

**“Long-term protection and integration strategy needed as refugee crisis continues”**

**World Refugee Day: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

World Refugee Day is marked on 20th June each year, giving us an opportunity to raise awareness of the many challenges faced by people seeking protection and to highlight the valuable contribution of refugees and asylum seekers to their new host communities.

In 2015, we witnessed an unprecedented wave of migration to Europe, with over one million refugees crossing the Mediterranean and over 3,700 people having lost their lives while attempting to make the journey to safety.

The situation faced by refugees has worsened considerably in the first few months of this year and effective long-term strategies that seek to protect, rather than deter, people fleeing war and persecution are urgently required. The EU's decision to outsource its human rights and international protection obligations under the controversial EU-Turkey deal in March 2016 is a worrying development that fails to address the causes, consequences and challenges of the crisis.

Leonie Kerins, Director of Doras Luimní, said “We cannot afford to close our eyes and turn our backs on the world’s most vulnerable in their greatest time of need. Ireland and Europe must do more to effectively address these current challenges: we need to see a long-term strategy being developed that draws on basic principles of human rights, human dignity and compassion. Our failure to offer protection and sanctuary at this critical time will haunt us and we are at real risk of losing sight of Ireland and the EU's fundamental values.”

Kerins continued “The number of people crossing the Mediterranean and the increasing death toll is deeply alarming. We must be careful however to avoid reducing this crisis to a numbers game: the lived experience of people fleeing persecution and the realities they face must remain at the centre of policy development. People seeking protection in Ireland and Europe are human beings that need to be treated with respect and dignity.”

While national and European policy-makers attention is focused on the crisis in the Mediterranean, it is important to remember that Ireland already has a cohort of asylum seekers in Ireland. Ms. Kerins added: “Asylum seekers living in Direct Provision centres across Limerick and nationwide are no less deserving than those who come here under the UN refugee resettlement programme. The asylum seeking population in Ireland continue to live in substandard accommodation under difficult circumstances, with no right to seek employment and limited opportunity to engage in local community life. Failing to address the human rights violations inherent in this system will only lead to further integration challenges for our communities that could have a long-lasting and devastating impact on an individual and societal level.”

Doras Luimní call on the Government to:

- Urgently increase refugee resettlement efforts, in particular to prioritise the resettlement of separated children to Ireland as previously promised;
- To uphold the refugee resettlement and relocation quotas outlined by the Government in 2015;
- To uphold the commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Working Group with regard to Direct Provision, in particular the recommendations pertaining to

the right to employment, increase of weekly allowance and the legacy solution for long-term residents;

- Work towards the development of an alternative reception system for people seeking protection in Ireland that respects basic human rights principles and the best interest of the child;
- To encourage and work with our EU partners to address the crisis and offer safe and legal passage for refugees to Europe;
- To maintain and increase search and rescue efforts in the Mediterranean;
- To continue to strive towards a more efficient and effective asylum system in Ireland and across Europe.

This year we will be inviting the public to write a message of welcome, solidarity and support to all those who have been forced to flee their home. Doras Luimní will be at Bedford Row on Monday 20th June at 1pm, encouraging public messages of welcome and providing information on the refugee crisis and Direct Provision.

**ENDS**

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