

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

No 26, Mar 2003

Bristol weekend for exiled journalists

Over 30 exiled journalists have already registered for the RAM weekend training course on Working in the UK Media, Mar 28-30.

Columnist David Aaronovitch will lead a debate on media coverage on the Friday evening, and NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear is among the speakers, along with HTV current affairs chief James Garrett, *Big Issue SW* editor, Tim Lezard, and Jenny Lacey from BBC Radio Bristol. There will also be a panel of exiled journalists who have developed their own media projects including Abel Ugba of the Irish Metro and Ibrahim Seaga Shaw of the Expo Times.

Participation, including full board and travel, is free to exiled journalists, and there are still a few places left.

Applications must be in by 14 March latest.

To register contact Nik on 0117 941 5889 or email ram@presswise.org.uk

Develop your media skills

Skillset has 40 cash grants of up to £500 and free training with the BBC, targeted at individuals from the UK's black and ethnic communities. Projects might include producing an item for local radio, establishing a website or writing a newsletter.

For an information pack, contact the Skill Set Millennium Awards 2nd Floor, Prospect House, 80 – 110 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1HB
Tel: 020 7520 5757

Poison pens of racism

Public fears over asylum seekers must be addressed - but not by pandering to a hysterical press, said Guardian columnist, and PressWise patron Polly Toynbee in her 31 Jan column.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,885938,00.html>

'I can remember nothing like this. The naked hate is not coded or polite, not iced with concern for domestic race relations. The shocking stabbing of DC Stephen Oake has allowed anyone to write anything disgusting about asylum seekers and migrants with impunity. What could be worse than a respected policeman murdered at the hands of a supposed ricin-making Algerian asylum seeker terrorist? Not even the Sun could have invented it.'

Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian*
31 Jan 03

In 1803 the courts forced the parish of Eastbourne to ensure refugees, who had fled there from Napoleonic rule, were saved from starvation. This law of humanity became common law, later incorporated into the UK's Human Rights Act, which David Blunkett now seeks to amend.

200 years latter Mr Justice Collins ruled the refusal of support for asylum seekers who failed to claim asylum immediately is "inhumane" and a breach of human rights laws. There had been "insufficient consideration" of each of the decisions, which must therefore be quashed and reconsidered. (Guardian Leader, 20 Feb 03)

Not in the tabloids

Here are some stories that did not make it to the front pages of the tabloids, but did get coverage on the back pages of few broadsheets and BBCi website.

On 31 Jan, Kent police arrested a man after a car was driven into the Coniston Hotel, Sittingbourne which the government had planned to use for asylum seekers.

In Southampton, a 22-year-old Afghan refugee beaten to death on the 11 Feb in what police is treating as racially motivated attack.

The same night, the Coventry home of asylum-seekers from Kosovo, was petrol bombed. Inmates at Haslar, a former prison in Gosport near Portsmouth, found the body of Mikhail Bodnarchuk, 42, hanging from his shoelaces in a toilet. Mikhail had a wife and two children in the Ukraine; he chose death over deportation.

EDITORIAL

Tabloid schizophrenia

In past weeks I have despaired over media mania about asylum. February's cuttings look as bad as January's, starting with the Archbishop's statements on asylum, then the tabloids used an OFSTED report to blame asylum-seeking children for all ills of the education system.

Michael Jackson, David Beckham, tanks at Heathrow and anti-war protests pushed the hate campaign off the front pages, but briefly.

I found some sanity on the Internet (See *Communicator feature and Useful Websites*)

The tabloids did stop two deportations - Miss Martin of Trimley St Mary, Suffolk who failed to sort out her immigration papers for 54 years, and war hero and Mayor of Shrewsbury, George Richey, born in, and is now deemed to be citizen of Mauritius. It is OK with the tabloids to refuse shelter and food allowances to asylum-seekers who walk across London all night and sleep in 'phone booths, but look how they respond to a sweet, nice old lady who is half a century late with her papers. The tabloids ignored many equally compelling stories.

Media studies must introduce 'tabloid schizophrenia' as a new category in content and discourse analysis. To exorcise the miserable cynic in me and renew my deep, naive, core belief in justice, I reached for the video of Mark Thomas' 2001 stand-up show after the victory over the Iisu Dam.

There must be a law against this, I repeated to myself. Then something truly great happened. There IS a law against it, and a judge who is not afraid to rule on it! The best thing about Judge Collin's ruling was the grief and fury it caused the Home Secretary and tabloids. Tabloid attacks, personal and general, and hysterical headlines against the judiciary, made me feel better (they take it SO personally) and provoked serious *chicken and egg* debate about democracy, law and politics.

I started feeling safe in Britain again, relieved to be reminded that there are still things that are Great about it – but not in the tabloids.

Zrinka Bralo

zrinkab@macunlimited.net

Leeds Media Forum

The second of the RAM Project's local Media Fora took place last week at the Town Hall in Leeds, with over 40 participants joining the debate. Dr Eymen Qadir, an Iraqi Kurd, spoke passionately about the difficulties facing asylum-seekers in the UK which are aggravated by negative media coverage. Meanwhile George MacIntyre, NUJ Vice President, pledged commitment by the NUJ and its members to fair and responsible reporting of asylum issues.

The next forum is scheduled for 19 March in Liverpool.

See 'peg' board for more details.

Oh no, it's the weekend

Acres of newsprint have to be filled out on Saturday and Sunday, so politicians, celebrities - and asylum seekers usually get it in the neck over the weekend. On Saturday 01.03. the Mail didn't disappoint with 6 plus full pages of 'asylum crisis 2003'. The story that caught our eye, by the reporter Paul Harris proclaims in title: '1000 refugees (from Sangate) are refusing jobs they are offered...' Yet in the story itself it turns out that one of the refugees has applied for 30 jobs (and was refused because he doesn't hold a passport), the other is so eager that he works gratis as a hotel receptionist, and that a large group of refugees was sent to pick fruit for £15 a day. Maybe, Mr. Harris should be offered the same job. A loss for the world of journalism could be a gain for the UK fruit trade, given his talent to cherry-pick interviewees whose statements disprove the main contention of the article. Anyway, how many people are likely to find a steady job in a foreign country within 12 weeks of arrival?

Refugee quest for liberty takes top prize at Berlin

In This World, a film about the gruelling journey of two Afghan asylum seekers smuggled to London by people traffickers, by Blackburn-born director Michael Winterbottom has won the Golden Bear, top award at the Berlin Film Festival. Shot on a digital camera, the film follows two friends who flee

refugee camp in Pakistan. Not all their group survive the 4,000 mile journey by bus, truck, ferry and sealed metal food container. Winterbottom said he had been compelled to make the film because of growing hostility towards immigrants throughout Europe. He had been particularly shocked by the story of 58 Chinese stowaways who suffocated in a truck at Dover docks three years ago.

He dedicated the prize to the film's stars, who were plucked from Peshawar refugee camps.

"This award is for them, as representatives of the 1 million refugees living in Peshawar and for all people who have to make the difficult choice between making the journey or staying at home.

"People say: 'These people shouldn't be here, they should be sent home.' But even if people are economic migrants, what's wrong with that?" One of the lead actors, Jamal Udin Torabi, a 15-year-old Afghan used his earnings from the film to seek asylum in Britain. He has been granted exceptional leave to remain until he is 18.

Migration and human trafficking were central themes in the 10-day Berlinale, whose motto this year was *Towards Tolerance*.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,897033,00.html

Racism drives the tabloid agenda, says Greenslade

Guardian columnist Roy Greenslade has challenged tabloid claims to be 'representing their readers' views'. He insists that their 'virulent campaigns against asylum seekers are driven by nothing more than racism'. (*Guardian*, 3 Feb 2003)

He is critical of simplistic arguments 'that people make up their own minds about issues despite what they have been reading.'

This conveniently suggests that papers have no real influence – they may be for war against Iraq, but the majority of people are against it.

So 'when the tabloids scream about Britain being swamped by bogus asylum seekers and demand government action against them,

they are merely reflecting the popular will.

'Editors in this case are said to be echoing the crowd by articulating the proper concerns of people whose opinions on immigration have been formed by their own experiences without the least editorial persuasion.'

<http://media.guardian.co.uk/mediaguardian/story/0,7558,887503,00.html>

Not just in the UK...

The impact of negative media coverage can be swift and dramatic, as PressWise Director Mike Jempson learned at a recent Red Cross conference in Athens,

A worker at shelter for 200 asylum-seekers in Vienna told him how local people had been sympathetic, until press reports of a dawn raid by armed police searching for drugs. She said that police targeted the 40 Africans in the hostel, and press reports implied the hostel was full of African drug dealers, although only four people were charged with offences.

Overnight locals joined the clamour for closure which is Austrian government policy.

Only 100 people had been found new homes by the time the hostel was scheduled to shut down.

What did OFSTED's report really say?

Under the headline "Official Asylum Rush Causes Crisis for Schools", *The Sun*'s report on the annual OFSTED report on schools opened with a warning that "British kids are suffering as schools struggle to cope with a flood of asylum seekers' children". However, the official report contained only brief references to the issue, commenting simply on problems arising from the "high mobility of pupils, often including large numbers of refugees".

The core of *The Sun*'s piece was based on comments by the chief inspector elicited by a reporter's questions at the report launch. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/features/mike_baker/2737785.stm

Not in my name!

A member of Board of political journal *Prospect* has dissociated himself from a polemic by Bob

Rowthorn in defence of Fortress Europe in the February edition.

Nicholas Hildyard writes 'At time when asylum seekers are regularly subject to brutal attacks by those whose racist politics have been fed by irresponsible media reporting, the need for cool heads and sober analysis is urgent. For Prospect to have published Bob Rowthorn's polemic on the case for Fortress Europe is therefore deeply regrettable...

'...freedom of expression carries with it a duty to be responsible. As a *Prospect* board member, I therefore wish to dissociate myself from the views expressed in the article. As the saying goes, 'not in my name'. His article is not yet available on the website, but Rowthorn's piece can be found at <http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/>

Celebrities back Cameroonian woman

Over 40 celebrities are backing the efforts of Françoise Motoum-Kamga to avoid being returned to Cameroon where she was imprisoned, raped and tortured.

Sir Derek Jacobi, Baroness Kennedy, Maureen Lipman, Ewan McGregor, Anthony Minghella, Andrew Motion, Michael Palin and Juliet Stevenson are among those who have written to Immigration minister, Beverley Hughes.

Ms Stevenson said: "We have a proud tradition in this country of giving asylum to people who need it, and I am appalled that 'asylum-seeker' seems to have become a term of abuse.

"I feel sick when I see newspapers like the *Daily Mail* attacking these people and suggesting they are connected with terrorism." http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/story.jsp?story=374819

New Archbishop invited to meet detainees

Kent Committee to Defend Asylum-seekers, (KCDAS) wants the new Archbishop of Canterbury to visit an asylum detention centre.

They are angry about remarks attributed to Dr Rowan Williams in a Sunday Times article in which he suggested it would be right for asylum seekers to be kept in secure accommodation.

The Archbishop has since said he does not believe in mandatory detention and was misrepresented by the paper.

Tom McGowan of KCDAS wants Dr Williams to see the situation for himself. "We think it is important he understands the impact and the secondary trauma that this sort of policy will inflict on asylum seekers <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2795861.stm>

Students drop *The Sun*

Leeds University student union shop will no longer sell *The Sun* until it stops its 'vicious campaign against asylum seekers and the basic human right of asylum in general'. Normally the shop sells 3,000 copies of the paper each month. The decision was reached by 121:111 votes the university's annual general meeting. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,9830,895673,00.html> !

LBC rapped over asylum phone-in

The Radio Authority has upheld listeners complaints about 'racist' and 'bigoted' remarks during a heated discussion about asylum seekers on Adrian Allen's phone-in show on London local radio station LBC.

Allen was standing in for Mark Mendoza on the *Through the Night* show in December after the station had been acquired by Chrysalis. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/radio/story/0,12636,894995,00.html>

Don't debase the asylum debate says *Observer*

One of the UK's leading Sunday papers has called on New Labour to counter 'racist lies' that have gathered pace because of tabloid coverage of asylum and terrorism stories.

In its leader column on 2 Feb the paper said: '*Public emotions about asylum-seekers are descending to those of the mob.*'

'Across Britain, opposition to new centres for asylum-seekers is becoming ferocious. They are even being blamed for noxious diseases and outbreaks of smallpox, which no longer exists outside the laboratory.

This is a bleak climate, with incalculable consequences for race relations. Anybody in Britain who isn't white is often suspected of carrying disease.'

It quotes a poll saying that 40% of people believe asylum-seekers may be terrorists.

<http://www.observer.co.uk/leaders/story/0,6903,887278,00.html>

With friends like these...

Anti-immigration *Times* columnist Anthony Browne has some strange friends in the USA according to *The Observer* Media Diary of 2 Feb.

It revealed that an anti-immigration US website hero-worships 'Sir Anthony' Browne as one of their own. Apparently he writes 'long, enthusiastic messages to the website about how he's transforming the agenda in Britain'.

He described a page of pro-BNP views run recently in the *Times* as 'a truly incredible event', and later got the site to add that the BNP were 'nasty pretending not to be nasty'. Readers interested in original pages are invited to contact the Diary column.

media.diary@observer.co.uk
<http://www.observer.co.uk/business/story/0,6903,886884,00.html>

Self slams Blunkett

Author and columnist Will Self has attacked David Blunkett for 'intemperate posturing over the law regarding asylum seekers.'

Commenting on his refusal to accept Justice Collins' ruling that removing benefits from asylum seekers was a breach of their human rights, he used his *London Evening Standard* column on 21 Feb to suggest that the Home Secretary would feel at home in Baghdad, "because your view seems to be that this is an elective dictatorship, not a democracy".

'Blunkett, Blair and their cronies,' he went on 'show every sign of using an asylum-seekers scare in the way that their Tory predecessors used immigration: to win the hearts and minds of Little Englanders who've never seen a real asylum seeker, but live in bigoted fear of them.'

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/opinion/articles/3511930?source=Evening%20Standard>

AGAINST WIND AND TIDE

**Gordon Doh Fondo
describes living in exile**

'Indefinite Leave to Remain'

I'm writing to inform you that you have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom'.

It was the greatest piece of news I had received in years. Suddenly I threw off the shackles of frustration that usually squeeze anyone who is far away from home and seeking protection in a foreign land. It was a time to begin a new life in exile. Little did I know that my journey would turn out to be an epic!

That Nass Letter...

I actually learnt of my grant of refugee status from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), on the morning their housing agent, armed with a letter, came for the keys of my emergency flat. Stunned, but determined not to leave, I fought hard and obtained 5 days of grace. That allowed me enough time to move my things into the flat of another asylum seeker. Thereafter, I stuffed a tiny scruffy bag with my meagre possessions and took to the direction of a hostel for the homeless. My tiny 3 m/sq room thus became my palace for a few weeks and a base from which to plan my next strategy.

Receding Hope

After a week at the hostel, I began to sink into the abysmal depths of despondency. I considered going back to whence I came from and facing the music of my hangmen. However, I beat back the temptation. But, things were further compounded by my fruitless job search, as I, armed with my CV, began a frantic search for a source of livelihood. I approached the job centre in the hope of getting a job with an immediate start. After all, had not I, Gordon Doh Fondo, been approved to stay by Her Majesty's Government? Hope began to recede far into the

background after 63 unsuccessful job applications.

A Strange Dimension

As I gradually settled down to life in the UK, I realised that my colour did not leave some people indifferent, to put it euphemistically. A store security guard would immediately jump to his feet on seeing me enter and would not lose sight of me until he was satisfied that I could pay. He would literally besiege me in my corner and knock items about just to let me know he was watching me! The lady at the bank told me I could not open an account without a full UK passport (I often wondered whether there was a ¾ UK passport). The employer said I could not work unless and until I provided him with my bank account details. Two school children walking home turned and saw me, conferred, hastened their steps and then scared I could catch up with them, fled for dear life, screaming for good measure. A strange guy had come to town! One evening as I sat typing on my computer, a stone thrown by an unknown person shattered the window of my lounge. "You are not welcome", they seemed to say.

Silver Lining

Happily, there have been great times since I began my life in exile. First, I decided to have a good laugh each time someone ridiculed my background and colour. When I made that decision, I began to see that the British are generally hospitable and have a good sense of humour. A British man once told me "Gordon, you are a nice-looking fellow". To which I responded, "I think you too look just great!" Smiling mischievously, he said: "No way. The problem is I have got it all in one place (pointing to his bulging stomach); if I could just spread it out a bit more evenly."

My most enjoyable thing in the UK as an exiled person is the British man's sense of etiquette. Unlike in some other countries I visited, the British have a sense of order and they are very polite. Little wonder that you find them in long queues waiting to buy

stamps at the post office or to be served at the bank. Or walk behind one through a door. They will hold the door open for you until you come through. So, I have decided, and I urge all other refugees, especially journalists, to build on the positives, rather than dwell on the negatives.

Against Wind and Tide

The atmosphere is poisoned everyday by anti-refugee hate speeches, incendiary newspaper articles and sensational broadcasts, all of which extol the virtues of a refugee-free Britain. We exiled journalists must not sit back and let society drift into chaos. Every refugee is an ambassador without portfolio and represents his country in every respect. We must carry ourselves about as behoves men and women who have a noble calling to defend their kind and be the voice of the voiceless. Where media intoxication and political bickering build walls, the journalists must build bridges.

My experience of exile taught me that journalists are respected people in the community. We as exiled journalists owe it to refugees and refugees-to-be to mitigate the rigours of vile rhetoric. We can only do so by writing, speaking out and mounting the rostrum as and when necessary. The road will be rough and dreary. What with the stigma of being different? What with the pain of staying for months without seeing our loved ones? What with our own craving for the barest necessities of life? But we are not to relent. Ours is a noble calling. It is a fray that must be won against wind and tide.

In my college days, we used to sing a song, which I happily quote:

*Let the road be rough and dreary
And its end far out of sight
Foot it bravely strong or weary
Trust in God and do the right*

Gordon Doh Fondo worked as a sports reporter and presenter for the Cameroon National Television Corporation. Since January 2003 he is co-presenter of In Site on Channel 7 Television, UK.

Cut-out-and-keep COMMUNICATOR

RIGHTING WRONGS ON THE INTERNET

Guest editor Zrinka Bralo interviews Frank Corrigan, a man with a virtual mission to put right injustices suffered by asylum-seekers

Searching for information can be a real nightmare, especially for journalists with pressing deadlines. A Google search on 'immigration and asylum' will produce no less than 59,500 links in the UK alone.

Those of us who use the Internet to keep up-to-date have noticed that <http://www.asylumrights.net> provides useful guidance in this sea of information. Its comprehensive content is neatly sorted in links under headings such as law, human rights, policy etc. In addition users can join more than 1,500 subscribers to a daily electronic newsletter containing updates with links to the original sources.

The site seems to be on top of things at all times, so I imagined that a team of at least 3 people were working full-time to keep up with new legislation, its impact and the media coverage. I was curious to learn who they were and who pays for it. It is almost impossible to find charitable funders willing to underwrite this kind of work – anything to do with the media is practically impossible raise funds for.

So when I met Frank Corrigan, whose name appears on the e-mails, I wanted to know who was so enlightened as to fund something like this. What I learned was disappointing in terms of funding but inspiring in every other way.

Frank is a social worker in South London. He started working in 1996 in the aftermath of the new draconian immigration legislation. He witnessed the misery it inflicted on asylum-seekers he was working with, but he lacked easily accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date information as well as a wider perspective so he decided to look for it and share it with his colleagues. Internet was the cheapest way, so Frank learned how to create web sites, registered a few domain names, and that was it.

In his free time he started building a web site and later on set up daily electronic mail-outs. No one pays him to do it or even covers his expenses. That gives him a freedom and independence that bigger organisations do not have because they have too many considerations to take into account.

Frank puts the information out there without editing or comment, to address myths and misinformation about asylum and to challenge stereotypes in order to relieve anger induced by disrespect for the human rights of asylum-seekers.

Frank told me: *"I do the website in personal capacity. Although it is one of the big issues in social*

work there isn't much out there for professionals. I find it helps me vent my anger and do something constructive. Most social workers are dealing with individual cases most of the time. For me it is important to see the bigger picture. I do the research and I just put it out for other to use it as I did.

"Clearly, I select information but I try to ignore negative and prejudicial sources and point towards the facts. There is so much information and you can get caught up in it all.

"I started with www.immigrationwatch.info in 1998 but I was anxious that it was too ambitious – it sounded like Human Rights Watch and then there is Migrationwatch, which is too close, and can cause confusion. However, casual surfers might click on the link for my website thinking that it is Migrationwatch – it is called Internet hi-jacking, which is not bad.

"I tried to create a straightforward, user-friendly and un-intrusive website with information sorted by topic. It is simple deliberately and all information has links to its source. Also, operating in personal capacity makes it easier and faster because there is no waiting on decisions or content considerations that happens in organisational set up.

"I am deliberately keeping low profile because I do not have capacity to respond to e-mails and queries.

"There are number of separate sites www.asylumrights.net, www.clandestines.info, www.asylumsupport.info, www.immigrationwatch.info and www.segregation.org.uk because there is a lot of confusion around the issues. I am also working towards better design because people are judging things visually too.

"The future of the website is still very open – I've got some ideas. I am working on purely on voluntary basis and time is the factor and I do not want to create a monster I can't maintain. I hope I will continue to provide alternative voice, listen to the virtual community that has interest in the issue and is using the website and explore virtual activism such as Urban75 perhaps.

"I feel there is a need for an instant reaction unit against the racism in the media. There is need to be proactive rather than reactive and Internet is not utilised for that purpose. I would also like to maintain independent and free service. Other websites require paid subscription, which is a serious issue if you are advocating for rights, and goes against the spirit of free information exchange on the internet."

It was inspiring to see how one person constructively addressed frustrations caused by the injustice of immigration system, failures of social work system, media frenzy and inadequacy of refugee and immigration practitioners to get their 'virtual' act together. It was empowering to learn that one person can make a difference. I am now off to look up those *HTML for Dummies* and *Teach Yourself Web Design* books, as I have discovered another way to use this weapon against prejudice.

Contact Frank frank.corrigan@asylumrights.net

'PEG' BOARD

Use some of these forthcoming events to attract good coverage, instead of having to react to negative stories.

Remind your media contacts if it is happening near you. Let them know if any of the speakers has a local connection, or if anyone is going from your area. Suggest they arrange an interview or send photographer/film crew.

Monday 3 March 7.30pm
POETRY CAFE

Exiled Writers Ink! present their regular monthly evening of poetry.

Reza Hiwa and Poets for Peace, a pacifist and artistic movement for these troubled times.

£1 members and unemployed refugees, £3 non-members
Venue: Venue: 22 Betterton Street, London WC2

For more info, contact jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk or visit www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Tuesdays in March 5.00pm
EXPERIENCE OF EXILE LECTURES

A series of lectures organised by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR).
March 4: Ethiopian and Tamil communities in the UK: the experience of exile. Followed by a short film on the Tamil community in the UK.

March 11: New identities in the diaspora: Somalis and Kurds in London, comparative issues. Dr David Griffiths, Senior Researcher, Oxford Brookes University

March 18: Bosnian refugees in the UK: questioning community, Dr Lynette Kelly, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
Venue: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Menzies Room, 28 Russell Square, London WC1B

For more info, contact Beth Crosland on beth.crosland@kcl.ac.uk or visit www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/diary/icar@kcl.ac.uk

Tuesday 4 March 5.30pm
FREE TRAINING FOR REFUGEES

PhotoVoice is starting a new project in Newham for refugees with an interest in learning about aspects of media work. The sessions will run every Tuesday evening and cover photography, video and journalism.

Venue: Trinity Community Centre, East Avenue, London, E12 6S
For more info, contact Yesim on 020 8472 8947

Thursdays 6 March – 24 April 7.30 - 8.30pm
GET CREATIVE!

If you are interested in starting a writing career and you are from the Middle East (Arabic, Kurdish or Persian), then come and join the regular meeting.

Venue: Hammersmith Library, ten minutes walk from Hammersmith Station.

For more info and to confirm your place, contact Ghias Aljundi, Writer-in-Residence at Hammersmith & Fulham Council on 020 7736 0864 (switchboard) or email ghias.aljundi@hafed.org.uk or Choman Hardi on choman@choman.fsnet.co.uk

Saturday 8 - Friday 28 March
OUR LIFE IN PIECES

An exhibition of objects and their stories from Iraqis in Exile, organised by Act Together, a London based group of Iraqi women exiles and non-Iraqi women. Sometimes it seems that the only Iraqi who exists is Saddam Hussein. This exhibition conveys the lives and culture of ordinary Iraqis, who often feel they have been silenced and that their experience counts for nothing.

Venue: Diorama Gallery, 34 Osnaurgh Street, London NW1 3ND

For more info, contact Act Together on 020 7272 9324 or info@acttogether.org

Saturday 15 - Sunday 23 March
ACTION WEEK AGAINST RACISM

21 March was declared International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a reaction to the murder of 70 peaceful demonstrators in Sharpeville, South Africa in 1960. This year once again hundreds of activities will take place all around Europe, organised by a wide variety of organisations.

UNITED co-ordinates the activities, functions as an information point and distributes campaign material. Please send information on your activities. A list of activities will be published on

<http://www.unitedagainstracism.org> and in the Calendar of Internationalism.

For more info, visit www.unitedagainstracism.org

Wednesday 19 March 6.30pm
LIVERPOOL MEDIA FORUM

Organised by the RAM Project, in partnership with the Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seeker Media Group, Refugee Council, Refugee Action and the NUJ, a forum to bring together asylum seekers and refugees, organisations working on their behalf and journalists to debate how to best turn the tide of negative coverage.

Food and wine from 6.30pm.
Venue: tbc

For more info, or to reserve a place, contact Anna Nelson on 0117 941 5889 or anna@presswise.org.uk

Thursday 20 March 9.30am - 3.45pm

INVOLVING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

A one day conference organised by the Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seeker Media Group for anyone wishing to involve refugees and asylum seekers in volunteering opportunities and community action.

£35 for voluntary sector organisations and £70 for public/private organisations.

Venue: Oakmere House, Cherry Lane, Liverpool

For more info, contact Lynn Wallace on 0151 707 1113 or book online at www.merseyworld.com/mersey_vo/iraas.htm

Saturday 22 March 10.30am - 4.30pm

REFUGEES: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE HEADLINES

An Amnesty International UK conference bringing together those working with refugees to challenge media myths.

Talks, workshops, discussions and music.

Speakers include Kate Allen (Director Amnesty International UK) and Mike Jempton (Project Manager, RAM Project and PressWise Director).

Venue: University of Exeter, Queens Building, Streatham Campus, Exeter.

For more info, contact Paul Eagle on 0207 417 6372 or paul.eagle@amnesty.org.uk

Sunday 6 April 7.00 - 10.00pm
ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Exiled Writers Ink! present Across the Divide: Palestinian and Israeli writers in discussion. With music and song by Israeli and Palestinian musicians and singers

Venue: Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

For more info, contact jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk or visit www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Wednesday 8 April 6.30pm

PROFESSOR STEPHEN CASTLES SEMINAR

The European Migrations and Transformations Institute & London European City of Immigration Group present a seminar 'The New Global Politics and the Fate of Refugees' by Professor Stephen Castles, Director of the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford.

Free admission but early booking is advised.

Venue: Henry Thomas Room, London Metropolitan University, Holloway Road, London N7 8DB

For more info, contact Kathryn Johnson on lerc@londonmet.ac.uk or 020 7133 2662

USEFUL WEBSITES

Frank Corrigan's websites

www.asylumrights.net
www.asylumsupport.info
www.clandestines.info
www.immigrationwatch.info
www.segregation.org.uk

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international humanitarian aid organisation that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in danger in more than 80 countries.

www.msf.org

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

www.ncadc.org.uk
Supporting families and individuals facing deportation.

Refugee Access Project – STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION
Yorkshire and Humberside Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

www.refugeeaccess.info
Excellent website for asylum seekers, refugees and agencies working in Yorkshire and Humberside. You will find links to a directory of services, a best practice showcase and translated information briefings in Albanian, Arabic, French, Somali, Portuguese, and Russian.

Copy for the next bulletin should reach ram@presswise.org.uk by 1 April 2003