



**TELL IT LIKE IT IS**

**THE TRUTH  
ABOUT  
ASYLUM**



# SEPARATING THE FACTS FROM THE FICTION

## THE TRUTH ABOUT ASYLUM

There is a huge amount of misinformation about asylum seekers and refugees.

The truth is in short supply. That's why we've produced this guide of simple facts and figures. Keep it with you, so that you can speak up for the rights of refugees.



# WHO'S WHO?

## REFUGEE:

*"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

### **The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**

In the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

**Asylum Seeker:** A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

**Refused asylum seeker:** A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.

**'Illegal' immigrant:** Someone whose entry into or presence in a country contravenes immigration laws.

**Economic migrant:** Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.

# IF YOU WERE TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO WARRING FACTIONS

## ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE LOOKING FOR A PLACE OF SAFETY

There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker. Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the 1951 Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim.

**There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach.**

It is recognised in the 1951 Convention that people fleeing persecution may have to use irregular means in order to escape and claim asylum in another country – **there is no legal way to travel to the UK for the specific purpose of seeking asylum.**

[\(United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees\)](#)

The top ten refugee producing countries in 2011 all have poor human rights records or ongoing conflict. **Asylum seekers are fleeing from these conflicts and abuses, looking for safety.** [\(UNHCR \(The UN Refugee Agency\) Global Trends 2011\)](#)

In 2011 17,700 children applied for asylum having arrived in the country of refuge alone, with no parent or guardian. 1,277 of these applications were made in the UK. Many of them come from Afghanistan, which was described by UNICEF in 2010 as **"the world's most dangerous place to be a child".**

**Many refugees and asylum seekers hope to return home at some point in the future,** if the situation in their country has improved.

The 1951 Refugee Convention guarantees everybody the right to apply for asylum. **It has saved millions of lives.** No country has ever withdrawn from it.

# IF YOU'D SEEN YOUR NEIGHBOURS TORTURED AND RAPED

## BRITAIN'S ASYLUM SYSTEM IS VERY TOUGH

The UK asylum system is strictly controlled and complex. It is **very difficult to get asylum**. The process is extremely tough and **the majority of people's claims are turned down**. ([Home Office statistics from 2006-2010](#))

A high number of initial decisions made by the Home Office on asylum cases are wrong. In 2011, **the courts overturned 26% of negative decisions** after they were appealed. ([Home Office asylum statistics fourth quarter 2011](#))

There is a particular problem with decisions on women's claims. A 2011 study found 50% of negative decisions were overturned by the courts. ([Asylum Aid, Unsustainable: The quality of initial decision-making in women's asylum claims 2011](#))

There were 19,804 asylum applications to the UK in 2011. **This the second lowest level in 10 years**. ([Home Office quarterly statistical summary, asylum statistics 2011](#))

Since 2005 most people recognised as refugees are **only given permission to stay in the UK for five years** and can have their case reviewed at any time. This makes it difficult for them to make decisions about their future, to find work and make definite plans for their life in the UK.

The Home Office still detains some children seeking asylum with their families each year, despite evidence that it causes them harm. ([Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Intercollegiate Briefing Paper: Significant Harm – the effects of administrative detention on children, young people and their families 2009](#))

# IF YOU WERE BEING HUNTED BECAUSE OF YOUR BELIEFS

## POOR COUNTRIES – NOT THE UK – LOOK AFTER MOST OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES

The UK is home to less than 2% of the world's refugees – out of more than 15 million worldwide. ([UNHCR Global Trends 2011](#))

About 80% of the world's refugees live in developing countries, often in camps. Africa, Asia, and the Middle East between them host more than three quarters of the world's refugees. **Europe looks after just 15%.** ([UNHCR Global Trends 2011](#))

Over 490,000 refugees have fled the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, including about 15,000 during 2011. **Only 188 of these people applied for asylum in the UK in 2011.** ([UNHCR Global Trends 2011 & Home Office quarterly statistical summary, asylum statistics 2011](#))

The likelihood that a refugee will be recognised as being in need of asylum depends on the country where they apply. In the UK in 2011, 25% of the people who applied for asylum were granted it. In some countries, such as Switzerland and Finland, over 70% of applications succeed. ([UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2010](#))

# IF YOU WERE IN CONSTANT FEAR OF BEING PERSECUTED

## ASYLUM SEEKERS DO NOT GET LARGE HANDOUTS FROM THE STATE

Asylum seekers do not come to the UK to claim benefits. In fact, most know nothing about welfare benefits before they arrive and had no expectation that they would receive financial support. ([Refugee Council, Chance or Choice? Understanding why asylum seekers come to the UK, 2010](#))

Many asylum seekers live in poverty and many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies.

([The Children's Society Briefing highlighting the gap between asylum support and mainstream benefits 2012](#))

Almost all asylum seekers are **not allowed to work** and are forced to rely on state support – **this can be as little as £5 a day to live on.**

**Asylum seekers are not entitled to council housing.** The accommodation allocated to them is not paid for by the local council.

Some asylum seekers, and those who have been refused asylum, are not entitled to any form of financial support and are forced into homelessness. This includes heavily pregnant women.

Asylum seeking women who are destitute are vulnerable to violence in the UK. More than a fifth of the women accessing our therapeutic services had experienced sexual violence in this country. ([Refugee Council, The experiences of refugee women in the UK, 2012](#))

# IF YOU WERE IN FEAR FOR YOUR FAMILY'S LIVES

## REFUGEES MAKE A HUGE CONTRIBUTION TO THE UK

An estimated 30,000 jobs have been created in Leicester by Ugandan Asian refugees since 1972.

(The Observer, They fled with nothing but built a new empire, 11 August 2002)

About 1,200 medically qualified refugees are recorded on the British Medical Association's database.

(BMA/Refugee Council refugee doctor database – 4 June 2008)

It is estimated that it costs around **£25,000** to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. **Training a new doctor is estimated to cost between £200,000 and £250,000.** (Reaping the rewards: re-training refugee healthcare professionals for the NHS, October 2009 NHS Employers)

18 refugees have become Nobel Laureates, 16 refugees have received knighthoods, 71 Fellows or Foreign Members of the Royal Society were refugees, 50 Fellows or Corresponding Fellows of the British Academy were refugees.

CARA (Council for Assisting Refugee Academics)



Children seeking asylum contribute very **positively** to schools across the country. This in turn enables more **successful integration** of families into local communities.

(Office for Standards in Education,  
The education of asylum seeker  
pupils, 2003)



# IF ALL YOU WANT IS PEACE AND ALL YOU FIND IS VIOLENCE

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

We want to see a world in which men, women and children who are forced to flee from their homes can find the protection they need, rebuild their lives in safety and dignity, and achieve their full potential.

You can help support the Refugee Council's work:

### Donate

Make an online donation at [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/donate](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/donate)  
or call 020 7346 1205

### Fundraise for us

There are all sorts of ways you can fundraise for us, find out more at  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/fundraise](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/fundraise)

### Keep in touch

Sign up to our regular e-newsletter at [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/signup](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/signup)

# WOULDN'T YOU BE SEEKING ASYLUM?



## Registered as:

British Refugee Council, PO Box 68614, LONDON E15 9DQ

Charity number: 1014576

Company number: 2727514

VAT Number: 936 519 988

*giftaid it*

### Gift Aid Declaration

☐ Yes, I am a UK taxpayer and I would like the Refugee Council to reclaim the tax I have paid on all my donations since 6 April 2008 and any further donations I may make. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

Gift Aid income will be used to support the general charitable purposes of the Refugee Council.

### Contact details:

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Firstname: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Yes, I'm happy to receive emails from the Refugee Council.
- ☐ In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, we will hold your details to provide you with updates and appeals. If you do not wish to receive any future information from the Refugee Council please tick.
- ☐ From time to time, we exchange supporters' details with other like-minded charities, if you would rather your name was not included please tick.

I would like to make a donation to the Refugee Council of:

☐ £30 ☐ £50 ☐ £100 ☐ £150 ☐ Other amount £ \_\_\_\_\_

- £30 could feed a destitute family for a week.
- £50 could help us provide destitute clients with emergency packs containing food, toiletries and warm clothing.
- £100 could buy two emergency packs for newly arrived separated children.
- £150 could give victims of wartime rape access to safe accommodation and specialist care.

☐ I enclose a cheque/CAF voucher/postal order payable to the Refugee Council

Please debit my Visa/MasterCard/Maestro/CAF card (circle one)

Card number:

Issue number (Maestro cards only):

3 digit security number:

Start date (Maestro cards only):   /   Expiry date:   /

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Freepost Plus RSYE-AYUL-CEUL  
Refugee Council  
PO Box 68614  
LONDON  
E15 9DQ

Please post today.  
You do not need  
a stamp, but  
using one will  
save us money.



Registered Charity no. 1014576

(Please fold here and moisten on reverse)



[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)



[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

 @refugeecouncil

 Refugee Council