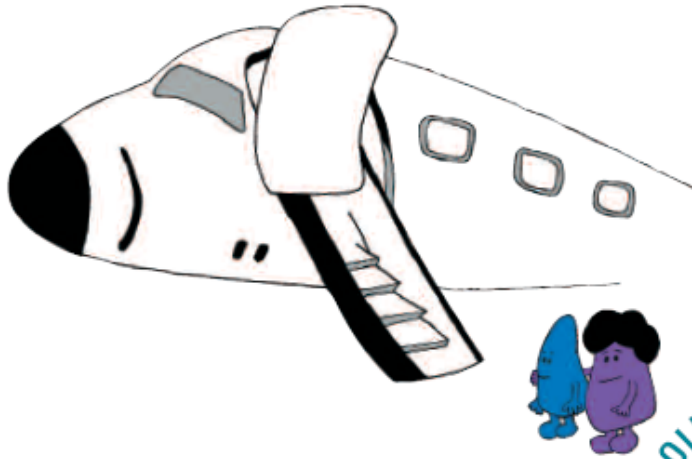


THE ISSUE

There is no system for monitoring the safety of people who are refused sanctuary and then expected to return home.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Help to support and prepare a person refused sanctuary to return home safely and sustainably.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Twin your congregation or community with a congregation or community that the person is linked to so you can monitor their safety.

THE SOLUTION

Monitor people refused sanctuary to make sure that they are not in danger when they return home.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Write to the Foreign Secretary to ask what the UK can do to help monitor the safety of those refused sanctuary in the UK.

"INDEPENDENT PRE-RETURN ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING OF THOSE FACING FORCED RETURN WOULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER CONFIDENCE IN THE RETURNS PROCESS."
INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION'S SAFE RETURN REPORT, JUNE 2008

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit:
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

CITIZEN ACTION TOOLKIT 10: Matter of Life or Death

The decision to grant or deny a person sanctuary in the UK can be a matter of life or death. That's why the Independent Asylum Commission recommended that although our international obligations may end when a person is denied sanctuary, it is important to monitor what happens when people denied sanctuary return to their country of origin. **Read on to find out how you can help.**

What will I find in this toolkit?

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What can I do as an individual?	3
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10 WAYS FOR CITIZENS TO SAVE SANCTUARY



CITIZENS
for sanctuary

Independent Asylum Commission
citizens

This toolkit is a supplement to the '10 Ways for Citizens to Save Sanctuary' booklet. You can download an electronic version or order copies of the full booklet at www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk.

THE ISSUE

There is no system for monitoring the safety of people who are refused sanctuary and then expected to return home.

The Facts

“The scale and complexity of what happens when we refuse people sanctuary requires a wholesale review of current practice and a new approach that mirrors what the New Asylum Model achieved in improving the asylum determination process.”

The Independent Asylum Commission’s ‘Safe Return’ report

Links

Independent Asylum Commission reports
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk/reports

The Independent
www.independent.co.uk

The Independent Asylum Commission uncovered many cases of people who had fled persecution and come to the UK seeking sanctuary but had then been refused sanctuary. Many of these people came from places like Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur, and other places that you would not put on your list of top 100 holiday destinations!

Take Reggie for instance. Reggie was an opposition activist in Zimbabwe and well-known in his community for opposing the rule of Robert Mugabe. After experiencing threats and intimidation, Reggie finally realised the game was up when some of his colleagues began to ‘disappear’. Convinced that he would be next, Reggie fled to the UK.

When he got to the UK, Reggie came up against all of the problems that the Independent Asylum Commission identified: a culture of disbelief among decision-makers, poor legal advice, detention and finally, destitution, when his claim was turned down.

Reggie was a proud man – a professional who valued his dignity. After several months of sleeping rough, ‘sofa surfing’ and surviving on charity, he decided to return to Zimbabwe, reasoning that he might be in danger there but at least he could earn enough to eat. Reggie took the plane back to Zimbabwe. At the airport he was picked by thugs from the Zimbabwean security services, beaten, tortured and left for dead.

The British authorities were oblivious to Reggie’s plight – their responsibility for his welfare ended the moment he stepped off the plane. Reggie was helped to get back to the UK. He once more appealed to the authorities for sanctuary. Instead, his details were picked up on the Home Office database and he was treated as a suspected abuser of the system rather than a person in need of protection.

Eventually, years later, Reggie was granted refugee status. Had his situation been monitored when he had gone back to Zimbabwe then much of the distress could have been avoided. Reggie’s case is not unique. In 2009 the *Independent* published a story about a man who had been executed after he had been forcibly returned to Sudan. But there are also countless people who have returned safely and sustainably – and their stories need to be heard too.

By shedding more light on what happens after people leave the UK we can redress mistakes, increase people’s safety, and have more confidence that our system works.

THE SOLUTION

Monitor people refused sanctuary to make sure that they are not in danger when they return home.

The Facts

“The Commissioners believe that encouragement should be given to developing a system which enables some record to be maintained of the subsequent history of refused asylum-seekers after return to their country of origin...[this would give] positive encouragement to the decision-maker who refused their claim...[and] would contribute towards better decision-making for the future.”

The Independent Asylum Commission’s ‘Safe Return’ report

Links

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/where-we-work/sudan/helping-refugees-return>

Let’s be clear. If you really believe in providing sanctuary to people fleeing persecution, then you have to believe that there should be a system for assessing the merits of each claim.

It would be lovely for anyone to be able to just pitch up and stay here, no questions asked; but while a borderless world might be an attractive utopia, it is not the same as sanctuary. Sanctuary is special, it is saving, it is a recognition of the fact that some people are not protected in their home countries.

So to preserve our proud tradition of sanctuary we must have a fair and effective system for assessing whether a person needs sanctuary or not, and then dealing with the outcome. That is our starting point. And it is the starting point of the majority of the British public, as identified by the Commission in the fifth principle that underpinned all of their recommendations:

“Once a decision has been made, the UK should act swiftly, effectively and in a controlled way – either to assist integration or to effect a swift, safe and sustainable return for those who have had a fair hearing and have been refused sanctuary.”

To preserve sanctuary for those who really need it, we must have a more effective system of return for those who have had a fair hearing and do not leave. The problem though, is that the people who make decisions about whether to grant sanctuary or not are human, and humans make mistakes. And when the stakes are as high as persecution, torture or death, we believe that you can’t be too careful.

In its third report of conclusions and recommendations, ‘Safe Return’, the Independent Asylum Commission set out a ‘New Deal for Safe and Sure Returns’. In recent years the government has made lots of changes to the way that decisions are made about who is granted sanctuary, and who is not. However, the Commissioners pointed out that “...there is an urgent need to review... what happens when we refuse people sanctuary and seek to improve the effectiveness and fairness of the asylum system at the end, as well as the beginning of the process.” Hence the ‘New Deal’, which sets out fifteen ways to ensure that returns are both safe and sustainable.

And what did the Commission recommend as part of the ‘New Deal’? Independent monitoring of people who are refused sanctuary when they are returned, to ensure that they are not in danger when they return home.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Help
to support and
prepare a person
refused sanctuary to
return home safely
and sustainably.

The Facts

International news agencies give regular updates on the situation on the ground in many countries, but their coverage will often be focused on the prevailing conflicts and issues, rather than specific information on remote areas which might more directly affect the person being returned. Check all facts, from as many sources as possible.

Links

<http://www.skills-southsudan.org/>

If you are doing this, or are interested, please contact Carina Crawford-Rolt (carina.crawford-rolt@cof.org.uk) for advice and support.

Sometimes the answer is looking at you in the mirror.

It is tempting to say that monitoring of people refused sanctuary is the job of the government, the UN or an international human rights charity. Sadly, they are not queuing up for the task, and until they do, then citizen action is the only answer. Citizen Guardians, in fact.

There are many citizen-led projects that work with people seeking sanctuary in this country – running drop-ins for the destitute, exchanging supermarket vouchers, hosting English classes, organising community football tournaments – the list is almost endless.

But why should citizens not play a role in supporting a person as they leave the UK?

Returning to one's homeland after a period of exile is one of the most difficult prospects a person could face. This is particularly so if the person is returning to a dangerous place or if their return is enforced against their will.

So if you know somebody in this situation, here is a list of things that you can do to help prepare a person's return as safe and sustainable as possible:

- Make sure the person is equipped with a basic mobile phone, charger, a SIM card that will work in their country of origin, and some credit. Keep a record of the number and programme your number onto the phone so you can keep in touch en route and back in the home country.
- Establish a means of regular communication and agree a schedule for conversations so that you can monitor their situation. Ensure that this is realistic – it is no point deciding to communicate by email if the person is unlikely to be able to access the internet.
- Ask a small group of supporters to be contacts for the person being returned so that the task is shared. Make copies of documentation and take photographs for identification.
- Research the current situation in the country of origin. Evaluate how dangerous it is in different parts of the country, the state of the economy, and any other issues relevant to the person being returned.
- Draw up a plan with the person returning which describes what they intend to do when they arrive back. Try to identify an independent and trustworthy person or organisation in the country of origin which may be able to provide support for the person when they return. Ensure that the person has all the resources they need to execute the plan. Make sure that all three parties have copies of the plan.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Twin
your congregation
or community with a
congregation or community
that the person is linked to
so you can monitor
their safety.

The Facts

Los Angeles is twinned with:
Athens, Auckland, Beirut, Berlin,
Bordeaux, Eilat, Giza, Guangzhou, Ischia,
Jakarta, Kaunas, Lusaka, Makati, Mexico
City, Mumbai, Nagoya, Pusan, Saint
Petersburg, Salvador, Split,
Taipei, Tehran, Vancouver, and Yerevan!

Links

Some twinning examples:

<http://famvin.org/en/archive/twinning-projects-of-the-vincent-de-paul-society-worldwide>

<http://www.christchurch-westwimbledon.org/mission/matabele.htm>

Twinning... with a difference

A town really isn't a town unless it is twinned with somewhere. And the more exotic the twin, the greater the kudos for the town – so well done to tiny Hay-on-Wye in Wales which is twinned with Timbuktu!

We are suggesting twinning with a difference. Normal town twinning often involves cultural and educational exchanges – but twinning between a town in the developed world and a town in the developing world can also involve fund-raising, professional support, and volunteering.

It is quite rare for people from a town to spend a great deal of time in their twin. And yet when people seek sanctuary in the UK and come to live in our communities they are living ambassadors for their own countries. Many will stay for years and then return home when it is safe to do so. Why are we not using these opportunities to twin our communities through ambassadors who we may know well through their time in the UK?

So we want to encourage you – if you know someone in your community who has sought sanctuary in the UK but is now returning home, for whatever reason, arrange to set up a twinning arrangement through them with wherever they end up.

This has huge advantages for our own communities, but potentially even larger ones for the person who returns, and the community where they live. A temporary exile now becomes an opportunity to improve conditions in their country of origin. So the school, church, mosque or local council in the UK can support the building of a school, the sinking of a well, the training of farmers, the construction of a community facility – or the direct sponsorship of an individual.

This can also make the return safer as well as more sustainable. By linking with a local community through a known individual, you can keep in contact and monitor a person's situation over time.

You could do twin formally through your local council, or you could do it informally through your church, mosque or school. Simply keep in touch with the person who returns home, ask them to remain in contact with you, and develop a link with the town in which they then live. You can work out all the details yourselves. And depending on where the person returns to, you may find yourself with an interesting new travel destination to add to your itinerary!

WHAT CAN I DO?

Write to the Foreign Secretary to ask what the UK can do to help monitor the safety of those refused sanctuary in the UK.

The Facts

Born in London, David Miliband is the son of Polish-born Marion Kozak and the late Belgian-born Marxist intellectual Ralph Miliband. Both paternal grandparents lived in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw. His paternal grandfather, Samuel, left Poland immediately after World War One, settling in Brussels by 1920. His paternal grandmother, Renia, also moved to Brussels. Hitler's invasion of Belgium in May 1940 split the Miliband family in half: Ralph and father Samuel fled to England, while Ralph's mother Renée stayed behind for the duration of the war.

Links

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/>
<http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/miliband/>

One of the reasons why people choose to seek sanctuary in the UK is its international reputation for justice and liberty.

And when you think of the historic role that Britain has played (or in some cases is still playing) in countries such as Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Iraq and Somalia, then it is unsurprising that people fleeing persecution choose to come here.

Part of the reason why people from these countries know so much about the UK's reputation is the activity of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The FCO has over 261 embassies and 16,000 staff worldwide. They have a mandate to oversee the return of people from the UK to their country of origin. At the moment this consists of administering a return and reintegration fund to help people rebuild their lives. There is no mention of monitoring people who have been refused sanctuary but who may be returning to very dangerous circumstances. In fact, their website provides all sorts of reasons why some people refused sanctuary don't go back, and yet misses the obvious fact that if you fear for your life – whether through persecution or generalised violence – no financial incentive will induce you to return.

A system of monitoring – even just for a small number deemed to be most at risk – would represent a major step forward in the UK's commitment for really ensuring the safety of those it denies sanctuary.

It might have helped Adam Osman Mohammed, who was refused sanctuary in the UK, sent back to Sudan, and was gunned down in his home in front of his wife and four-year-old son just days after arriving in his village in south Darfur. It is thought that he was killed by government security forces who followed him from the airport.

Adam's case was reported in the *Independent* newspaper, but there are undoubtedly countless others whose homecoming catastrophes go unreported. It is not enough for us to say that our responsibility ends when a person steps off the plane in their country of origin. If a person seeks sanctuary in the UK, the UK should take responsibility for persecution suffered by those people who return home when denied sanctuary.

So please write to David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, to ask him what monitoring his 16,000 staff and 261 embassies can do of people who have been returned to dangerous places such as Darfur.

Resources

Title

Text

Please let us know how you get on with these actions. We will collate all of the results from across the country and add them to our website so we can see all the change we have accomplished.

If you need advice or support, please contact carina.crawford-rolt@cof.org.uk.

Good luck!