

TROUBLING IRELAND

**Asylum Seekers in Ireland -
Victims of State Racism.**

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Anti Deportation Ireland

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Ireland, like all nation states, is a racist state. This racism is experienced most acutely by asylum seekers. Currently there are less than 6,000 people seeking asylum in Ireland. These men, women and children are kept in the direct provision system. This system consists of 35 accommodation centres, scattered around the country. The majority are former hotels, hostels, guest houses and convents. The remainder include a caravan park, a former holiday centre and a number of custom built centres that resemble prison camps.

Within direct provision, people's freedom and ability to make decisions regarding their lives, are severely restricted. They are not allowed to cook for themselves, they have no control over the food they are given, they are not allowed to have visitors in their rooms, up to 4 single people are obliged to share a single room, 2 single parents with one child each have to share a single room, parents and children have to sleep in one bed. As well as all of the above, people are denied the right to work and cannot access 3rd level education. All adult asylum seekers are given €19.10 per week to live on. This payment was first introduced in 2000 as £20. It is the only Social Welfare payment never to have been increased, not even during the Celtic Tiger years.

Less than 5% of asylum seekers are granted refugee status in Ireland, one of the lowest rates in the EU. The majority are eventually given deportation orders, sometimes after spending many years in direct provision. Some people have been in direct provision for over 8 years. Deportation is the most brutal manifestation of state racism. People are awoken from their sleep in pre-dawn raids, carried out by members of the Garda National Immigration Bureau. They tell people that they have 20 minutes to get ready, that they are going back to Africa. Imagine the scene, children crying and adults pleading. Yet these GNIB officers show no humanity or mercy. Any resistance is met with brutal violence. Sometimes even pepper spray is used. Many times whole families are taken, on other occasions families are torn apart. In the Cork area alone there are 4 families where the husband and father was deported, leaving the wife and children. In all these cases the children are Irish born, but are denied citizenship. The tearing apart of families was challenged in the Supreme Court. But the court ruled in favour of the government. One of the judges said that "the integrity of the asylum process takes precedence over the right of a family to live their lives together." So much for Christian Ireland.

Those to be deported are taken to a special holding area of Dublin airport to wait for the plane. Whether they get food or not depends on the individual GNIB officer. Many times they are denied food. When eventually they are loaded onto the plane, each adult is accompanied by a GNIB officer for the full journey. These immigration officers even accompanied people when they use the toilet. They are not allowed to close the toilet door.

Deportations are supported by Fine Gael, Labour Party, Fianna Fail and the Green Party. Not one of the pro-immigrant NGOs opposes deportations. Anti Deportation Ireland is the only national organisation that campaigns against both deportation and direct provision. ADI consists of asylum seekers and their supporters. It is not funded and is therefore free to name and oppose state racism. ADI has 3 demands,

- An immediate end to all deportations.
- The complete closure of the direct provision system.
- Asylum seekers to be given the right to work and access to 3rd level education.