



Joint Press statement from Doras Luimní and the Irish Refugee Council: 21st August 2014

Pressure mounts in call for closure of Mount Trenchard ahead of Friday's planned demonstration

Doras Luimní's call for the immediate closure of Mount Trenchard direct provision centre is being supported by the Irish Refugee Council as pressure mounts ahead of the planned demonstration in Limerick on Friday.

The centre has a reputation among asylum seekers and those working with them as the centre that is used as a form of punishment, and to accommodate individuals with challenging behaviour and complex cases. It is regarded by many as the worst of the 34 direct provision centres nationwide.

Karen McHugh, CEO of Doras Luimní, said: "Mount Trenchard epitomises all of the major failures of Direct Provision. The immediate closure of the centre would be a significant step in the right direction, but it does not do enough to resolve the multitude of issues caused by an inept and inefficient system".

McHugh continued: "The lengthy delays have led to an institutionalisation which has had significant mental health consequences for those trapped in the system. Mount Trenchard as an institution cannot and does not meet the mental health needs of its residents: there is very limited support available for a very vulnerable group. The isolation of Mount Trenchard, located five kilometres from Foynes village, and its overcrowded and inhumane living conditions that sees eight male adults of different nationalities sharing a room, contributes to an environment that exacerbates the volatility of the centre".

Sue Conlan, CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, added: "The Reception and Integration Agency of the Department of Justice does not appear to have taken seriously the issues that have been raised with them in the past about Mount Trenchard. They also seem to be failing to respond to the immediate situation in Foynes and are refusing to recognise a situation that they have helped to create."

A demonstration will be held on Friday 22nd August at 2pm in Limerick city centre to strengthen the call for action to close Mount Trenchard and end the system of Direct Provision. Speakers will include Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, Stephen Ng'ang'a, Co-ordinator of a Core Group of asylum seekers and refugees that campaign with the Irish Refugee Council and residents of Mount Trenchard and other direct provision centres in Limerick.

ENDS

Notes

The failures 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."
- 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.
- [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.

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