

SUPPORTING REFUGEES: ORGANISATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NOTTINGHAM CHARITIES

As Nottingham celebrates Refugee Week, we wanted to highlight some charities in the city doing fantastic work helping refugees and asylum seekers in Nottingham.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) is a Nottingham-based charity whose mission is to support asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire in gaining just outcomes, rebuilding their lives and integrating into society. **Adel** sought support from NNRF when he first arrived in Nottingham:

Refugee Forum is offering remote appointments and limited face-to-face services.

To get advice and support, please call **0115 960 1230**

Monday to Thursday between 10am and 3pm or

email at info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk



Nottingham Refugee Forum

@NNRF1

To get advice and support, please call 0115 9601230 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesday or Thursdays between 10am and 3pm.

Nottingham, U.K. nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk Joined May 2014

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"I approached Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) to seek support. They played a crucial role in helping me navigate the challenges of starting a new life. I also began volunteering with them and other small charities in the city, which allowed me to connect with the community and contribute in meaningful ways. Therefore, Nottingham became the main place to start my life, to work, to study, and to contribute."

The NNRF also works with Nottingham City Council in order to help implement the UK Resettlement Scheme, a scheme launched in 2021 which aims to help resettle the most vulnerable refugees. The Resettlement Scheme helps to provide specialist support to newly arrived refugee families and works with families from their arrival in the UK for a period of five year.

Refugee Roots is a Christian charity that helps asylum seekers and refugees build relationships and navigate the complexities of building a new life in the UK. Their mission is to create 'a place to belong' for refugees and asylum seekers. They want refugees to feel welcome and valued and want to provide support to help rebuild lives with dignity. We had the chance to speak with the Director, **Adam Baker** about their work:



"Refugee Roots welcomes all, helping those in need find friendship and a place to call home. Refugee Roots welcomes everyone, valuing each person and their culture, embracing equality and diversity while empowering and supporting those that need it most. A range of empowerment initiatives include befriending, accompanying asylum seekers to appointments, information, advice and guidance, as well as supportive groups and activities, such as free English conversation classes. Having worked with more than 650 participants in this financial year to date to find friendship and a safe place to be."

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STAR Nottingham: STAR (Student Action for Refugees) is the national network of students building a more understanding and just society where refugees are welcomed and can thrive in the UK. The first STAR group was created by University of Nottingham students in 1994 and the network has since grown to reach 31 towns and cities across the UK. STAR members volunteer locally and work directly with refugees, building understanding and connections. They campaign nationally for policy change and equal access to higher education for refugees and learn about refugee protection and the asylum journey in the UK with experts and peers.



student_action_for_refugees

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STAR ❤️
STAR is the national network of students building a society where refugees are welcomed. We volunteer, campaign and learn together.

linktr.ee/studentaction4refugees

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CENTRE REFUGEE CLINIC PARTNERS

We also spoke with the Refugee Clinic's partner organisations, Across Borders and St Andrews Refugee Services, to learn more about their work:



Across Borders
@acrossbordersuk

Refugee-led charity, we focus on refugee rights and system change to support people across borders. ❤️

UK acrossborders.org.uk Joined October 2019

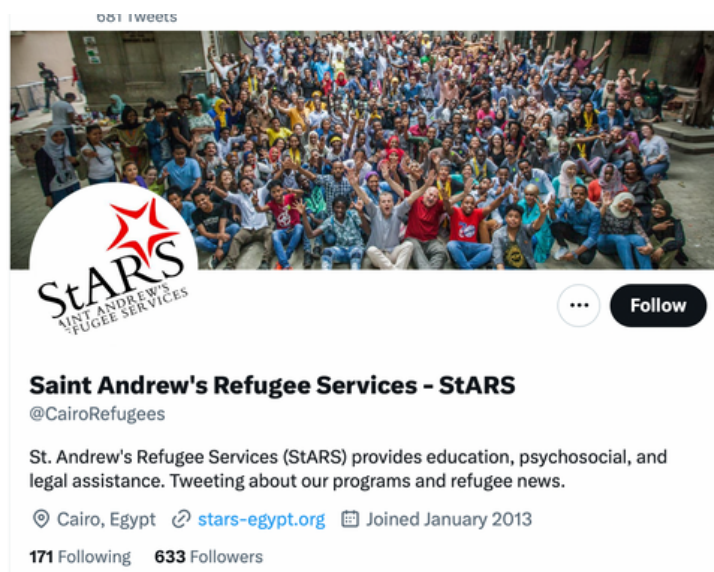
Across Borders is a UK-registered charity run by and for refugees and forcibly displaced migrants in the UK and across the Middle East. They support refugees and migrants in the UK through their refugee-led projects in the UK, which aim to build positive integration experiences and increase access to safe routes. Across Borders also runs a Remote Legal Project which connects law students in the UK with St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Cairo. We spoke with **Rosie Watt**, Co-ordinator of the Remote Legal Project, who was able to tell us a bit more about their work:

"The Remote Legal Project enables law students to use their newly acquired skills and knowledge to support the Legal Aid department at StARS which assists refugees from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen and Syria (among other places) with registering their asylum claim and receiving refugee status so that they can access support and entitlements whilst residing in Egypt. This means that law students who have trained in International Refugee Law have an opportunity to gain real-life experience of practicing law and StARS benefits from critical, additional case management support. Over the last three years, Across Borders has enjoyed working with the University of Nottingham's Human Rights Law Centre on this project, testing this approach in the initial stages of the project's implementation and honing the process to make it work for both partners. This is one of Across Borders' projects - we also have a refugee-led mentor programme to support refugees who are integrating in the UK after resettlement from another country and a programme to equip refugee to become interpreters."

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St Andrew Refugee Services (StARS): StARS is a refugee service provider in central Cairo that works to enhance the quality of life for refugees and vulnerable migrants through four broad program areas: education, psychosocial, legal, and community outreach. They provide high-quality services meeting the unaddressed needs of displaced people and offer a safe and inclusive space for displaced people to come together as a community.

As caseworkers, we support the work that StARS' Refugee Legal Aid Program (RLAP) does. RLAP is currently the only legal aid provider for those seeking refugee status in Egypt. **Rachelle August**, Coordinator of StARS's Refugee Status Determination Legal Aid Program, has been working closely with us throughout our internship with the Refugee Clinic as we navigate UNHCR guidelines to draft refugee status determination applications.



We had a chat with Rachelle about her work with StARS:

Can you please tell us about what StARS does to help asylum seekers and refugees in the local community?

St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) is a refugee-led organization based in Cairo, Egypt. Our work is centred on enhancing quality of life for refugees and vulnerable migrants through education, psychosocial, legal, community outreach, and unaccompanied children and youth support services. The refugee community in Egypt comes from many countries in the region, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. StARS' Refugee Legal Aid Program (RLAP) helps refugees seeking asylum in Egypt by providing advice and representation on registration and refugee status determination procedures with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). RLAP advises on protection related concerns in Egypt and assists refugees in accessing resettlement to safe third countries via referral of vulnerable cases to UNHCR. We also support refugees with accessing education and labour mobility pathways.

What are some of the common challenges facing the refugees/asylum seekers you work with?

There are no camps in Egypt, so the refugee community lives autonomously in urban areas. This allows some freedom; however, it also presents challenges as inflation and cost of living pressures have risen drastically. Refugees in Egypt are vulnerable to exploitation when seeking housing, and in the labour market where they mostly work informally. There is also inequality in access to education, and a high prevalence of gender-based violence. Related to UNHCR procedures, refugees are often unfamiliar with their rights and responsibilities in the refugee status determination process, and misinformation can impact negatively on case outcomes. Demand to address needs that flow from these challenges remains high, and StARS works in collaboration with other service providers, including many community-based refugee-led organizations to raise awareness and support the community to overcome these challenges so that refugees can live safely and with dignity.

SUPPORTING REFUGEES: OUR EXPERIENCE AS CASEWORKERS

We have been caseworkers at the Human Rights Law Centre Refugee Clinic for a little over eight months now and it has been a rewarding experience. We share some of our thoughts:

Frankie : One of the best parts of this experience is the insight it has given me into the UN system and how it affects refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. This has not only expanded my knowledge of refugee and asylum law, but I have also been able to learn more about the issues that the people fleeing persecution face, not only in their home country but also on their journey to reach refugee status. This internship has been an important learning experience in terms of understanding how compassion plays a role here. Every week we have had the opportunity to build an understanding of asylum seekers and refugees by reading their interviews with StARS, learning more about what led them to flee their country and the discrimination that they continue to face. Ultimately, I have learnt that these are the people in society who deserve the most compassion.

Ritika: The past eight months have been rewarding. Volunteering at the Refugee Clinic as a caseworker has helped me strengthen my research and drafting skills. I prepared Appeal Briefs and Appeal Statements in support of applications for clients. After reading interview transcripts and 'Notification of Rejection' decision letters issued by UNHRC, I realised that their genuine refugee claims are often times rejected on flimsy grounds and/or on the basis of mere procedural errors. The interview transcripts explain how they undertook dangerous journeys to another country to protect their life and liberty from the State as well as family members. This strengthens my belief that the rights of refugees need to be ensured. This has also inspired me to continue working in the field of refugee law and contribute to improving the quality of life of refugees.

Rosie: Often valuable information gets missed or miscommunicated in interviews with UNHCR, and StARS helps clients convey their stories when this happens. For example, we learnt to write 'Appeal Briefs' which explain why a client has a claim under refugee law considering their story and country of origin (COI) research. Sometimes these Appeal Briefs are coupled with Appeal Statements, which summarise a client's whole life to support their claim and takes 20+ hours of interviews by the caseworkers at StARS to collect the information. We then learnt how to collate it into a coherent account that describes the client's story. Behind each document we drafted was a huge amount of work done by the tireless caseworkers, driven by compassion and understanding for clients who have often faced incredible hardship and experienced traumatic incidents. Our work with StARS was incredibly illuminating, and I would encourage any student to take the opportunity to work with StARS through the Human Rights Law Centre.

Mohammad: Saint Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS), is a beacon of hope for refugees and vulnerable migrants in Egypt. The organisation provides invaluable services spanning education, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and community outreach. I want to briefly highlight the recent conflict in Sudan which has further brought to light the urgency and importance of the work that StARS and other such organisations do. The war, initiated in mid-April between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has led to an alarming escalation of the humanitarian crisis. This has resulted in the further displacement of 2.2 million individuals, with over half a million seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, including Egypt. These circumstances have made the work of StARS more critical than ever. In these times, it is vital that we continue to support and raise awareness about the work of organisations like StARS.