



JRS Europe

Serving Forgotten Refugees

Jesuit Refugee Service www.jrseurope.org

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Refugee brothers in Malta,
Photo: UNHCR, A Pace

Katrine Camilleri wins top UNHCR award

JRS Europe is pleased and excited to announce that Dr Katrine Camilleri, Assistant Director JRS Malta, has been awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee award for her courage and commitment to the defense of refugee rights. The award is given to an individual or group for outstanding services in supporting refugee causes.

In 2002, following the rise in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving and subsequently being detained, JRS expended its caseload and focused more and more on those in detention. Dr Camilleri was responsible for securing funding to expand JRS projects and offer new services such as social work, health and education.

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Katrine Camilleri has been a very important part of the JRS family since 1997, first as a volunteer and eventually on a full time basis. She has provided legal advice to hundreds of detainees, particularly the most vulnerable such as the chronically ill or disabled.

UNHCR recognised the exceptional contribution Dr Camilleri has made to the protection and assistance of refugees and displaced people in Malta. The official selection committee commented on, "the tireless efforts of Dr. Camilleri to lobby and advocate for refugees." The spokesman added, "By rewarding Dr. Camilleri for her civic courage and for the inspiring example set by her actions, the Nansen Refugee Award Committee would like to honour all individuals who are working to improve the well-being of refugees."

When Katrine Camilleri first started to offer legal services to refugees and asylum seekers in the community, JRS was a small organisation working in Malta. In 2000, JRS became the first non-governmental organisation to offer regular professional legal services to detainees held in the detention facilities.



Dr. Katrine Camilleri talks with an asylum seeker at the Hal Far Open Centre for Refugees, Malta
Photo: UNHCR, A. Pace, Sept 2007

Katrine Camilleri is also a central figure in countering the growing xenophobia in Malta. She runs training on refugee law for university students and organises practical placements. This gives young Maltese students direct contact with asylum seekers.

In 2006, Katrine's home and car were the objects of an arson attack, reflecting the negative opinion of migrants in Malta. Katrine and her young family were not hurt and she continues to work for asylum seekers and migrants with the same enthusiasm and compassion.

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Nansen Refugee Award

The Nansen Refugee Award, created in 1954, is named after Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian polar explorer and the world's first international refugee official. Previous recipients include Eleanor Roosevelt and Médecins sans Frontières.

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*The Hal Far Immigration Reception Centre,
Malta*

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Upon finding out she was the recipient of the award, Katrine said “I hope this award serves to draw attention to the suffering detention causes to thousands of innocent people in Malta and elsewhere and that it generate a real search for alternatives which respect people’s dignity and rights.”

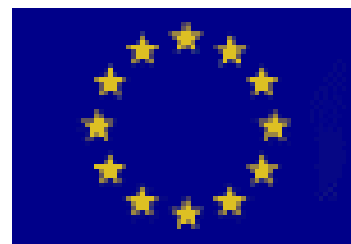
Fr Jan Stuyt, Director JRS Europe, stressed how proud he was of the support provided to detainees in Malta. “It is one of Katrine’s great qualities that she looks at every migrant as an individual with a name, a face and a personal history. The migration debate is often dominated by numbers, statistics and images of people arriving in boats,” he added. “Once people have contact with JRS and Katrine, they are treated as individuals and each person has a different story to tell.”

The award will be officially presented at a ceremony in Geneva on 1 October 2007 at the annual gathering of UNHCR’s governing Executive Committee.

For more information on the work of JRS Malta, visit the website: www.jrs.malta.org

The Future of the EU Asylum System

On 6th June 2007, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on the future of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The purpose of this Paper is to open a wide debate about a more harmonised EU in the field of asylum after the adoption and implementation of the “Dublin I and II” regulations, as well as the “reception”, “procedures” and “qualification” directives.



JRS Europe welcomes the Commission’s initiative, as it has put refugee protection back on the EU agenda. However, JRS takes this opportunity to reiterate its deep concerns regarding the use of detention during the asylum process.

JRS opposes detention as it criminalises people in need of international protection while affecting their physical and psychological health. To that extent, the EU legislation should be amended with provisions encouraging alternative measures to the detention of asylum seekers (reporting/residency requirements, provision of a guarantor, bail, open accommodation centres, etc). In particular, asylum seekers falling under the application of the “Dublin II” regulation should not be detained in closed facilities for extended periods of time. Similarly, vulnerable persons, especially minors, should not be kept in custody for the sole reason they are claiming asylum.

Furthermore, JRS advocates for improving legal safeguards for asylum seekers held in detention centres or in transit zones. These safeguards comprise, among others, of the right to be informed rapidly about the channels to challenge detention, the right to free legal aid and free linguistic assistance, the right to psychological care, as well as the right to have regular visits from relatives, friends and religious counsels.

Finally, JRS calls for the setting up of a EU body, which monitors and periodically reports on the development of national legislations and practices regarding detention in the EU Member States as well as in the EU Candidate Countries.

“Today, it is as if the detention of asylum seekers was the norm in the EU Member States. It should however remain a measure of very last resort if the EU wants to build an effective area of justice”, concluded Renaud de Villaine, the JRS Europe advocacy officer.

To read in full JRS’ response to the Commission Green Paper visit the JRS Europe website: www.jrseurope.org.
For information about JRS activities in the field of detention go to the detention in Europe website: www.detention-in-europe.org.

Renaud de Villaine, JRS Europe

Prizes for young Pedro Arrupe Award winners

Under 16 winners - Croatia

The prize for the Pedro Arrupe Award winners in the under 16 category was a trip to Croatia to visit various projects and organisations working with asylum seekers. For their winning entry, the Slovakian students researched the situation of refugees in Slovakia and even arranged for their class to interview a refugee from the Congo. This was just the start of their experience learning about refugees, however. The aim of the trip to Croatia was to provide the young winners with an understanding of the asylum process in Croatia, and the problems many asylum seekers face when trying to access asylum in Europe.

The first stop for the students was a meeting with Boris Peterlin, from Caritas Croatia, who provided an introduction into the history of forced displacement in Croatia. The CROPAX project, currently run by Caritas Croatia, was initiated in 2001 to try and promote peace, reconciliation and social cohesion in communities where people are returning after years of displacement. Mr Peterlin helped the students to understand the importance of promoting feelings of belonging in communities in Croatia where families might be returning for the first time in many years.

Following this meeting, the students found out about the current situation for new asylum seekers seeking refugee status from outside Croatia. They met representatives from the UNHCR and the Croatian Law Centre and were given a tour of a reception centre for asylum seekers in Kutina, near Zagreb. Currently, only one refugee has been officially recognised by the Croatia government. The students were shocked to hear how difficult it was to claim asylum in Croatia but were heartened by the dedication and commitment shown by the staff in the reception centre.



The Slovakian winners: Daniela Richterová, Michaela Parkanská, Alica Tkáčová and Mária Slezáková

Near to the site of the reception centre is the Ježevo detention centre. The group were unable to enter the detention centre, but saw the very harrowing site of high fences and barbed wire. All of the students were concerned how similar to a prison the centre looked.

Before leaving Zagreb the students were interviewed for the Catholic radio station Radio Sijemenu. One of the students, Daniela Richterová, told the presenter that participating in the Pedro Arrupe prize and visiting asylum seeker projects in Croatia has motivated her to help refugees and asylum seekers in her future career.

Peter Kuriško SJ, a Jesuit scholastic who accompanied the winners, praised the Pedro Arrupe Award in helping to raise awareness among the students about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. All of the students have learnt a lot from this trip, he reported. We have seen the real hardships facing asylum seekers trying to obtain refugee status and met people working with asylum seekers on a daily basis. On their return, the students are very keen to find out more about asylum seekers and refugees in Slovakia and explain to their fellow classmates all they have seen and heard.

Under 19 winners - Macedonia



Lake Ohrid, Macedonia

The prize for the winners in the under 19 category was a trip to a very special summer camp in Ohrid, Macedonia.

The winners, Paulina Klonowska, Maciej Zydek, Maciej Glaza, Aleksander Nadolski and Michał Gronowski and their tutor Bożena Pratkanicka, were invited to spend the week with 32 young landmine victims. The students joined in with the summer camp programme and participated in educational workshops and sporting activities such as playing football, volleyball and swimming in the Ohrid lake.

At the end of the week the young winners said the trip had been a great opportunity to find out more about European land mine victims and the work of JRS Kosovo.

Slovenia: Summer holiday for detainees

For the fifth consecutive year, JRS Slovenia organised a week's holiday at Portorož, a well known tourist city on the Slovenian coast. Social worker Milena Frank and a group of volunteers organised the holiday for mothers and children from the asylum home, the detention centre in Postojna and for families who had already received refugee status. It was the first time that families held in the detention centre were able to participate. There was no difficulty in obtaining permission for them to visit Portorož and it is hoped that families from the detention centre can again participate next year. The holiday took place from 20th till 25th of August with 30 people in total traveling to the Slovenian coast.



JRS summer holiday for families in Portorož

For some of the children it was the very first time they traveled by train and for many it was the first time they had seen the sea. It was a very special experience to see them swim and play on the beach.

The participants were of different nationalities: Bosnians, Gorans (a minority in Kosovo), Albanians from Kosovo, Romas and Slovenians. All participants left with the positive message that living with different people is possible and enriching for us all.

Fr. Robin Schweiger, JRS Slovenia

Italy: No help for refugee victims of torture

Refugees are one of the groups most at risk of developing psychological difficulties – and also the group least likely to receive adequate treatment. This point was emphasised at a national seminar on socio-health assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and victims of torture, co-organised by JRS Italy, on 28 June.

The seminar, held at the Nuovo Regina Margherita hospital in Rome, was attended by a number of medical practitioners, government officials and NGO representatives who work with refugees, as well as a former torture victim forced to flee his country.

Several speakers at the seminar insisted that non-governmental assistance should not replace the obligations of the health system provided by the local government.

Participants were told that those working with refugees need to be aware that their beneficiaries may have been victims of torture. Consequently, they need to be trained on how to identify those who are facing psychological difficulties and to provide them with support.

“In their country of origin, many victims of torture felt invisible. Now they want to be a part of the decisions concerning their future and recovery”, JRS Italy Information Officer, Donatella Parisi, reported.

JRS International

Websites

A number of JRS offices in Europe have their own websites that provide details on local JRS activities.

JRS UK - www.jrsuk.net
 JRS Belgium - www.jrsbelgium.org
 JRS Malta - www.jrsmalta.org
 JRS Germany - www.jesuiten-fluechtlingsdienst.de (in German)
 JRS Slovenia - www.rkc.si/jrs (in Slovenian)
 JRS Italy - www.centroastalli.it (in Italian)
 JRS Portugal - www.jrsportugal.pt (in Portuguese)



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