: the EU Commission had proposed 6 months, Mr. Weber suggests 12 months arguing that this comes closer to the EU Council position, and JRS in Europe is advocating for 2 months.

Like the EU Parliament, JRS-Europe advocacy has to discern whether it would presently be better to have no Directive at all or to have a Directive that would not be 100% satisfying. JRS-Europe's advocacy officer, Cornelia Bührle, says that ultimately 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' if essential elements of JRS-Europe's recommendations were to be incorporated in a future Directive.



**Cornelia Bührle, JRS Europe Policy Officer**

### HOW TO HELP.....HOW TO HELP.....HOW TO HELP.....

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