



Joint Statement: 4th December 2015

“NGOs call for the International Protection Bill to be withdrawn and reconsidered”

Doras Luimní, the Irish Refugee Council, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and Nasc are calling for the International Protection Bill, currently before the Seanad, to be withdrawn so that it can be properly amended by the Government and full consideration must be given to concerns expressed by organisations that work directly with asylum seekers and refugees.

Proceedings before the Seanad on 3rd December 2015 were described by some Senators as “shambolic” whilst the leader of the Seanad, Senator Maurice Cummins, has criticised the Department of Justice and questioned why the Bill was published given that 90 amendments were then made by the Department within a week. Despite the criticism and concern, a motion was passed in the Seanad yesterday to bring a guillotine on debates in the Seanad on Monday, with the effect that all amendments will fall if not passed with the exception of those submitted by the Government.

The principal purpose of the Bill is to introduce a single application procedure to reduce the length of time that people applying for international protection spend in this system. Attempts have been made to bring in such a procedure for more than ten years. The Government is now attempting to steamroll this critical piece of this legislation within four weeks and without proper debate and scrutiny.

Sue Conlan, CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, said: “A single procedure will not cure the problems in the Irish asylum system unless there are proper safeguards in place which protect asylum seekers from cursory examination of their applications and a swift move towards deportation. The outcome of passage of the Bill, as it stands, will lead to people being at risk of being returned to persecution or serious harm and refugees separated from family members. This will be at the time of the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War.”

Fiona Finn, CEO of Nasc, and a member of the Government’s Working Group on the Protection Process which reported at the end of June, said: “The Minister claims that the Bill implements the key recommendations of the Working Group, this is simply not true. With the exception of the single procedure, the Minister has cherry picked a handful of the more conservative recommendations and ignored any positive recommendations, such as the right to work, early identification of vulnerable applicants, and the application of the Best Interests of Child principle for all asylum seeking children. In addition, the Bill erodes rights to family reunification and brings in harsher detention measures. The single procedure is necessary to improve the protection system, but not at this cost.”

Leonie Kerins, Director of Doras Luimní, commented “We are extremely concerned with the speed at which the Bill has been progressed. We see this as a deliberate attempt to prevent proper debate on the

more alarming areas of the legislation. This legislation is an opportunity to address the failures of the current system and to bring Ireland in line with international practice and the Common European Asylum System in particular.”

ENDS

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Notes

[Seanad leader criticises Department of Justice over amendments](#)