



Press statement: 09-12-2014

Private businesses profiting from system of Direct Provision

Doras Luimni continue to be excluded from entering Mount Trenchard

The latest figures revealed show private businesses profiting from system of Direct Provision, with a total of 17 companies having received more than €50 million in funding in 2014 while over 4,000 asylum seekers received less than €3.5 million.

Barlow Properties, the company responsible for the management of Mount Trenchard in Foynes, as well as four other Direct Provision centres in Cork and Waterford, had an accumulated profit of €2.5 million by the end of last year, reports have revealed.

Mount Trenchard was at the centre of controversy in August of this year following the peaceful protests held by residents in response to the sub-standard living conditions and isolation of the centre. Doras Luimní has since called for the closure of Mount Trenchard DP centre, which has been supported by the Irish Refugee Council.

Despite the significant profits been made by private companies such as Barlow Properties, conditions at the centres continue to be inhumane, overcrowded and un-fit for purpose. The allowance given to asylum seekers, €19.10 per week, has not increased since 1999 when it was equivalent to IR£15.

Organisations working with asylum seekers have described Mount Trenchard as "one of the worst in the system" and have alleged that the centre is used as a form punishment for asylum seekers who have spoken out about the system.

Asylum seekers commonly refer to Mount Trenchard as "Guantanamo Bay", with many former residents describing their time spent in the centre as very challenging. A former resident of Mount Trenchard said "I languished in Mount Trenchard for eight months and can honestly say that living in Foynes was one of the worst times of my life."

Doras Luimní continue to be refused entry to Mount Trenchard Direct Provision centre in Foynes, following the peaceful protests by asylum seekers held at the centre in August of this year.

Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, said "We are shocked and appalled by the continued exclusion of Doras Luimní staff. We have repeatedly requested that the contractors provide us with reasons for our exclusion but to date, this has not been forthcoming. We have been providing direct support to residents in Mount Trenchard since it opened its doors as a DP centre almost ten years ago. Mount Trenchard is very isolated and without our legal information clinics, residents have very limited or no access to information regarding their rights. We provide outreach to all other Direct Provision centres in the Limerick region, as well as operating a drop-in centre in our office in the city centre, and believe this to be a critical service."

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), the unit within the Department of Justice responsible for the Direct Provision system, have said: "It is at the discretion of the contractors and managers who to allow into their centres, other than those legally entitled to be there".

McHugh added "Private contractors are profiting at the expense of vulnerable asylum seekers who have come to Ireland to seek much-needed protection. Most of these contractors come from a background in property development, hospitality and catering management. They have no specific qualifications or experience in working with vulnerable groups, and they have huge responsibility and control over the lives of asylum seekers. It is outrageous that they can make decisions, such as the exclusion of Doras Luimní, that have such an enormous impact on resident's well-being. We provide an absolutely essential service and RIA has assumed no responsibility for ensuring that organisations such as Doras Luimní are granted access."

Last month, Monseigneur John Byrne, parish priest in Portlaoise, was also denied access to the Montague Hotel Direct Provision centre due to his public criticism of the asylum system at the time of protests at the centre in September. Following media attention and a subsequent Ministerial visit to the centre, Monseigneur Byrne has now been granted re-entry.

Doras Luimni continue to call for the closure of Mount Trenchard and an end to the Direct Provision system. Following the peaceful protests in Mount Trenchard and the subsequent public meeting held in the city centre, a Limerick action group called End Direct Provision Limerick (EDPL) has formed.

The group, which is comprised of local organisations, concerned individuals and residents of Direct Provision centres in Limerick, are campaigning for an end to Direct Provision and the closure of Mount Trenchard. For more information, visit www.endedirectprovisionlimerick.org.

ENDS

Notes

- [Doras Luimní](#) is an NGO based in Limerick which has worked to support the rights of asylum seekers since the introduction of the direct provision system 14 years ago. During this time, Doras Luimní has witnessed the detrimental impact of this system on men, women and children's lives.
- Mount Trenchard direct provision centre is located 5 km from Foynes village and has been described by many as the worst of the 34 centres nationwide.
- The Irish Times analysis of company records, published 9th December 2014, provided a breakdown of the profits accumulated by private contractors nationwide ([Available here](#)).
- Those who speak out about the conditions which they experience can find themselves victimised as a result. The most salient examples of this are the recent events in Mount Trenchard which saw three residents removed by the armed Garda response unit for acting as spokespersons during a peaceful protest.

Contact

- **Karen McHugh**, CEO, Doras Luimní
Telephone: 061 310 328; 0879794079 Email: k.mchugh@dorasluimni.org
- **Aideen Roche**, Communications Officer, Doras Luimní.
Telephone: 061 310 328 Email: a.roche@dorasluimni.org