

Press statement: 14th August 2014

Doras Luimní mediates dispute between residents & management at Foynes direct provision centre

Asylum seekers resident in the direct provision centre located in Foynes, Co. Limerick staged a protest on Thursday 14th August, with the aim of highlighting the difficulties faced by asylum seekers living in the centre, which is compounded by the length of time residents are left awaiting a decision on their asylum applications. Staff were prevented from entering the centre by residents but discussions have since been held with the owners and management, facilitated by Doras Luimní, a Limerick-based human rights and migrant support organisation. While some agreement has now been reached with regard to the specific concerns with the centre in Foynes, a small group of residents have pledged to go on hunger strike as and from today in protest at the larger human rights issues at stake, which are common to the direct provision system nationwide. Doras Luimní will continue to provide support and to monitor this situation closely.

Residents in Mount Trenchard, located just outside the village of Foynes, Co. Limerick, organised the protest to add their voice to the national campaign to end direct provision and reform the asylum system. Some of the specific issues raised included lengthy delays in hearing a decision on their application, with some residents having already spent 10 years in direct provision and some of whom have been separated from their families including Irish-born children. Concerns specific to the centre included overcrowded living conditions; unsuitable food; isolation and lack of transport to the city centre. With an allowance of just €19.10 per week, public transport is simply not an option. Such isolation exacerbates the anxiety and stress experienced by many of the residents and can have an enormous impact on the resident's mental health.

Matt Cannon, Doras Luimní's Integration and Training Officer, and Okeremute Okeregha, Legal Officer with Doras Luimní, who led the mediation of today's dispute, said "This type of incident is not new to the direct provision system. We have mediated resident protests in the past in Hanratty's, Limerick. It's symptomatic of larger structural issues which need to be immediately around direct provision."

The treatment of asylum seekers and the living conditions in direct provision centres has been heavily criticised by Doras Luimní and other NGOs active in the migrant sector since the system's introduction in the year 2000. Recent pressure to reform the system has come from the UN Human Rights Committee and the UN Special Rapporteur for Child Protection, who likened the direct provision centres to the scandal of the mother and baby homes. Key issues raised include the systemic delays in processing applications and the lack of an independent complaints mechanism. The average length of time individuals spend in direct provision is four years, with 25% of asylum seekers spending over 6 years living in these conditions.

Following the recent pledge given by Frances Fitzgerald T.D., the new Minister for Justice and Equality, to reform the asylum application system, as well as the high priority given to reform of the system by Aodhan O'Riordain T.D., new Minister of State for Equality and New Communities,

residents took the opportunity to voice their particular concerns and to increase pressure on any potential reform process.

Regular meetings with owners; management and Doras Luimní will be held to review the key concerns presented today. Doras Luimní will continue to monitor the situation in Foynes and to assist the residents to ensure that the agreement reached with the owner and management today is upheld.

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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.

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