

Police rubbish Express 'Plot to kill Blair' story

The Daily Express scooped the world exclusive (once again), with a front page story headlined "PLOT TO KILL BLAIR" (Mon 16 Aug). "Asylum seekers with hi-tech equipment and maps caught half a mile from PM's home," the exclusive sensationally claimed, with an inside report entitled "Al-Qaeda scouts found mile from PM's home".

The article suggested Durham Police foiled an Al-Qaeda team gathering intelligence on the PM's constituency home in County Durham. But Police issued a statement saying the story was "rubbish" and that the *Express* had been told in unequivocal language on Fri 13 Aug that the incident as reported did not happen, and the two men had no known connection with the PM's home in Trimdon Colliery some two miles from the scene of their discovery.

The PM's spokesman also dismissed the story as "complete nonsense," when asked about it during the PM's briefing on Monday 16.

On the same spread the paper wrote: "As the Home Secretary is accused of an affair, security alert is revealed after two asylum seekers in a stolen car are found casing Blair's backyard."

It was the very last paragraph with the release of two Lithuanian men arrested last September which raised questions. "After they had been thoroughly interviewed," it stated, "the Force were satisfied no security issues were involved." Despite that, the *Express* goes on to make further claims that they were linked to Al-Qaeda. But Police said their presence in county Durham was drug related. Police also said they were not asylum seekers as reported by the paper. An editorial took up the theme: "Give us the truth on terror."

After all, it was less than a year ago that Hill, then editing the *Daily Star*, splashed with a completely cooked-up story headlined "ASYLUM SEEKERS EAT OUR DONKEYS".

See: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page6244.asp>

[uk/output/page6244.asp](http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page6244.asp)

Amplifications & corrections

Barely two weeks after *The Express* for the first time clarified its misuse of the term "illegal" when referring to asylum seekers, the paper persisted in breaching the PCC guidance by referring to asylum seekers as 'bogus' in its 23 Aug report "The Asylum Time Bomb". The paper's shift from using the term "illegal" to "bogus" asylum seeker after making a clarification leaves a lot to be desired.

To remind the *Express* 'an asylum seeker is someone currently seeking refugee status and therefore in law is not illegal'.
PCC Guidance Note, Oct 03.

EJN challenges abuses of PCC guidance

Exiled journalists have approached the PCC and newspapers about persistent breaches of the Commission's guidance note issued to editors last October about the use of 'misleading or distorted terminology' in asylum and refugee stories.

Meanwhile, the BBC has shown journalistic integrity by moving swiftly to remove the confusing term 'illegal asylum seekers' used in one of its stories in Aug. This was after the RAM Project complained to the Corporation about the use of the term in breach of Clause 1 of the PCC Code of Practice.

Gary Duffy, UK Editor, BBC News Interactive in his written apology to RAM said: "We do appreciate you raising this. I will be reminding our journalists that the greatest possible care is needed in the use of language surrounding this issue and that this is a phrase that should not be used in referring to asylum seekers".

EJN members decide on the future of the Network

Exiled Journalists Network members who met in London on Aug 21 agreed on the need to create a self-contained group. The meeting came up with clear aims and objects for the group. Two network members volunteered to work on the draft constitution. Other issues raised was the membership categories and it

EDITORIAL

Press pay no heed to PCC guidance

It's almost a year since press watch dog, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) issued its guidance note to all editors about use of 'misleading or distorted terminology' in asylum and refugee stories.

But what is utterly disturbing is the newspapers and magazines' persistent use of the terms 'illegal asylum seeker' and 'bogus asylum seeker' breaching the PCC's guidance note.

RAM has been monitoring this and the list of language offenders has been increasing. It is high time the PCC persuaded editors to respect it's guidance note. Some papers use 'illegal asylum seeker' and 'illegal immigrants' interchangeably, ignoring the PCC advice. Instead of the PCC waiting for the public to complain, the Commission should put in place some mechanism to ensure that it's advice is heeded. It may seem like a mammoth task for the PCC but they have to police their own industry.

Newspapers continue breaching the guidance note willy-nilly. Most members of the public are 'third parties' and if they took the lead in complaining might get nowhere, but if no-one complains the newspapers will have a field day breaching PCC guidance with impunity. The public are given a false impression as a result and the victims of continued breaches are asylum-seekers who rarely read the newspapers. The ball is in the PCC's court.

Forward Maisokwadzo
Guest Editor

was stressed that all members should complete membership form already completed all members of the network.

It was also agreed that besides serving the interests of its members, the group can work with other organisations on how exiled journos can actively take part in issues of community integration, citizenship and capacity building. Member involvement is essential to development of the network.

Lincoln Uni/RAM to offer training for exiled journos

Lincoln University's Faculty of Media and Humanities has agreed with the RAM Project to run a joint training course for members of the exiled journalists network.

The scheme will start with a pilot two-day programme where participants will learn how to produce their own publications or for organisations, UK press law issues, job opportunities, freelancing, new media press opportunities, moving from print to broadcasting. The two day format would be a 'how to get started' scenario with practical sessions. *Interested? Contact RAM for further details on ram@presswise.org.uk*

BMC proposals to Ofcom

The NUJ's Black Members Council (BMC) has challenged Ofcom, the broadcasting regulator to ensure that views, needs and interests of the UK's ethnic minorities are adequately reflected in proposals that arise from its review of public service broadcasting. The BMC says Ofcom proposals should include:

- the regulation of commercial broadcasters to the extent that they should be required to produce policies, aims and a viable strategy for multicultural programming and for the presence of racial minorities in broadcasting
- the policy should uphold the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- the policy and aims should include targets for the employment of racial minorities, and publish an annual report of their work in addressing race equality.

The BMC says this will help to avert the real danger that, apart from black faces on screens, the UK's racial minorities will face a situation where broadcast programmes will go back to the pre-Scarman era. An era where racial minor-

ties had little influence over how they were represented and, when they were, they were often depicted as pathological.

Last month BBC ran into trouble as ethnic minority campaigners called the corporation to scrap its controversial documentaty addressing whether young black men in Britain are facing a crisis. <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/media/story.jsp?story=552925>

Britain facing no migrant 'flood' says MPs

The idea Britain is facing a "tidal wave" of immigrants has been branded a myth in a report by a committee of MPs. The media, mainly the right-wing press, often suggests the UK is in the frontline of dealing with refugees, the cross-party Commons International Development Select Committee said.

In fact, most migration takes place within and between developing nations, it pointed out. It said migrants coming to the UK benefited the country and should not be treated as a "problem".

The MPs called for more "joined up thinking" in government on key issues linked to migration.

Publicity fight over asylum policy

Some asylum seekers detained in centres such as Dungavel could have their personal details revealed by the government as part of a plan to counter adverse publicity over asylum policies.

Des Browne, the Minister in charge of asylum and migration strategy, is preparing a fightback against those who, he claims, make political capital out of asylum seekers.

He believes some detainees and their advisers seek publicity, knowing the government has consistently refused to comment on individual cases.

Experts in the refugee field would have serious reservations about such a policy, although they would prefer that all individual asylum cases were kept out of the media.

Celebrating Roma Culture

Londoners were given a rare opportunity to experience Roma culture when the capital's mayor, Ken Livingstone, brought a celebration of dance and music to Trafalgar Square.

Reactions to Roma asylum seek-

ers and travelling communities have not always been so positive.

Throughout the past eight centuries or so Roma communities have been abused, harassed and chased across Europe. In many parts of eastern Europe, the Roma are still subjected to discrimination, marginalisation and segregation, the Council of Europe says.

In some former Soviet bloc countries, Roma women are not only racially abused but subjected to enforced sterilisations, the council's commissioner for human rights has said.

It is experiences like these that have led many to take refuge as asylum seekers in the UK. But some sections of the media continue splashing hate and negative stories about the group. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3579230.stm

Critics slam asylum guide written in Welsh

The public expressed mixed reactions to the Government's decision to spend £10,000 on a leaflet for asylum seekers - written in Welsh.

Critics described Westminster's decision to splash out the money as an "absolute ridiculous" waste of money

But asylum seekers and refugee campaigners applauded the Government's decision to produce and distribute the leaflet, called Claiming Asylum.

Mr David Farnsworth, the chief executive of the Welsh Refugee Council told the press: "It is ironic that the issues of Welsh language rights and asylum touch together in this issue.

"Too often we deal with asylum seekers that have been persecuted because they are from minority group. Respect of human rights and language rights is essential in any democracy." <http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/page.cfm?objectid=14532680&method=full&siteid=50082>

Whistleblower writes a book

Steve Moxon, a Sheffield Immigration Service whistleblower who lost his job after claiming immigration checks had been waived, launched his book 'The Great Immigration Scandal'. David Davis, shadow Home Secretary, was supposed to officiate at the launch but pulled out describing Moxon's book as an "Islamophobic rant."

EXILED JOURNALISTS SPEAK OUT**Safety in numbers?**

As conflicts around the world escalate, *Forward Maisokwadzo* asks whether Home Office efforts to turn the debate about asylum and immigration policies into a numbers game risks ignoring the real need to protect those fleeing from persecution, especially children.

The number of people seeking asylum in Britain dropped sharply in the second quarter of this year, recent statistics published by the Home Office revealed.

The politically sensitive statistics showed there were 7,920 applications in the second quarter of 2004, 11% less than in the previous quarter. With a general election expected next year, the government is delighted about this drop in number of people applying asylum. Government seems keen to score political points for its policies rather than giving a home to asylum seekers forced to flee their home countries and settle in UK. The situation for example in the ethnic torn northern Sudan, Iraq, Zimbabwe testifies to increasing conflict around the world. I'm not suggesting that the government should be home to all asylum seekers world over. Many asylum seekers are in limbo after their asylum applications have been refused and benefits withdrawn. These are the issues around which the Government and all stakeholders should come together and find a lasting solution rather than celebrating reduction in numbers.

According to the Refugee Council 44% of the Somali nationals who appealed had their initial decision overturned, as did 40% of Sudanese nationals, 42% of Eritreans and 30% of Russians.

"This is wholly unacceptable- an overhaul of the initial decision-making process is clearly long over-due, if only to avoid those telling who are genuinely fleeing their for their lives that this country will not offer them the help and protection they so desperately need," said Margaret Lally, Deputy Chief Executive of Refugee Council.

"The Government must concentrate on ensuring people whose lives are in danger can get to the UK and are protected here. It must also address the reasons people are forced to leave their homes and take a more enlightened look at what the UK can do globally to make the world a safer place."

Though critics were quick to protest that the number of asylum seekers and their dependants being deported was 9% down - chiefly, officials said, because many are citizens of new EU member states - ministers believe they are finally achieving a "balanced" policy which cuts abuse but protects the vulnerable.

Year on year there was a record number of such removals in 2003: 13,005 or 21% up on 2002; 29% if dependants are included. While numbers are now falling, the proportion being removed or leaving voluntarily is higher - to the dismay of asylum

support groups and the delight of the tabloids.

The immigration minister, Des Browne, said: "We have cut abuse and are protecting our borders, while at the same time offering a haven to those genuinely fleeing persecution, and providing controlled legal routes for workers who want to make a contribution to the UK and where it is in the interests of our economy."

That is the 'managed migration' policy of Home Secretary, David Blunkett, in a nutshell, and the latest figures also showed 139,675 people were allowed to settle in the UK in 2003 - 20% up on 2002. They include 29,600 people who have lived and worked in Britain for at least four years.

With an increasing number of asylum seekers including children still held in detention centres, there is no reason to congratulate the Government for a reduction in number of people seeking asylum in Britain. It is shocking to see from the same Home Office figures that the number of asylum seeker children detained by the UK immigration service in the last six months has increased six-fold. Instead of the Government seriously putting in place some mechanisms to help vulnerable children languishing in detention centres. The figures show that on 26 June 2004, 60 asylum seeker children were detained in removal centres under immigration Act powers. According to detention charity Bail for Detainees (BID) this is double the number of children detained when the last snap-shot was taken in March 2004, and six times the number of children detained in December 2003.

The latest figures also show that over 16% of children were detained for longer than 14 days - way above the maximum period of a few days recommended for children by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. On 26 June, five children had been locked up for between 15 and 29 days, and a further 8% between one and two months. The other 50 (84%) children had been detained for 14 days or less.

"As these figures today show, children are being detained in significant and increasing numbers. There is no statutory time limit and no requirement for their detention to be sanctioned by a court. In our experience many do not have legal representation and are therefore unable to exercise their right to a bail application. We have serious concerns about children's welfare. Having conceded last year that detained children deserve some protection by way of an assessment the government have as yet failed to put any concrete measures in place with social services," said Sara Cutler, BID Policy Officer.

Looking at these statistics, less is being done to solve the problem yet the Government seems delighted by the fall in the number of asylum applications. According to asylum and refugee campaigners the 441 asylum seekers who were being held at the centre in west London were sent to prisons all over the country. Recently the United Nations' refugees agency has protested to the Government over the detention of asylum seekers in Welsh prisons.

See: <http://www.biduk.org>

Cut-out-and-keep COMMUNICATOR

How to attract funding for a regional media group

The recent national conference for regional media groups showed that the most successful ones were those with a paid full-time co-ordinator. Many grant-making trusts and foundations are now making substantial awards for asylum related projects. Here are some that the RAM Project has made applications to:

Community Fund: www.community-fund.org.uk

Offers several different types of grant for community projects that help disadvantaged groups. Refugees and asylum seekers are one of its priorities, and Black and ethnic minority communities are another – media groups serve both. The application form is complicated but its worth bearing in mind that they use a point-scoring system to assess applications and if you score highly enough you will be awarded a grant. The Community Fund also awards smaller grants made through Awards for All (www.awards-forall.org.uk), offering £500 - £5000.

Oxfam UK Poverty Programme: www.oxfamgb.org

Funds activities to: improve knowledge about asylum seekers and refugees in Britain; change public, government and media attitudes towards them; and help shape government policy.

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust: www.jrct.org.uk

Racial Justice programme aims to monitor and challenge racism and racial injustice relating to both colour and culture. Average of £30k awards, but anything from a few hundred pounds to £200k.

Barrow Cadbury: www.bctrust.org.uk

Inclusive Communities programme in the West Midlands focuses on strategic support for refugees and asylum-seekers. Grants usually £10 – 15k.

Home Office Refugee Integration Unit's Challenge Fund and European Refugee Fund:

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?pageid=90

Both funds revolve around the Home Office report *Full and Equal Citizens*, and promote refugee integration.

Comic Relief: www.comicrelief.org.uk

UK fund to counter hostility and prejudice against asylum seekers and refugees – exactly the kind of thing regional groups are doing. Unfortunately the programme has now closed and but will reopen in March 2005 so get in touch and register your interest now.

Also have a look at the **Association of Charitable Foundations'** website (www.acf.org.uk). ACF is a support organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations. It's useful to scan through occasionally to see who is funding asylum-related projects.

Funders want to see that you can demonstrate a need for your project, that you have clearly stated aims, objectives, activities, and that there will be measurable outcomes. Here are a few pointers:

Needs analysis: a report based on media monitoring is the best way to demonstrate this. Use headlines, articles, editorials and letters pages of your local newspapers, and quotes from radio and TV. You can also use testimonials from people you know who are scared to talk to journalists. It's also worth quoting work by other groups that has identified exaggerated reporting and misrepresentation (there are plenty of examples in *Bulletin* back issues).

Aim: the purpose of the project – probably 'improving local media coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers'.

Objectives: individual elements in the project – training refugees and asylum-seekers to talk to the media, and building contacts with local journalists, for example.

Activities (or inputs): how your objectives will be delivered – contact with refugee and community organisations, and making regular contact with journalists for instance.

Outputs: services your project will provide – support, training and advice for asylum-seekers and refugees to confidently provide interviews, for example.

Outcomes and evaluation: up to 10% of your funding should be used for evaluation and you can budget for this in your application. For example, to show that there has been real change to coverage in your area, you will need to effectively monitor the all the media which can be time consuming. Participant feedback forms are also vital.

Budgeting: you will never be awarded more than you have asked for so make sure your budget forecasts are realistic. Budgets should include direct costs such as wages, materials, supplies, equipment hire and administrative services (such as accountants).

Funders also understand that there are indirect costs and can include a contribution to the organisation's overheads, costs of using assets (wear and tear), computer software, upgrades and security, costs of research and development and costs of raising the money in the first place. You should also include a small percentage as a contingency for unforeseen circumstances. Every cost has to be justifiable so make notes on how you have come up with figures.

PEG BOARD

Help to set the media agenda by generating stories rather than having to react to theirs. Keep your ears and eyes open for events that can provide you, and the media with a 'peg' on which to hang positive stories about refugees or asylum seekers. Keep your media contacts informed about what is happening and why it's relevant for them.

Wednesday 8 September 6.00pm LEEDS MEDIA GROUP MEETING

Organised by RAM, one of the regular regional meetings set up by the RAM project to promote positive coverage of refugee and asylum issues. Newcomers are welcome to the meeting.
Venue: Carpe Diem, Civic Court, Calverley Street, Leeds LS1
For more info, contact helencitauk@yahoo.com

Friday 10 September PAIH ANNUAL MEETING

Positive Action in Housing (PAIH) is holding its 9th annual meeting in Glasgow. This meeting will be an opportunity to meet refugee communities, organisations, housing providers, local authorities and Scottish Executives; speakers tbc.
Venue: Glasgow City Chambers, George Square, Glasgow G2
For more info, contact Clare or Kam on 0141 353 2220 or clare@paih.org

Friday 10 - Sunday 12 September MIGRATION IN EUROPE

'frassanito-network' is made up of a group of organisations who consider migration as a social movement and that migrant's struggles have a crucial role in the development of the whole global movement. This meeting is open to all groups working on migration to discuss how to develop and strengthen an Europe-wide movement, in the context of ongoing border transformation and will be followed up by an event at the European Social Forum in October.
Venue: London tbc
For more info, contact frassainfo@kein.org

Saturday 11 September 10.00am LOBBY THE HOME SECRETARY

Sheffield Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers has called this event to lobby David Blunkett's surgery. Iraqi asylum-seeker Naseh Ghafor who recently ended his 46 day hunger strike will be speaking.

Assemble at Firth Park Advice Centre, 9 Stubbin Lane, Sheffield 5
For more info, contact Sue Taylor on challistaylo@rapidial.co.uk or 07787 146 690

Saturday 11 September 11.30am - 4.30pm

NCADC TACTICS WORKSHOP

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns have organised this one-day workshop to share their knowledge and good and bad experiences with campaigners in the North West.
Venue: St Aidan's Orthodox Church, Clare Road, Levenshulme, Manchester.
For more info, contact Emma Ginn on 0161 740 6504 or ncac-north-west@ncadc.org.uk

Tuesday 14 September 9.30am - 4.45pm

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE

Organised by The Refugee Council and supported by The Local Government Association, the first of two conferences aiming to examine the impact of the Asylum and Immigration Bill of 2003.
The second event takes place in Sheffield on 17 Sept at Culter's Hall, Church Street.
Venue: Regent's College, Regents Park Inner Circle, London NW1
Booking required.
For more info, contact 02078203049 or marketing@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Monday 20 September NO LAUGHING MATTER - LONDON AND LEEDS

The first of two comedy nights in aid of the Refugee Council.
The second night takes place on 29 September in Leeds at The Wardrobe, St Peter's Buildings, St Peter's Square, Leeds LS9 8AH. tickets are £10 in advance from the box office on 0113 383 8800. London tickets are £14 in advance from Ticketmaster (0870 154 4040 or www.ticketmaster.co.uk) or £15 conc/£20 on the door.
Venue: The Comedy Store, 1a Oxendon Street, London SW1Y 4EE

For more info, contact Elizabeth Bananuka on elizabeth.bananuka@refugeecouncil.org.uk

20 September - 16 December
9.45am - 2.15pm

FREE ENGLISH TRAINING FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

Organised by The Refugee Women's Association, a free Accelerated English Course.
Venues: CanalSide House, London W10; African Women's Welfare Group, London N17
For details on how to register, contact Lucy or [Asye 020 7923 2412](tel:020 7923 2412)

Wednesday 22 - Thursday 23 September

IAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) is holding its two-day conference in Leicester to explain the recent and on-going changes and the impact of immigration and asylum policy
Conference fee: £120, including refreshments, lunch, and dinner.
Venue: University of Leicester, Gilbert Murray Hall, Manor Road, Leicester LE2
For more info, contact 020 7967 6000 or marketing@jasuk.org

Thursday 30 September 2.00pm VIDEO LAUNCH: "A SAFE PLACE"

Organised by The Show Racism the Red Card Organisation, the Midlands launch of the latest video: "A Safe Place", which aims to combat racism against asylum seekers. Players from Villa and other Midland clubs will be in attendance.
Booking required
Venue: McGregor Suite, Villa Park, Trinity Road, Birmingham, B6
For more info, contact 0191 291 0160 or ged@theredcard.org

Saturday 2 October 12.00pm - 5.00pm

NCADC NATIONAL MEETING

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) is holding its national meeting in Stockton-on-Tees to share experiences and network.
Lunch and a crèche is provided, transport costs for Anti-Deportation campaigns will be reimbursed by NCADC.
Venue: ARC, 60 Dovecote Street, Stockton on Tees
Please contact your nearest co-ordinator details on <http://www.ncadc.org.uk/about/contact.htm>

Thursday 14 - Sunday 17 October EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM 2004

The third European Social Forum (ESF) to come together and

discuss how to achieve global social justice for all and debate ways of making 'another world possible'.
Entry fee(3 days): £30 waged; £20 students
Cheap accommodation available from £5 - £24
Venue: London tbc.
For more info, contact 020 8809 5347 or ukesoffice@gn.apc.org or visit <http://www.fse-esf.org/>

Thursday 14 October WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

A training day facilitated by the Medical Foundation in Scotland for all front line professionals to highlight and develop the skills required. Content includes working with interpreters, holistic assessment of torture survivors, decision making and referral options and examples of long term therapeutic options.
Venue: Glasgow tbc
For more info, contact Morna Stickings on mstickings@torturecare.org.uk

Thursday 21 October 9.30am - 4.30pm

BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS SCOTLAND AND EUROPE

A national conference to raise awareness and debate the implication of the new EU Employment and Race Directives for Diversity against Discrimination.
Venue: Glasgow tbc
For more info, contact Heather Green on 0141 221 0030 or Heather.Green@scvo.org.uk

Wednesday 27 October 9.00am - 4.10pm

SUPPORTING REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER CHILDREN

Conference organised by Neil Stewart Associates with Policy Review to consider the impact of the Asylum and Immigration Act. The RAM Project's Terry Williams will be speaking in the session on Community Cohesion and Integration.
Tickets: Full rate £395, reduced rate £280, supported rate £180
Venue: Immarsat Conference Centre, London, EC1
For more info and an online booking form, visit www.neilstewartassociates.com/se163 or call 020 7324 4330

The deadline for the October RAM Bulletin is Fri 24 Sept. Please send stories, news items or ideas to Forward Maisokwadzo on ram@presswise.org.uk