



*Promoting and protecting human rights*

**Press statement: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

**“Homeless crisis and refugee crisis separate issues with common solution”**

Despite the considerable public support to assist people seeking protection, some recent commentary on the refugee crisis has taken a negative turn.. A small but vocal minority continue to pit the Irish homeless population against asylum seekers and refugees.

Leonie Kerins, Doras Luimni, said “The call on the Government to respond effectively to the current refugee crisis should be considered alongside the call on the Government to address the housing and homeless crisis. It’s not a case of one vulnerable group against another, the Government must do more to protect all vulnerable groups in Ireland, including the homeless, and as well as asylum seekers and refugees.”

Kerins continued “The homeless and refugee crises are entirely separate issues nonetheless with many similarities – Emergency homeless accommodation has become a long-term housing option for many homeless people, similar to Direct Provision institutions for asylum seekers in Ireland. Both emergency homeless accommodation and Direct Provision institutions have been proven to do more harm than good. Both the homeless population and asylum seeking population urgently require adequate social housing and support services to be made available throughout the country.”

There are over 5,000 people experiencing homelessness in Ireland, with over 100,000 people on housing lists. Meanwhile there are over 4,000 people living in Direct Provision and a further commitment to receive 4,000 asylum seekers and refugees, some of whom are already arriving. Ireland, however, has one of the highest rates of vacant properties in Europe, enough vacant houses to accommodate both homeless and refugee populations.

Kerins commented “We simply cannot afford to keep introducing emergency measures time and time again: we need long-term strategies that will prevent repeating the same mistakes.. The Government must respond quickly and effectively to this urgent need while taking the long-term effects of their policies into account. There are enough vacant properties in Limerick to accommodate both homeless and refugee populations here, but the political will to take action is missing.”

Kerins said “The housing crisis has been used as an excuse by the Government for not addressing the needs of the thousands of long-term residents who have been trapped in Direct Provision for the past number of years. There are currently over 600 people in Direct Provision who have received status but are unable to move out of Direct Provision for a number of reasons, including the lack of housing as well as the debilitating effects of long-term institutionalisation caused by the system of Direct Provision. While Doras Luimní and other NGOs are supporting people transitioning from Direct Provision to access housing and other services, and to integrate into Irish society, the lack of financial support from the State to do so is putting a considerable strain on already limited resources.”

With the exception of a small minority who engage in offensive and discriminatory commentary on the current refugee crisis, the Irish people have recognised the need to do more to support and welcome asylum seekers and refugees who have come to Ireland seeking protection. The general public are reaching out to NGOs with offers of support, it is time for the Government to do the same. Ireland must step up and start putting adequate resources into addressing the housing and support needs of Ireland's most vulnerable groups – people experiencing homelessness, poverty and people seeking protection.

**ENDS**

### **Notes**

- Doras Luimní is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Limerick. Our mission is to promote and uphold the human rights and wellbeing of migrants through personal advocacy, integration development and collaborative advocacy campaigns at the local and national level.
- Doras Luimní operates a drop-in centre on Monday; Tuesday and Friday mornings and afternoons at their office in Limerick City Centre. For more information, visit [www.dorasluimni.org](http://www.dorasluimni.org).
- Doras Luimní's volunteer-led housing assistance service for people transitioning from Direct Provision operates during drop-in centre hours.
- [Irish Times article](#) (9<sup>th</sup> March 2015) claims 600 asylum seekers are currently unable to leave Direct Provision, despite having received status, due to housing issues.
- Recent [UNHCR report](#) claims Direct Provision system impacts negatively on refugee integration into Irish society.

- Vacant property statistics available here:  
<http://airo.maynoothuniversity.ie/external-content/table-45-permanent-housing-units-occupancy-status-location-and-statistic>

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