



Press statement: 18th August 2014

Doras Luimní calls for investigation and closure of Mount Trenchard Direct Provision Centre, Foynes

Four residents at Mount Trenchard Direct Provision centre in Foynes continue their hunger strike with the aim of highlighting the alarming situation of asylum seekers living in direct provision in Foynes and nationwide. The lengthy delays in the system leaves people waiting on a decision for up to 14 years, as is the case for one of the residents and hunger strikers, Mr. Altamimi. The situation in Mount Trenchard further escalated yesterday evening and saw the removal of one resident who has been on hunger strike since Wednesday, following an incident at the centre.

Last Wednesday, Doras Luimní was called to the centre in Foynes to speak with residents about their concerns and again on Thursday when they mediated an agreement between the owner of the centre and residents, and a number of actions were agreed by all parties. However, shortly following Doras' departure from the centre, the armed Garda response unit arrived on the scene and transferred three residents to other centres in Cork and Limerick city. The decision to transfer the residents was taken by officials from the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) in the Department of Justice. The residents were not given any notice and feel that they are being targeted because they spoke out about their treatment and the conditions in which they live. Doras Luimní is shocked and seriously concerned by this action by RIA which is an infringement on the basic civil and human rights of these asylum seekers.

Several residents have said that they have been transferred more than 10 times to centres nationwide as a result of making legitimate complaints in the past. This issue has been previously raised by Doras Luimní and other NGOs working in the migrant sector, as well as by international human rights bodies, including the UN Human Rights Committee, who criticised Ireland for failing to provide an accessible and independent complaints procedure for people living in direct provision.

Numerous local, national and international reports point to evidence of serious mental health needs among asylum seekers who have spent prolonged periods of time in Direct Provision in Ireland. These issues have been repeatedly raised by Doras Luimní and others working with asylum seekers, with specific reference to Mount Trenchard.

A group of seven residents have now formed a group called Foynes Asylum Seekers For Change (FASFC) and Doras Luimní are supporting the residents in their campaign to reform the direct provision and asylum system nationwide.

Doras Luimní have requested an urgent meeting with RIA officials and Minister Ó'Riordáin to further advocate on behalf of the residents but have received no response to date. Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimní, said "We are deeply concerned at the decision made by RIA to transfer these residents' just moments after we had mediated an agreement over the legitimate and alarming concerns raised with management and conditions of the centre."

Karen McHugh added that "A number of allegations have been to our attention, which we are now following up with residents and RIA. We are calling for an immediate investigation and closure of Mount Trenchard Direct Provision centre. We will make further comment as the situation progresses".

Doras Luimní has made arrangement for those on hunger strike to see a specialist GP in Limerick today and will remain in close contact with residents to support them through this ongoing dispute.

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. Our 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 Limerick and there are a total of 34 centres nationwide.

Mount Trenchard Direct Provision Centre is located three miles outside Foynes village in Co. Limerick. Mount Trenchard was formally a boarding school and has been accommodating asylum seekers under the direct provision system since 2007.

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