

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers & the Media Project

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

No. 32, Sept 2003

A prison by any other name

The case of the Ay family polarised the media, with the Daily Mail and the Sun emphasising how much the saga cost the taxpayer. Liberal papers pointed out that the anti-deportation campaign garnered a great deal of support in Scotland. However, one of the most disturbing facts of the case was not emphasised enough. The Ay children and their mother spent over a year 'in an equivalent of category B prison' - as Guardian commentator Diane Taylor pointed out.

According to material published on the Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) website "in April 2003 the government revealed that there were 56 children in detention centres in the UK. The children are detained under the same criteria as single adults."

However BID also explained that statistics for the number of children detained are not routinely available
Further reading: How does it feel to be a child in a detention centre?
Ann Treneman, Times, November 06, 2002 www.the-times.co.uk
Bail for Immigration Detainees:
www.biduk.org.uk

Immigrants dragged into Anglo-Welsh spat

According to anti-racist group Searchlight, the national website of Wales <http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/> writes that the far-right British National Party will try to exploit the Dafydd Iwan immigration row.

Folk-singer Dafydd Iwan, the first candidate to bid for the presidency of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru. Plaid Cymru maintains that the folk singer's comments about some English families leaving inner cities because of black and Asian people were misinterpreted and misrepresented by opponents.

After the BNP won a 17th council seat in England in August its next target is Wales. "In the 2004 local elections they are quite likely to wrap themselves in the Welsh flag,"

predicts Ian Titherington, secretary of Wales Friends of Searchlight.

"Perversely, they will blame multi-ethnic communities in England for 'forcing' English families into Welsh-speaking communities in a bizarre attempt to blame ethnic minority English families for the decline of the Welsh language."

Sun's half-baked answer to the PCC

Complaints to the PCC that an article in the Sun was largely a fabrication, has prompted the paper's ombudsman to insist: 'We stand by our story.'

The 4 July article claimed that asylum seekers hunt swans for food. It contained statements which have proved unfounded. The theme was a recently taken up by the Daily Star, substituting donkeys for swans.

The Sun article attracted several complaints and the PCC has yet to reach its verdict.

Racist attacks in Lowestoft

Police are investigating organised racist attacks against Asian overseas students in Lowestoft, according to the Waveney Advertiser www.advertiser-online.co.uk

As a result a protest demonstration was held on Monday 25 August. The students, mostly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, are on marine courses at Lowestoft College and they are living there temporarily. They have been targeted by racist thugs who throw eggs at their cars, scribble graffiti on their property, smash their house windows, and even unleash their dogs on them and physically attack them.

A spokesman for the students said: "We want the people of Lowestoft to realise that we are not asylum seekers, just students trying to study in peace. We all have families back at home and will be returning there when our courses finish."

EDITORIAL

A picture is worth a thousand words

It is no longer unusual to see articles blaming asylum-seekers for all that is wrong in Britain: whether it is donkeys missing from Greenwich Royal Park or the crisis in the NHS.

What makes me curious are the photos used to 'illustrate' asylum seekers like those in 'The Sun' recently. Stereotype leather jacketed, dark-haired or dark-skinned people making 'OK boss' thumbs-up signs; gypsy women begging with babies; or dark-haired leather-jacketed people using mobile phones.

It is not surprising that there are so many racist attacks against those who resemble these images but are not asylum seekers. The latest victims were Asian students in Lowestoft.

I know plenty of blonde, well-dressed asylum-seekers who don't get that treatment - until they speak. I once met a blonde, English-looking Kosovan guy who was involved in an incident with an Englishman. Initially the man wasn't angry "because he thought I was an Englishman too. But after he has realised that I am a Kosovan he has called the police and exaggerated the whole story. He claimed afterwards that he had psychological problems as a consequence of the incident. I had to go to court and spent four months in jail!"

Using stereotypical images in newspapers especially the tabloids, and on TV, stigmatises vulnerable groups. Even well-established ethnic minorities are suffering as a result.

Images stay in the mind even if we quickly forget the details of a story. Perhaps it is time such use of images was regulated.

Besim Gerguri
Guest Editor

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, 1989-2003

1989	15	
1990	15	
1991	320	START OF WAR IN CROATIA, 10-DAY WAR IN SLOVENIA
1992	5,635	START OF WAR IN BOSNIA
1993	1,830	
1994	1,385	
1995	1,565	END OF WARS IN BOSNIA AND CROATIA
1996	1,030	
1997	2,260	START OF WAR IN KOSOVO
1998	7,980	
1999	14,180	JUNE : END OF WAR IN KOSOVO
2000	8,335	MILOSEVIC STEPS DOWN
2001	4,025	MILOSEVIC IN THE HAGUE
2002	2,695	
2003	1,200	(projected)

Causes of asylum migration

If the refugee-bashing press is to be believed asylum-seekers come to the UK for every other reason, except to flee danger.

Yet analysis of the number of applications from former Yugoslavia over a 12-year period makes it clear that surges in number of refugees from there followed periods of war and political instability.

In the two years leading up to the start of hostilities number of asylum applications filed in the UK by Yugoslavian citizens was 30. In two years after the outbreak of the war the number shot up to 6000.

Conversely, political settlements and peace brought noticeable drops in the number of people seeking asylum.

See above chart

Directory increasingly used as journalistic resource

Since publication of the RAM Directory of Exiled Journalists a number of those featured have contacted by the media with requests for interviews, radio guest slots and other journalistic contributions.

Most recently Robert Egwea, from Uganda, was interviewed by the *Sunday Express* about his experiences of Idi Amin's rule.

RAM would like to hear about other examples.

To contact exiled journalists visit www.ramproject.org.uk/directory

UNSEEN STATISTICS

989,000

The number of asylum applications made in Germany in two years (1992-1993)

613,500

The number of asylum applications made in the UK in twenty-two years 1980 -2002

70,000

The number of asylum seekers known to have left or been deported from UK in the decade 1992-2002

65,460

The number of people forcibly removed from the UK in 2002, of whom 13,910 (including dependents) had sought asylum at some stage.

56

The number of children held in UK detention centres as of April 2003. Immigration detention centre security is at the level of a category B prison (Category A is highest)

30

Britain's place on the list of countries in the world, ranked according to population density (4th in Europe)

Asylum measures hit people in need of protection

People fleeing war and human rights abuses are being prevented from reaching the UK by tough asylum policies, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research.

If the Government plan to exclude economic migrants while guaranteeing protection to those fleeing persecution was working, there should be a proportionate increase in the number being granted asylum status, argues IPPR's Migration Research Fellow Dr Heaven Crawley.

In fact latest official figures indicate that the proportion of applicants granted asylum has remained at 7% while those given leave to remain on humanitarian grounds has fallen considerably. The number of overturned by The courts have overturned 21% of negative decisions by the Home Office, up 4% over the last 3 months - suggesting that poor decisions are still being made.

In August IPPR published *Asylum in the UK: A Fact File*, with comprehensive, objective information. It has also produced *States of Conflict: Causes and patterns of forced migration to the EU and policy responses* by Stephen Castles, Heaven Crawley and Sean Loughna.

Both can be obtained from IPPR, 30-32 Southampton Street, London W1V 2E 7RA tel 0207 470 6100 www.ippr.org.uk/

Cut-out-and keep COMMUNICATOR

Web publishing made easy

How to avoid using ready-made programmes and web services. Tips from Besim Gerguri.

Web hosting¹ and domain name²

The most important thing before 'going live' is to create a web magazine or newspaper, with so-called 'sticky' content to make readers keep coming back. Lots of online and print magazines provide thorough step-by-step tutorials.³ I think the best web-page software is Macromedia's Dreamweaver, but it doesn't come cheap.⁴

Having created your e-magazine or e-newspaper, which is the best and cheapest way to publishing them online.

Lots of Hosting Service Providers (HSPs) offer free hosting but they come with a 'price'. Most oblige customers to put third party 'banners' on their websites, use their phone number as a dial-up number, or impose limits in web space, bandwidth⁵ or domain name like.

For example, if 'John Smith' signs up for Freeserve⁶ services, he gets 35Mb of free web space but has to carry a banner; other restrictions include using only ready-made Freeserve templates. His home-page address will be: <http://john.mysite.freeserve.com/>.

There is also a possibility to upload⁷ his site to its free space by using FTP⁸, but he has to dial a specific Freeserve (0845) number, which means he can't upload his site if he is connected to the internet by different ISP. If he wants his own domain name (e.g. www.johnsmith.co.uk or .com, .org, etc) then he must buy it from a Hosting Service Provider of which there are thousand in cyberspace.⁹ It is time-

¹ A service provided by Hosting Service Provider to host your website

² A name which identifies a web page by typing it on your browser for example: <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

³ For beginners: <http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/> and <http://html.tucows.com/index.html>, For advanced web designers: <http://www.internet.com> click on Developer link.

⁴ <http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/>, where you can find lots of tutorials and tips how to build web pages.

⁵ The amount of **data** that can be transmitted in a fixed amount of time. For **digital devices**, the bandwidth is usually expressed in bits per second (**bps**) or **bytes** per second. For **analog** devices, the bandwidth is expressed in cycles per second, or Hertz (Hz).

⁶ <http://www.freeserve.com/>

⁷ To transmit **data** from a **computer** to a **bulletin board service**, **mainframe**, or **network**. For example, if you use a **personal computer** to **log on** to a network and you want to send **files** across the network, you must upload the files from your **PC** to the network.

⁸ **File Transfer Protocol**, software which helps uploading files on the web space provided by an HSP. Windows XP has its own built-in FTP, so there is no need to buy or install one for those who have Windows XP. Best known FTP is Cute FTP (\$39.99) see www.cuteftp.com. There are also lots of free FTPs, look at <http://html.tucows.com/index.html>.

⁹ A metaphor for describing the non-**physical** terrain created by **computer systems**. Online systems, for example, create a cyberspace within which

consuming to find a good one. If he comes across an HSP offering very cheap domain names and hosting services and there is no phone number or address on their web-site, my best advice would be – don't buy from them.

To check for the best ISP and HSP in the UK buy a specialist magazines like Internet Magazine, NetMagazine, WebUser etc, or by visiting websites like <http://www.best-stuff-uk.com> or <http://www.best-deals-uk.com/>

Reliable web hosting companies

One of the cheapest and most advertised web hosting companies is <http://oneandone.co.uk>. Prices aren't high and there is a technical service helpline - very important in case things go wrong.

Other respected UK companies are <http://www.123-reg.co.uk/> which offers very cheap UK domain names and <http://www.redstation.com> which is very reliable. They offer an excellent deal of 500 Mb free hosting for one year to those who purchase a domain name from them.

Before buying a domain name it is important to ask or check transfer possibilities. If you want to buy a domain name from one company and hosting from another, examine the offers carefully. Some don't allow transfers, which means if you buy a domain name from them you also have to buy hosting space. 123-Reg, for example, allows a transfer of domain name but OneandOne doesn't. However with the latter you can cancel any agreement at any time, so they are quite flexible and they offer refunds.

Checking for domain names

Usually **.com**, **.net**, **.org** and **.tv** domain names are more popular and expensive than UK domain names like **.co.uk** or **.org.uk**. Buying domain names with the UK suffix in the UK is more reliable because they are regulated by the UK internet registry Nominet,¹⁰ to whom you can complain if things go wrong.

Dot.com domain names are regulated by Register.com¹¹ in the USA – but you could buy your .com name from a French company and it is difficult to fix if that company goes bust. Buying from well-established companies anywhere in the world is quite safe, but avoid small semi-legal companies offering 'bargain' prices.

Use the Whois option on the Nominet and Register websites to check which companies or individuals have bought already registered domain names, so you can see who has been quick to buy easy-to-remember domain names. GOOD LUCK!

Besim Gerguri

besim@gerguri.com

people can communicate with one another (via **e-mail**), do research, or simply window shop. Like physical space, cyberspace contains **objects** (**files**, mail messages, **graphics**, etc.) and different **modes** of transportation and delivery. Unlike real space, though, exploring cyberspace does not require any physical movement other than pressing **keys** on a **keyboard** or moving a **mouse**.

¹⁰ <http://www.nominet.org.uk/>

¹¹ <http://www.register.com/>

**THE REFUGEE
COUNCIL**
*Direct services
a priority*

**In the first of a new series
RAM Communication Officer
Nick Medic surveys
organisations working with
refugees in the UK**

The Refugee Council is the largest non-governmental organisation in the UK working with asylum-seekers and refugees.

It provides help and support, but also works with asylum-seekers and refugees to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed. It employs 450 people and has 300 volunteers based at sites across the country, with headquarters in Vauxhall, South London

Following the Second World War and creation of the 1951 Refugee Convention two independent organisations were founded in the UK in 1953 to help refugees who fled from East and Central Europe. In 1981 these two organisations merged to form the British Refugee Council.

In those days Refugee Council was a very small organisation responding to a small number of refugees said Fazil Kawani the Council's Communications Director, for instance in 1982 according to Home Office statistics – the number of people applied for asylum in the UK under the terms of the Geneva Convention was 2,425 including dependants. By the late 80s the number of staff increased to cope with the growing number of asylum applicants, which in 1989 stood at 11,640.

Fazil heads the Communication Department, who have overall responsibility for:

- Advocating on behalf of refugees through media, lobbying and public awareness campaign;
- Raising the necessary funds for Refugee Councils services, and

- Providing a range of high quality information services
It is one of five departments within the Council. The others are Operations, Development, Regions and Resources.

The organisation is committed to dedicating a great proportion of it's output in man-hours to 'direct services'. According to Fazil, 75% or close to 400 people are involved in working directly with refugees. The funding comes largely from the Government Departments, with other portions from the European Commission, trusts and individual donations. The direct work is done through a number of 'walk-in' centres across the UK, the one in Brixton, South London being the largest employing 200 people.

**REFUGEE COUNCIL
FACT SHEET**

Number of paid staff: 450
Number of volunteers: 300
Budget (2001): £37.5 million

Head Office

3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ
Tel 020 7820 3000
Fax 020 7582 9929

Website

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Press Officers:

Jean Candler 020 7820 3057
Hannah Ward 020 7840 4404
Out of hours call 0870 0555500 & ask for pager 865169.

The Council's budget for 2001 was just over £37.5 million. Out of this sum close to £26 million was for designated for asylum support, primarily grants and accommodation. Another priority are the external and in-house training programmes for which more than £3 million was earmarked the same year.

The courses include Working with interpreters; Recruiting refugee jobseekers; Teaching about refugee issues; Asylum: facts and fundamentals; and the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) System.

Among other activities the Refugee Council publishes a bi-monthly magazine 'In Exile', a respected magazine on refugee rights. Though it regularly features prominent activists and humanitarians such as Anita Rodick or author Monica Ali, the main emphasis is on articles dealing with problems and challenges refugees face in the UK, asylum legislature and refugee culture. The 'Speaking-Out' column has over the years featured many harrowing testimonies from asylum-seekers held in detention centres, on the receiving end of mistreatment and abuse.

The Refugee Council was the lead organisation in the successful campaign against the voucher system. It has a very useful website (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk) and organises many high profile events every year to highlight the plight of refugees in the UK and abroad.

Fazil Kawani's own experience confirms that many refugees are not aware of any rights they might be entitled to under the Geneva Convention. As a young man of eighteen his first contact with in 1979 London was as a Kurdish Refugee, not aware that there was something called 'political asylum'. He applied a few years later, went on to graduate as civil engineer, worked on for the local council and then after volunteering for his community and other Refugee Community organisations in London then later joined the Refugee Council in 2000.

'The reason I'm still alive today,' wrote Kawani in a recent article for *In Exile*, 'Is because of the existence of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the hospitality of the British people and my friends in exile. But also because we exist as living messengers and we believe that our message is a vitally important one.'

It is fitting to remember this in the year 2003, when the Refugee Council celebrates its 50th anniversary, and the world seems to need the Geneva Convention as much as it ever did.

'PEG' BOARD

Keep your ears and eyes open for events which can provide you, and the media with a 'peg' on which to hang positive stories about refugees or asylum seekers.

Help to set the media agenda by generating stories rather than having to react to theirs.

Keep your media contacts informed about what is happening and why it is relevant for them.

September to December
FREE TRAINING FOR REFUGEE WOMEN
Organised by the Refugee Women's Association, various courses are available this autumn for refugee women living in the UK. Courses include Accelerated English, Childcare (leading to a vocational qualification), Business Start-up, Job Search, Mentoring and Capacity Building for women's groups. All courses are free. Venues: in London
For more info, contact 020 7923 2412 or rwa@refugeewomen.org.uk

Thursday 4 to Sunday 27 September
VISIONS OF IRAQ
Working in collaboration with the Iraqi artistic community, before.after.now have organised events ranging from traditional music performance, to contemporary Iraqi art and Poetry. Venues: in London
For more info on all events, contact before-after-now@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.before-after-now.com

Friday 5 September
BEYOND LABELS
'Beyond Labels: Working towards Equality and Diversity through ICT' is a one day event organised by the University of Huddersfield. The

conference will focus on ways of supporting the use of ICT for overcoming poverty and social exclusion
Venue: University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield, HD1 3DH
For more info, contact Rehana Ansari on 01484 472 640 or info@beyondlabels.org.uk or visit www.beyondlabels.org.uk

Saturday 6 September 12 noon

CLOSE DUNGAVEL DEMO

Called by the Scottish Trade Union Council (STUC), a demonstration to coincide with the second anniversary of the opening of Dungavel Immigration Removal/Detention Centre. Please bring banners and friends!
Venue: Dungavel, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire, Scotland
For more info, contact Rozanne Foyer on rfoyer@stuc.org.uk or 0141 337 8100, or visit www.stuc.org.uk

Thursday 11 September 6.30pm

THE FAKE EMERGENCY
Public meeting called by the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities, a public meeting entitled 'The Fake Emergency: Mass-Media Propoganda in the so-called War on Terror'. Organised in association with the NUJ and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF).
Venue: NUJ HQ, 314 Grays Inn Rd WC1. Nearest tube Kings Cross.
For more info, contact Estella on estella24@tiscali.co.uk or 020 7586 5892, or visit www.cacc.org.uk

Saturday 13 September
DHSU INFORMATION FAIR

Detainees Help Support Unit fair to address recent changes to immigration decision procedures and legal aid entitlement. Bring information material and leaflets. Booking essential.
Venue: Clubland, 54 Camberwell Road, London SE5

For more info, contact 020 7703 5435 or info@dhsu.org.uk

Sunday 14 September
FLORA LIGHT CHALLENGE

Asylum Aid are organising a team to join the Flora Light Challenge for Women 5km funrun, and will provide sponsorship forms, t-shirt, publicity materials and a goody bag at the finish. £12 registration fee.
Venues: Hyde Park, London and Birmingham City Centre.
For more info, contact Disha Sughand on 020 7377 5123

Sunday 14 September 3.00pm

FREE BEHARO LEMANI

Called by the Trans-European Roma Federation (TERF), this rally is for the release of the 'Yarl's Wood Three' - Behari Lemani, Henry Momadou, Aliane Ahmed and also to focus on the plight of Kosovan Roma.
Venue: Outside HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London W12 OAE. Nearest tube East Acton
For more info, contact ustiben.2@ntlworld.com

Sunday 21 September 3.00 - 5.00pm

ONE PEOPLE, ONE WORLD

Organised by Peace and Progress, this public meeting aims to counter the lies told about asylum seekers.
Venue: Birmingham Library Theatre, Paradise Place, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham City Centre.
For more info, contact Vivian Yates on 07816 823 437 or info@peaceandprogress.org or visit www.peaceandprogress.org

Wednesday 1 - Thursday 2 October

ARTIST'S FORUM/NETWORK

The Arches, GCC Arts Development, Sanctuary: the project, and Artists in Exile are looking to establish a high quality, informative and creative network for artists to include the growing number of asylum seeker, refugee and exiled artists in Glasgow.

This first meeting will initiate development of the network.

Venue: tbc Glasgow
For more info, contact Katie Bruce on 0141 229 1996

Monday 13 October
EMPOWERING ASYLUM SEEKERS

Organised by ASSET UK, this conference will have a regional perspective and will identify regional strategies, services and projects which relate to asylum seekers. Speakers will be invited from national, regional and local organisations. Attendance is free and includes lunch.
Venue: Blackburne House, Liverpool
For more info, contact Katherine Friedmann on 0116 2044291 or katharine.friedmann@niace.org.uk

Monday 24 to Thursday 27 November

A SENSE OF PLACE

Organised by the British Council, a four day international event to investigate, question and shed light on 'displacement' and 'integration' in Europe, through the intellectual focus of the role of arts, culture and media. The RAM Project is co-ordinating day two on media - confirmed speakers so far are Gary Younge (journalist), Daniel Meadows (BBC) and Terry Threadgold (University of Cardiff).
For more info, contact info@asenseofplace.org.uk or 01280 821 292 or visit www.asenseofplace.org.uk

Saturday 30 November
RE-IMAGINING DIASPORAS

A one-day symposium organised by Liverpool University, to establish a research network, facilitate collaborative research, and promote further research. Registration £25 waged, £15 unwaged
Venue: Liverpool John Moores University, Dean Walters Building, MCCA, St James Road, Liverpool L1 7BR.
For more info, contact Clare Horrocks on clhorrocks@aol.com or 0151 424 6170