



Press statement: 5 September 2014

Overwhelming support in Limerick to take action to close Mount Trenchard and end the system of Direct Provision

Public meeting saw over 100 people gather in support of a local movement to take action and bring an end to the system of accommodating asylum seekers in Ireland, known as Direct Provision. Meanwhile, a second protest is taking place in Lissywoolen Direct Provision centre in Athlone, which is state-owned mobile home accommodation for asylum seekers, where residents have been refusing food since Wednesday in protest against the food standards at the centre.

Local political representatives, members of the general public and community organisations joined residents of the Direct Provision centres in Limerick to offer their support and solidarity with the campaign to close Mount Trenchard as a first step in bringing change to the situation faced by over 4,000 asylum seekers nationwide.

Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, said "It was great to see local representatives from the Labour party and the Anti Austerity Alliance showing support for the campaign. We hope that Limerick City and County Council will take leadership on this issue and take it forward at political level".

Sue Conlan, CEO Irish Refugee Council, who travelled to Limerick to speak at the event, offered her full support to those in attendance and encouraged all to participate in the planned national day of action on 20th November, which will be held on Universal Children's Day.

Addressing the crowd, Aminah, resident of Knockalisheen Direct Provision centre, expressed her gratitude to the people of Limerick: "Thank you so much for answering our call for help, thank you for being here among us". She continued by highlighting the urgent need to address the problems faced by asylum-seeking children in particular: "The pain will never get out of their hearts. It stays with them and it grows".

This week, Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, reiterated her call for the inclusion of asylum-seeking children to come under the remit of the Ombudsman's office. "The Department of Justice and Equality and my Office do not have a shared understanding of the scope of this exclusion, particularly as it relates to children in Direct Provision," she said.

Ms Logan also expressed the need for accountability with regard to the outsourcing of management of Direct Provision centres and that centres needed to be assessed in a "qualitative" manner, not just from a health and safety perspective.

Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, said "Emily Logan drew attention to many of the issues that we have been raising over the years. Unfortunately the Department of Justice do not

seem to be listening. There has been no change to this system, despite the criticisms from local, national and international human rights bodies.”

McHugh added “We have still not received a response from RIA (Reception and Integration Agency) regarding the situation in Mount Trenchard, despite repeated requests. In light of this, we will be taking the matter up with the Minister for Justice.”

A Limerick committee is in the process of being formed to address the needs of residents in Direct Provision centres in Limerick and to progress the local movement to close Mount Trenchard as a step towards the end of Direct Provision nationwide.

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Notes

- The [Ombudsman for Children's Office \(OCO\)](#) is a quasi-judicial body with a mandate to accept and investigate complaints about how the State is providing services or making decisions about children. The [annual report 2013](#) of the OCO was launched 1st September 2014 and includes concerns regarding children living in Direct Provision, despite being outside the remit of the Office.
- [Doras Luimní](#) is an NGO based in Limerick which has worked to support the rights of migrants 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. Doras Luimní's three core areas of work are Direct Support, Advocacy and Campaigns, and Integration Planning.
- Direct Provision refers to the system put in place by the State to accommodate asylum seekers in residential institutions. The system was first introduced in 2000 and was intended to provide temporary accommodation and basic needs such as the provision of three meals per day. Today, the average length of time asylum seekers spend living in these conditions is four years or more, while 25% of asylum seekers have been living in direct provision for over 6 years.
- There are four direct provision centres located in the Limerick region, accommodating almost 400 asylum seekers including approximately 50 children. There are a total of 34 centres nationwide, accommodating over 4,300 people.