

FAHAMU

= Refugee Legal Aid =

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter

*a monthly forum for relevant news
and wider reflection on the provision
of refugee legal aid.*

Africa

Refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo fear return; need for refugee legal aid in Cameroon.

Asia

Hong Kong needs refugee law reform; return pressure on Karen refugees in Thailand; Malaysia to issue refugee ID cards.

Middle East

Yemen sees dramatic rise in African migrant arrivals; budget increase for refugee resources in Egypt expected.

Europe

Bulgarian case limits detention in victory for migrants and legal advocates.

Refugees in Central African Republic fear return

The roughly 17,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo are skeptical of Kinshasa's assurances that their homes are safe for return. IRIN reports: "Speaking after a visit to Zinga, WFP regional director for West and Central Africa, Thomas Yanga, warned that initial predictions of a short-term refugee presence had been wide of the mark." Full report: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87743>

Need for refugee legal aid in Cameroon

A recent article reports that, of the approximately 100,000 refugees living in Cameroon, mostly in urban areas, "no known case of a refugee receiving legal representation by a lawyer has been documented. In short, there is no legal aid for refugees in the Cameroon." The country is signatory to the 1951 Convention, and refugee status determination is conducted by UNHCR. The author, a practicing judge in Cameroon, calls for the training of lawyers in refugee law and the provision of legal aid for asylum seekers in the country.

Hong Kong's refugee law is changing

Mark Daly and other refugee lawyers have been working to advance refugee law in Hong Kong through judicial review 'test cases.' However, a comprehensive legislative regime is needed to complete a protective framework for asylum seekers, refugees and CAT claimants, as well as proper procedures that the legal profession can positively engage with in order to safeguard the rights of applicants. Full report: http://www.hk-lawyer.com/InnerPages_features/0/45/2009/9

Budget increase for refugee resources in Egypt expected

Based on a needs-based budget assessment, UNHCR Cairo expects a budget increase of at least 30 per cent in the coming year, as part of an organisation-wide increase in focus on urban areas. Full report: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>

Yemen sees rise in African migrant arrivals

Since 2008, Yemen has seen a rise in arrivals from the Horn of Africa, up 55 per cent in 2009. Somalis are granted prima facie status upon arrival; they and Ethiopians make up the majority of asylum seekers in the country. However, resettlement efforts have slowed amidst political unrest and insecurity which have increasingly deterred third country governments from the country. Full reports: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87759> and <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87947>

Court case of Chechen limits detention to 18 months

Lawyers with the Legal Clinic for Refugees and Immigrants in Sofia, Bulgaria have succeeded in securing the release from detention for a Chechen asylum seeker who had been detained for almost four years. The case, brought to the European Court of Justice, also resulted in the directive that no period of detention for illegal immigrants or asylum seekers should exceed 18 months. Full report: <http://lrien.wordpress.com/2009/12/03/said-kadzoev-has-been-released-from-the-busmantsi-detention-centre/>

Internships Offered, Refugee Law Project in Kampala, Uganda. Details:

http://www.refugeelawproject.org/internships_training.php Deadline 15 March.

Return pressure on refugees in Thailand

Human Rights Watch has called on Thailand to cease pressure on Karen refugees from Burma to return to the country, since both landmines and human rights in the country remain a serious risk. 30 Karen families have been targeted for return to Burma. Full story:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/02/05/thailand-cease-intimidation-karen-refugees>

Cyprus detention victory

Nicoletta Charalambidou, a lawyer for the KISA Migrant and Refugee Centre in Cyprus, has won her first case in court; an asylum seeker has been released from detention as a result. The KISA website: <http://www.kisa.org.cy>

Malaysia to issue refugee identity cards

Malaysia's Home Ministry plans to issue identification cards to refugees recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Human rights organisation SUARAM calls this "a step in the right direction" in a country otherwise known for mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Full report: <http://www.suaram.net/node/268>

Japan to resettle Myanmar refugees

Japan has begun steps to resettle 90 Myanmar refugees over three years as part of a pilot project. Full report: <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/breakingnews/view/20100203-251084/Japan-to-resettle-Myanmar-refugees>

The Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter

The Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter aims to provide a monthly forum for wider reflection on the provision of refugee legal aid. With a focus on the major geographical areas in the global South (Asia, Africa, Latin America, and non-EU Europe), it includes an overview of highlights of important issues related to refugees; major events relevant to legal aid providers' concerns; recent developments in the interpretation of refugee law; cases which can be used as precedents from other constituencies; reports and helpful resources to refugee legal aid NGOs; and stories of struggle and success in the work of refugee legal aid. It will raise awareness of refugee concerns among the wider readership of Pambazuka News.

The Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter welcomes input, feedback and submissions.

Please email:

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Editors

NEWS & INFORMATION RESOURCES

http://www.srlan.org/beta/ http://lists.fahamu.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/srlan-list	southern refugee legal aid website & email list
http://www.irinnews.org	humanitarian news & analysis
http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain	reports and documents on refugee status
http://fm-cab.blogspot.com	forced migration current awareness blog
http://kakuma.wordpress.com	kakuma news reflector - a refugee free press
http://www.asylumlaw.org	helping lawyers prepare asylum cases
http://www.forcedmigration.org	information on human displacement
http://www.rsdwatch.org	refugee status determination watch