

Press statement: 26 August 2014

“Residents of Mount Trenchard and Doras Luimní are still awaiting a response from RIA in relation to their concerns”

Residents of Mount Trenchard direct provision centre and Doras Luimní are still awaiting a response from the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a division of the Department of Justice, in relation to the concerns raised about the conditions and management of the centre.

Following a demonstration in Limerick city centre last Friday, 22nd August, which saw approximately 300 people gather in support of the call for action, Doras Luimní are hosting a public meeting on direct provision and the situation in Mount Trenchard specifically. The meeting will focus on direct action to close Mount Trenchard; raising awareness on the system of direct provision; and will call on the general public to assist in the campaign efforts.

Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, said “We requested a meeting with RIA officials as a matter of urgent priority, immediately following the peaceful protest and subsequent removal of residents from Mount Trenchard on Thursday 14th August. Two weeks have now passed and we are still awaiting a response.”

Doras Luimní facilitated an agreement between the residents and contractor of the centre shortly before residents were transferred by RIA to alternative direct provision centres in Cork and Limerick city. Since then, new allegations have been brought to light in relation to the conditions and management of Mount Trenchard. Furthermore, the initial agreement reached has yet to be fully implemented, all of which further strengthens the call for the immediate closure of the centre.

Ms McHugh added that “We have been supporting residents to file formal complaints to RIA regarding the issues that they have brought to our attention. However, the absence of an independent complaints mechanism continues to be an issue of grave concern, which has been clearly highlighted in the example of Mount Trenchard.”

The system’s failure to effectively respond to the concerns repeatedly raised by residents of the centre, has led Doras Luimní to call for the immediate closure of Mount Trenchard, which has been supported by the Irish Refugee Council, as the first step in the campaign to bring an end to the system of direct provision.

The public meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd September at 5pm in Central Buildings, 51A O’Connell Street, Limerick. Speakers will include Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, Sue Conlan, Irish Refugee Council, Stephen Ng’ang’a, Co-ordinator of a Core Group of asylum seekers and refugees that campaign with the Irish Refugee Council, and residents from the direct provision centres in Limerick. The meeting is open to all interested persons willing to support the campaign.

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 failures of the direct provision system have been well documented and criticism has come from international bodies as well as experts in Ireland:

- Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, has raised concerns year on year in his Annual Reports about the risk and reality of child welfare and protection issues in the Direct Provision system. In his [2011 report](#) he stated: "The system of support for those claiming asylum in Ireland, known as Direct Provision, gives rise to profound concerns about the detrimental effect on children growing up in a form of institutionalised poverty with parents unable to adequately care for their children."
- Retired Supreme Court judge, Catherine McGuinness, warned the previous Minister for Justice, Alan Shatter, about the current treatment of asylum seekers, "I would be very concerned that in the future we find ourselves with another huge thing to apologise for, for people who have been kept in institutions for many years with very little supervision and no recourse from the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children and no outside direction on what's happening with them."
- [Former Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan](#): "We have become quite adept at apologising for the sins of earlier generations. We recognise that Ireland, from the 1920s to the 1970s, was a cold place for some minorities and the marginalised. We are only slowly beginning to face the possibility that we ourselves may not be much better than our predecessors. We have an image of ourselves as a modern, liberal democracy with a commitment to the rule of law and the protection of human rights. To some extent, this image may be justified. But there may also be significant blind spots in our self-appraisal as a society. I suggest that our treatment of asylum seekers over the past decade or so represents one such blind spot."

Complaints mechanism:

- The [UN Human Rights Committee](#) of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), expressed "concerns" with the system of direct provision, in particular recommending that an independent complaints mechanism needs to be established for those currently in direct provision centres and stated that stays in direct provision accommodation centres need to be for the shortest duration possible.

- 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 on Thursday 14th August.

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