

CARF64

CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM & FASCISM • OCT/NOV 2001 • £1.00

THE HIJACKINGS, THE LOSS OF LIFE AND THE SCALE OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON WERE TERRIFYING. SO MUCH SO THAT, IN THE AFTERMATH, SILENT GRIEVING AND THE LARGEST EVER CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION SEEM THE ONLY APPROPRIATE RESPONSES. YET THESE AWFUL EVENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN USED TO STRENGTHEN A NEW WORLD ORDER IN WHICH RACIST RHETORIC IS OPENLY DEPLOYED. LEADERS SPEAK OF A FIGHT FOR 'OUR CIVILISATION' AND ITS FREEDOMS YET LEAVE US NO SPACE IN WHICH TO CONDEMN U.S. POWER AT THE SAME TIME AS UPHOLDING THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE. IN SUCH A WORLD, TERROR IS THE ONLY WINNER. THIS RHETORIC OF REVENGE AND RETRIBUTION, LEADS TO

DEMONISATION

OF THE ENTIRE ARAB WORLD AND GIVES LEGITIMACY TO A WAVE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE, AUSTRALIA AND NORTH AMERICA.

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ISSN 0966-1050 - Printed by Russell Press (TU)



The hijackings, the loss of life and the scale of human suffering in New York and Washington, were terrifying. So much so that, in the aftermath, silent grieving and the largest ever criminal investigation seem the only appropriate responses. Yet these awful events have already been used to strengthen a new world order in which racist rhetoric is openly deployed. Leaders speak of a fight for 'our civilisation' and its freedoms yet leave us no space in which to condemn US power at the same time as upholding the sanctity of human life. In such a world, terror is the only winner.

It is this rhetoric of revenge and retribution, which demonises the Arab world and treats all Muslim countries as 'rogue states', that gives legitimacy to a wave of violence against Muslim communities in Europe, Australia and North America. But it is not only Muslims who are demonised but anyone who wishes to challenge American imperialism. As US citizens are confronted, in the most terrible way imaginable, with the hatred their nation inspires in many parts of the world, the countries of the First World, including the EU, would do well to consider the bitterness engendered by its policies towards poor countries in the developing world, eastern Europe and the former Soviet bloc. It is becoming increasingly impossible for people from poorer regions of the world to travel to the EU; the dependants of long-settled non-EU citizens are denied family reunification; visitors cannot breach the rich man's fortress on the grounds that they would overstay their visit and if, like the Nobel prize-winning African author, Wole Soyinka, their status allows them to overcome the huge hurdles 'lesser' visitors face, they are still subjected to humiliating treatment and intrusive immigration controls at European airports. But this treatment, even of the Third World's most eminent citizens stems from the EU's approach to refugee-producing countries as a whole, with immigration officials openly treating all their citizens with contempt as potential illegal immigrants.

As Sivanandan argues, it is this demonisation of the people that the West does not want that constitutes the new racism – xenoracism. To put it at its simplest, the new phenomenon of xenoracism constitutes systematic racism against foreigners, strangers. And while this xeno-racism has emerged today through the First World's demonisation of asylum seekers, it spreads like a cancer to embrace Muslims – the strangest and most despised of foreigners, the potential enemy within. So that Australian defence minister Peter Reith belatedly justified his refusal to allow into his vast and rich country 434 (mainly) Afghan refugees on the grounds that amongst those on board the *Tampa* would be terrorists linked to Osama bin Laden. They were guilty of nothing more than being Afghani. Nobody pointed out that refugees are fleeing Afghanistan because they are also opponents of the Taliban, people who have been trying to oppose the Taliban's rule since long before 11 September.

In this way, the demonisation of asylum seekers, first as illegal immigrants and then as international terrorists, is used to justify the end of asylum altogether. ■

A wave of anti-Muslim racism has swept the western world in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Anyone of Muslim appearance faces a new climate of fear and intimidation on the streets. Verbal abuse, physical assaults and attacks on mosques have all increased beyond measure.

Racism rides on back of war

Not surprisingly the worst violence took place in the USA where, within a week of the terrorist attacks, three men had been shot dead in revenge shootings. Waqar Hassan Choudhry was killed in Dallas, Texas. Balbir Singh Sodhaid, a Sikh, was shot in Arizona and a third victim was an Egyptian Christian. Obviously anyone with a brown skin was a potential target.

In the UK, hatred was directed at mosques and Muslim businesses – from Belfast to Southend – as windows were smashed, graffiti daubed and threatening phone calls made. In Birmingham, tensions were high as the large Kashmiri community found itself under threat: mosques had excrement put through their letter-boxes, and a number of people were beaten up. In Edinburgh, a Muslim shopkeeper was assaulted by two men and stabbed, causing him to suffer two

In Twickenham, west London, 28-year-old Afghan cab driver, Haniddullah Gharwal, was left paralysed from the neck down, after being beaten up by three men. His suspected assailants were released on bail after being arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm. A 19-year-old Asian woman wearing a headscarf as she walked home from work in Swindon was spotted by a gang of youths who shouted 'Here's a Muslim', before repeatedly hitting her over the head with a metal baseball bat. And, in Dover, an Afghan asylum seeker was assaulted only hours after the terrorist attacks.

The BNP urged its members to hand out new recruitment leaflets which condemned Islam as a religion that 'creates religious hatred' and 'spawns psychotic mass murderers'.

Media witch-hunt

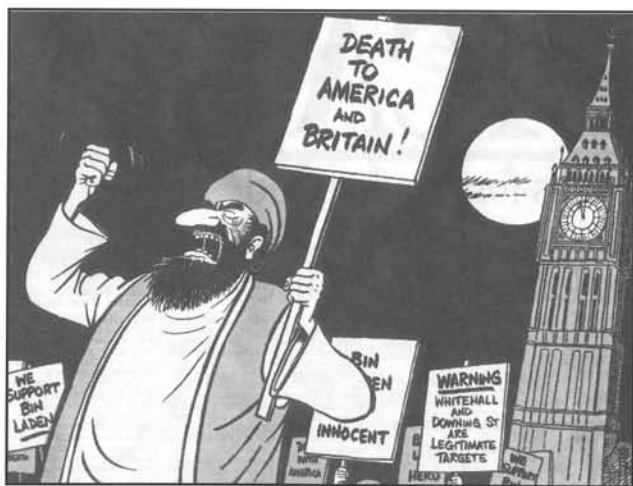
The rush to blame the entire Muslim population of the world for the actions of a tiny band of terrorists was backed up by outright prejudice in the UK media. Labels such as 'Islamic terrorists', 'fundamentalist Muslims', or occasionally just 'Muslim fanatics', left readers and viewers with the impression that the terms 'Muslim', 'fanatic', 'fundamentalist' and 'terrorist' were almost interchangeable. Rarely was it pointed out that fundamentalism is a feature of all religions and, in any case, is as likely to lead one to oppose the use of violence, as support it. But instead of these points being made, slimy so-called security experts propounded their 'clash of civilisations' theories in which, egged on by George W. Bush, they advised us that a final showdown between the modern 'civilised world' and the 'medieval' world of Islam was now upon us.

In their attempts to develop the theme of a dramatic clash between

opposing worldviews, journalists trawled their lists of Muslim 'usual suspects' to find anyone with the slightest hint of mixed emotions. Every mosque was telephoned to check that they opposed the attacks unreservedly and that they were feeling America's pain. Muslim commentators were contacted in the hope of finding someone who would act out the media's 'West versus Islam' script by publicly celebrating the attacks on America. But none obliged. When eventually someone was found who believed that the attacks were 'self-defence', his views were plastered across the pages of the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Evening Standard*. And when members of a live audience on BBC's Question Time wanted to criticise US foreign policy in the Middle East as part of the context – not justification – for the attacks, the BBC was forced to issue an unprecedented apology. Apparently it was offensive to ask those questions. But it was not offensive to ask, as many news programmes did, if Islam itself was responsible. Or whether tighter immigration controls might have prevented the attacks.

War against who?

For the first time ever, war has been declared, not against another nation, but on what has been defined as 'terrorists and those who harbour them'. But 'terrorism' is too slippery a concept to define a military target and, as CARF readers familiar with the Prevention of Terrorism Act will know, states have, till now, defined terrorism to suit their own interests. Whatever the actual military targets now turn out to be, many people will have already drawn the conclusion that Britain has entered a state of war against 'Muslim fundamentalists'. And racists have chosen to take that war on to the streets of Britain. ■

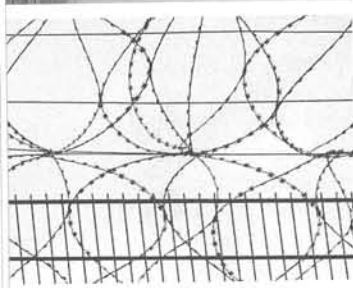


The new enemy within? A *Daily Mail* cartoon, 20 September 2001, expresses fears about the 'rantings of the fundamentalist leaders' operating in Britain. Elsewhere in the same issue, it is suggested that 'Islamic fanatics' are entering Britain from the Sangatte Red Cross centre at Calais.

strokes. Many of the mosques in the greater Manchester area were also damaged. The Jamia Alavia mosque, in Bolton, was set ablaze with 20 people inside while another mosque in Fallowfield was vandalised. In Glodwick, Oldham, the New Jamia mosque had its windows broken and racist graffiti painted on the walls.

Throughout the summer, the EU issued several proposals for new directive

the end of



There is a surreal air about the EU's proposals for a common definition of who constitutes a refugee. The proposal for a directive, published in September, lays down minimum standards and criteria for the recognition of refugees in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1951. But behind the pages of carefully drafted conditions and qualifications for refugee status, lies the reality of Sangatte, of people clinging to the underside of trains and falling from the undercarriage of aircraft, and drowning in small boats on the way to Europe – and the reader goes back to the document and asks: but how do the refugees get here? There is no answer. The document is silent. The answer is: they don't. They shouldn't. They can't.

Of course, they do. Desperate asylum seekers always find ways to come, even at risk of their lives. For decades, the EU member states have been trying to stop them, through visa controls, political agreements to impose carrier sanctions, cooperation on 'early warning' systems and deployment of more batteries of controls, human and technological. In 1997, EU ministers decided to go the whole way and make immigration and asylum laws pan-European, through the Amsterdam Treaty. By 2004, member states' immigration and asylum laws will have to correspond to a model drafted by EU Council ministers.

Co-opting the carriers

New draft laws represent further nails in the coffin of the right to asylum in Europe. Far from making it easier for refugees to reach Europe to claim asylum, the draft proposals on carrier sanctions for the first time make carrier sanctions part of European law, through a Directive issued to member states in June. Member states are now obliged by law to impose fines on airlines, shipping companies and train and coach operators who bring to Europe migrants who don't have the correct documents. Since it is impossible for refugees to get visas, the provisions entrench the impossibility of their

travelling safely, by legitimate carriers, to the EU, and force them into the terrifying voyages of death – and sanctimonious and hypocritical EU leaders blame the smugglers.

Under the new Directive, the carriers concerned must not only be fined; they must be made responsible for returning their undocumented passengers back where they came from – regardless of the conditions in that country and the risks of torture or death which the passenger

may be running in being returned. All the so-called 'accession' countries of central and eastern Europe, who have applied for membership of the EU, will be expected to implement this Directive – so asylum seekers will not even be able to reach Romania, Bulgaria or Poland in safe forms of transport.

Australia says you can't come in: refugees on the deck of the Tampa



Enforcing expulsion

A proposal which would force all member states to criminalise anyone who helps people get to the EU illegally (whatever the motive) is in the pipeline, awaiting approval. Another, adopted in May, requires all member states to enforce expulsion orders issued in any member state – so an asylum seeker who travels to Britain having been rejected and ordered to be expelled in Germany must be expelled by Britain to his or her country of origin. Last year the EU forced the African, Caribbean and Pacific states signatories to the Lomé Convention to agree to take back not only their own citizens but anyone else who travelled through their countries en route to 'unauthorised entry' to the EU, as a condition of liberalised trade provisions.

Beyond scrutiny

The informal arrangements for cooperation are in some ways even more pernicious, since they are not set out in formal texts or subjected to scrutiny by the European or national parliaments. The Action Plan to improve the control of immigration, adopted by EU ministers last year, contains an 'early warning system' to deal with 'threats' of large-scale migration, proposals for 'establishment of close cooperation with the authorities of the countries

on aspects of asylum. Where will these changes lead?

asylum



Behind the pages of carefully drafted conditions lies the reality of Sangatte, of people clinging to the underside of trains and falling from the undercarriage of aircraft, and drowning in small boats on the way to Europe

The end of the road: the Red Cross camp at Sangatte

of origin, and a network of EU 'liaison officers' to 'control embarkation' (the UK has already done this in the Czech Republic), and to cooperate with local authorities 'in all areas relating to the management of migratory flows'.

In other words, immigration officers from EU member states cooperate with the police of persecuting countries to prevent people leaving those countries. And at what cost? In June 2000, the UN condemned western policies of interception of asylum seekers before their arrival, and the financial assistance given to transit countries for the detection, detention and removal of those suspected of intending to go to the west. Its High Commissioner for Refugees warned that the measures were undermining refugee protection and leading to increased dangers for refugees of return to death and torture, to prolonged detention and to 'orbit' – that is, a situation where no country accepts responsibility for them.

The warning had no effect. In September 2001, fifteen months on, as Australian soldiers hijack a refugee-laden boat to deny the right of asylum to its occupants, and Britain and France bicker over the would-be asylum seekers at Sangatte, the UN warns that unless rich western countries offer more help, the whole system of protection of asylum seekers will be threatened. The EU and its ministers will bear a large measure of responsibility for the death of the right to asylum. ■

Poverty is the new Black

A Sivanandan

Today, under global capitalism which, in its ruthless pursuit of markets and its sanctification of wealth, has served to unleash ethnic wars, balkanise countries and displace their peoples, the racist tradition of demonisation and exclusion has become a tool in the hands of the state to keep out the refugees and asylum seekers so displaced – even if they are white – on the grounds that they are scroungers and aliens come to prey on the wealth of the West and confound its national identities. The rhetoric of demonisation, in other words, is racist, but the politics of exclusion is economic. Demonisation is a prelude to exclusion, social and therefore economic exclusion, to creating a peripatetic underclass, international Untermenschen.

Once, 'they' demonised the Blacks to justify slavery. Then they demonised the 'coloureds' to justify colonialism. Today, they demonise asylum seekers to justify the ways of globalism. And, in the age of the media, of discourse, of spin, demonisation sets out the parameters of popular culture within which such exclusion finds its own rationale – usually under the guise of xenophobia, the (natural) fear of strangers. Such a term, it is thought, would include white refugees and asylum seekers streaming in from Eastern Europe, whereas the term racism strictly refers to people of a different race and colour. Xenophobia, besides, is innocent, racism culpable.

But the other side of the coin of 'the fear or hatred of strangers' is the defence and preservation of 'our people', our way of life, our standard of living, our 'race'. If it is xenophobia, it is – in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them – a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism, except that it is not colour-coded. It is a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial countries, but at the newer categories of the displaced and dispossessed whites, who are beating at western Europe's doors, the Europe that displaced them in the first place. It is racism in substance but xeno in form – a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism.

Xeno-racism is a feature of the Manichean world of global capitalism, where there are only the rich and the poor – and poverty is the new Black. Where the national state works primarily in the interests of multinational corporations, where the national bourgeoisie collaborates with international capital, where the middle class is effete and self-serving and the working class, disaggregated and dispersed by technology, has lost its political clout.

That is the context within which we have got to adjudge the changing nature of racism and from that, conversely, adjudge the nature of the society we live in. ■

Excerpted from an article in *The Three Faces of British Racism*, available from the Institute of Race Relations, £6, tel 020 7837 0041

The economics of managed migration

Blunkett's proposals to open up a legal route for economic migrants needs to be put in the context of European's economic self-interest.

The new home secretary David Blunkett has hinted that he intends to open up a legal route to Britain for the 'economic migrants' previously reviled by the Home Office, so as to render illegal entry unnecessary. Immediately after the general election, the Home Office took over responsibility for overseas labour (previously overseen by the Department for Education and Employment), an indication of his intention to fashion a policy for economic migration.

After Tampere

Blunkett's plans must be seen in the context of the EU-wide trend from 'zero immigration' to 'managed migration', which began two years ago at the 1999 Tampere summit, when European leaders decided that their economies once more needed foreign labour to fill the 'skills gap'. Western Europe, they said, needed 1.6 million new migrants per year to 'keep the working age population stable', and to support the ageing indigenous population. Soon afterwards, Germany introduced its 'green card' system to attract computer specialists from India, though ministers were dismayed to find that not many Indians actually wanted to move to Germany. In January 2001, the Home Office Research Directorate produced a report, *Migration: an economic and social analysis*, in which the economic benefits of immigration were set out. Economic migration was, it appeared, a veritable panacea for the nation's economic ills, filling labour market gaps, improving productivity and even 'reducing inflationary pressures'. Immigrants were 'net fiscal contributors' to the economy. The report called for economic and social integration to make the most of migrants' skills.

Migrants as commodities

This document mirrored an EC consultation document, which said that tough immigration rules have forced economic migrants to try other means of entry, which 'allows for no adequate response to labour market needs and plays into the hands of traffickers and unscrupulous employers'. 'Managed migration' means the exploitation of migrants as commodities instead of their outright exclusion. It is a response to the demands and needs of large employers, who don't want to pay more taxes and welfare contributions, rather than the demands and needs of the migrants themselves. It is a cheaper alternative to higher taxes and better welfare provision. Under 'managed migration', the arrival of poor non-English speaking, unskilled asylum seekers is never going to be encouraged, unlike the sought-after skilled migrants. That's why the English language test is suddenly an issue. It separates the high-paid sheep from the low-paid goats. It reinforces the obvious truth that immigration is still very much a policy for the benefit of UK plc. ■

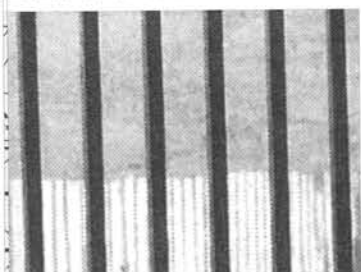
The Home Office and the Scottish Ex
Its conclusions are expected any day

the cr

A safe haven?

As Europe's overall approach to asylum seekers gets ever harsher, the organisations delegated to assist in reception arrangements follow an approach based on hostility and rejection. Certainly, they do not see themselves as responsible for providing a safe haven for asylum seekers. Protecting refugees from racial violence should be regarded by reception agencies as a 'duty of care', but protection measures are not even on the agenda. Some refugee organisations have asked whether governments see racial violence, like vouchers and dispersal, as a component of deterrent policies. But whether governments wittingly or unwittingly use racial violence to deter asylum claims is less important than the effect such racial violence has on the quality of asylum seekers' lives and on their ability to make a claim.

The charity Refugee Action reported in August a huge rise in the number of asylum seekers seeking to return to often war-torn home countries rather than face racial harassment in the UK. Their views can, perhaps, best be summarised by the Iranian asylum seeker, Davoud Rasul Naseri who, after being stabbed in the back in Sighthill three days after the racist murder of Firsat Dag, told the press that it would be better to return to Iran 'because I would be killed because of my aims, not because of nothing'.



the end of asylum



Curtis Ben Curtis/PA

Executive ordered civil servants to carry out a thorough review of the dispersal system. But will the racial violence that claimed the life of Firsat Dag be on the agenda?

Times of NASS



Firsat Dag

Failure to protect

What is so alarming about the approach of national reception administrations is that they do not consider it their duty to protect asylum seekers from racial violence, or ensure racial harmony, as evidenced by the almost total absence of strategies, policies and mechanisms in this area. This is particularly culpable in the UK, because the Macpherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence recommended that all institutions should put in place systems to monitor and record racial incidents.

And in order to meet another of Macpherson's recommendations, the 1976 Race Relations Act was amended last year to place on public bodies general duties to promote good race relations and monitor the impact on racial equality of their policies.

Despite these measures, introduced and supported by the government, NASS (the National Asylum Support Service), itself a government agency, is probably the only housing body in the country with no coherent policies against racial harassment and no apparent overall strategy to promote good race relations. But, does the Race Relations Act, as amended, actually apply to NASS? This is a moot point, as the amended Act actually excludes from its provisions bodies with immigration control and asylum application functions. And what about NASS's failure to draw up policies to record and monitor racial incidents? Is the government to argue here, too, that NASS is exempt from Macpherson's recommendations? The Home Office's manifest failure to ensure NASS meets its obligations in this area could well be the subject of a challenge under the Human Rights Act, as a failure to provide protection for life and property constitutes a fundamental breach of human rights.

And the recent proposal from the EU Council for a directive laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers across Europe is striking on the matter of protection. Member states are, under the proposal, under a duty to protect asylum seekers in accommodation provided by the authorities from sexual, but not racial, violence. This glaring omission suggests that the EU expects asylum seekers simply to put up with racial violence as the price they must pay for entry to Europe.

Negotiation not education

The failure of NASS and its European counterparts to protect asylum seekers from racial violence is manifest at all stages of the reception process. Prior to placing asylum seekers in dispersal areas, no checks are carried out on the suitability of locations vis-à-vis racial violence and hostility. In Ireland and the Netherlands, where the DASS (Directorate for Asylum Seekers) and the COA

(Asylum Seekers' Reception Service) have at least held consultations prior to dispersal, the authorities have responded to hostility with negotiation instead of education, embarking on consultations designed to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers sent to a dispersal community. In this way they have capitulated to the racist argument that fewer numbers make for better race relations.

Abdicating responsibility

NASS, DASS, the COA and their like do not provide extra finances to deal with racism, either through education, material measures to improve physical safety, or improved resources that would benefit the whole community and go some way to reduce racial hostility. But whereas DASS and the COA have attempted to negotiate in cases when local communities have opposed dispersal, NASS has removed itself from the fray altogether. And it is this abdication of all responsibilities, that brings NASS into direct conflict with the Race Relations Amendment Act. For promoting good race relations would mean that NASS would have to, at each turn, consider the race relations implications of its dispersal policy. And it is its manifest failure to do so which has led to increasing racial violence.

This initial failure is then compounded by the fact that NASS does not consider that it has a responsibility to monitor racist attacks nationally or co-ordinate a response. On the contrary, NASS regards racism, like health, as an issue for the consortia which accept dispersed asylum seekers, with any additional measures paid for through their own budgets. Prior to the murder of Firsat Dag in Sighthill, Scottish anti-racists had documented the worst racist attacks and pleaded with Glasgow city council to invest in better protection measures and to fund better facilities for all the community. But the council did not act soon enough. In the aftermath of Dag's death, Glasgow city council announced that it was considering a new resource centre in Sighthill. In future, every asylum seeker in the city will receive a guaranteed monthly visit from a support officer and be given a regular opportunity to air their concerns to the council. But this, while welcome, is too late for Firsat Dag. And where will such a measure lead in practice if NASS, and the government, do not take responsibility for a situation they created through their underfunding of the dispersal system?

The question of responsibility is crucial. Talk to those asylum seekers who have experienced racial violence, and they will tell you that NASS simply does not want to know. NASS, of course, will tell you otherwise. Its official policy actually states that it is prepared to move asylum seekers if they suffer racial violence and that those who flee an area due to racial harassment will not be considered 'intentionally destitute'. However, no one at NASS seems to be aware of the policy, which is hardly surprising

'I feel with this recent situation that I just want to stay in my country. It would be better for me because I would be killed because of my aims, not because of nothing'

Davoud Rasul Naseri
(shown left)



the end of asylum

given that its sole policy declaration on racial violence appeared in an August 2000 edition of its inaccessible policy bulletin, and if the staff are aware of it, they are more than happy to ignore it. In Scotland, Positive Action in Housing caseworker Adrian Lui acts as an advocate on behalf of asylum seekers who want to be rehoused by NASS because of racial harassment. Yet, in many cases, NASS does not reply to his appeals, which are backed up by police and medical reports. And trying to contact NASS direct, is, according to Lui, like trying to contact 'a call centre – they deal with numbers and seem to have no emotional attachment to their duty to deal with asylum seekers.' The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture says it has repeatedly warned NASS that asylum seekers are left at the mercy of racist landlords, but its evidence is ignored. In one case an asylum seeker was hanged from a bannister in a tower block by agents of the landlord, to force him to reveal the identity of a person who had complained about their accommodation. Despite NASS being informed, the administration continued to send asylum seekers to this accommodation.

And it was only after a long and bitter campaign which included a damning TV documentary exposé that the government recently agreed to stop sending asylum seekers to particularly notorious accommodation in Liverpool (see p9).

Administrative racism

On top of this failure to respond to complaints, there is inbuilt into administrations such as NASS a social authoritarianism and control that prevents it from responding in a humane way to complaints of racial violence. In turn, this militates against asylum seekers challenging such administrative racism. For accommodation is allocated on a no-choice basis and those who demand a choice are simply ejected from the system, denied housing and welfare and thrown onto their own resources. This is most graphically shown in Germany, where the Law of Obligatory Residence forbids asylum seekers from moving from the region to which

they are sent. But in the UK too, asylum seekers who want to escape racial violence risk forfeiting all welfare rights. For the Palestinian brothers Iyad and Haitham Sada, who, among other things, suffered serious head injuries after being beaten up in Sighthill, this was a price they were prepared to consider. They have fled Glasgow for Bolton.

When dispersal was introduced in the UK, the then immigration minister Mike O'Brien issued assurances that those experiencing racial violence would not be forced to live in unsafe areas. In reality, the opposite is now the case, as those experiencing racial violence are either ignored by NASS or actively bullied, harried and threatened into silence. Ignoring racial violence is another example of a system contemptuous of asylum seekers' health needs. Asylum seekers interviewed by Charles Watters, of Kent University's European Centre for the Study of Social Care of Minority Groups and Refugees, said they felt suicidal at the prospect of dispersal. In one case, a man dispersed to northern England had to be returned to London after racial violence. The man, who had a history of mental illness, was subsequently admitted to a psychiatric hospital with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

At the NASS HQ in Croydon, London, officials promptly dispatched back to Glasgow nine families who had fled the Sighthill estate and arrived on NASS's doorstep seeking protection. A NASS official later announced that should the asylum seekers refuse to return to Sighthill, all welfare support would be withdrawn. Eighteen asylum seekers, most of them Kurds, who refused to be sent from Liverpool to Oldham were similarly threatened if they did not comply with the NASS instruction. And when asylum seekers have appealed against the withdrawal of support after fleeing racial harassment, asylum support adjudicators have told them they should have stayed where they were and waited for the police to protect them.

Evading responsibility

How do governments respond when the impact of racial violence goes beyond individuals' experiences to become a highly-publicised national concern?

Recent suicides and racially motivated murders of asylum seekers

1998 Mehretab Kidane 28
Eritrean asylum seeker committed suicide on the final day of his asylum appeal hearing because he was so afraid of losing the appeal and being sent back.

7.98 Sofonias Alemseged 22
Eritrean asylum seeker with psychological problems found hanged in Brixton prison, just weeks before an appeal on his asylum claim.

23.12.98 Farhan Mire 33
Somalian refugee kicked to death in Harrow, London in street attack.



12.98 LinYan-Guang
Chinese asylum seeker committed suicide in Warley hospital, Brentwood, Essex.

2000 Glynnis Cowley
South African mother of three took her own life after her asylum claim was refused. She claimed she had been forced to act as a drugs courier.

24.1.00 Robertas Grabys
Lithuanian asylum seeker found hanged in Harmondsworth detention centre.

21.12.00 Saeed Alaei 26
Iranian asylum seeker dispersed to Nelson, Lancashire, was found hanged after his asylum claim was refused.

1.01 Ramin Khaleghi 27
Iranian asylum seeker dispersed to Leicester took his own life after his asylum claim was refused.



1.01 Gian Singh Nagra 37
Asylum seeker was clubbed to death by Matthew Dorrian in Elm Park, East London.

24.3.01 Fetah Marku 24
Kosovan asylum seeker was beaten and stabbed to death in Edgware, London by gang of six men when he was celebrating his birthday with friends at the Oscar Wilde pub.



Dispersed refugees protesting in Glasgow after the death of Firsat Dag

What sense of responsibility do government ministers show? Having allowed asylum seekers to be attacked, ministers then leave them in the same areas, vulnerable to further attacks – and justify this, in the words of junior home office minister Jeff Rooker after the murder of Dag, on the ground that to do otherwise would 'mean that our policies would be run by the racists in this country. And we're not going to have that'.

And here, Britain follows in the footsteps of the worst European precedents. In the Netherlands, the government has not even responded to a request for a public inquiry into the high level of arson attacks on asylum reception centres. And in Germany, the plea of 116 asylum seekers in the Brandenburg town of Rathenow to be transferred to a safe region in the face of escalating racial violence, fell on deaf ears. The asylum seekers sent an open letter to the Chancellor, the lower house of the German parliament and other federal institutions, but their request was refused by the foreigners' office as Rathenow's mayor angrily denounced the economic consequences of the labelling of the town as racist. ■

5.8.01 Firsat Dag 22

Kurdish asylum seeker dispersed to the notorious Sighthill estate in Glasgow, was stabbed to death in a racist attack. Twenty-six year-old Scott Burrell was charged with Firsat's murder, and also of attempting to murder a German tourist on the same day.



20.8.01 Unnamed Kosovan man

Asylum seeker died after jumping overboard a ferry. He was being deported by the Immigration service, when he made a run for it and jumped overboard, two miles from Dover. He was found within 20 minutes but pronounced dead on arrival at Dover lifeboat station.

22.8.01 Nassar Ahmed 36

Eritrean refugee dispersed to Nelson, Lancashire was found hanged after his asylum claim was refused. ■

One more dead, nothing said

The death of 37-year-old Gian Singh Nagra, a political asylum seeker, received very little coverage when it occurred in January this year – just a few lines in the local paper.

The subsequent trial of Matthew Dorrian received marginally more – a couple of columns in the *Evening Standard* and the *Guardian*. Newspapers were more interested in reporting on the 'scrounging' 'floods' of asylum seekers waiting in Sangatte trying to cross into the UK than the trial of a man accused of murdering an innocent asylum seeker.

But what had actually happened to Gian? He came to the UK in October 1999 and claimed asylum. It was refused. He had married and was in the process of appealing against the decision.

On 7 January, a 14-year-old girl phoned Dorrian, a friend of hers, alleging that 'an evil looking Asian' had been behaving strangely and leering at her and her friends at Elm Park tube station. Despite there being no evidence of any wrongdoing, Dorrian armed himself with a golf club, went to the station and confronted Gian. When Gian did not respond, he hit Gian with the golf club across the face. Gian was found with massive head injuries and later died in hospital from blood loss.

The Old Bailey jury was unable to reach a verdict on the charge of murder, but Dorrian admitted manslaughter and was remanded for pre-sentence reports. ■

Lessons from Liverpool

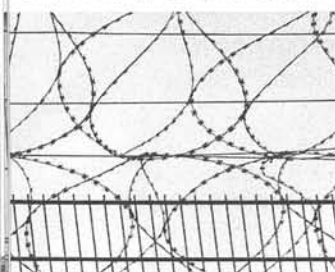
On 5 September, immigration minister Lord Rooker announced that no more asylum seekers would be sent to Landmark tower blocks in Liverpool. Paul Tarpey of People Not Profit tells CARF what campaigners learned from the residents in their battle with Landmark.

The two tower blocks in Everton Brow, Liverpool now known as Landmark and Inn on the Park, smack you in the face as soon as you take in their setting. Ugly and isolated, surrounded by grimy waste ground, they lie in an area that was targeted by the Militant Labour council of the 1980s as part of their new housing policy. It built as much new housing as possible until being told this was against the law, and, from that point on, only minor patching up jobs were allowed. If you walk around Everton there is now a small oasis of decent housing accentuating the unacceptable housing around it. These particular tower blocks should have been knocked down in the '80s. Valued by the council at 10p a flat, they were abandoned and condemned. They were sold to a private company at a pittance, to use as it saw fit.

A group called Landmark Ltd saw an opportunity, but whether they knew just how lucky they were going to get remains a mystery. In fact, finding out exactly why it was decided to lease out a contract to this company in this particular situation to house refugees is like trying to find out a state secret.



the end of asylum



Landmark Ltd employ refugees within the tower blocks who violently intimidate the mainly Kurdish residents, and local residents are employed to watch people coming and going, refugees or not. Letters are opened, official messages destroyed. Safety within the buildings is casually disregarded, with lifts turned off and repairs not done. This is not speculation, it is documented. The landlord's attitude to their tenants has been televised. Landmark Ltd receive £105 per week for every refugee, with the potential to generate an income of £3m.



Inn on the Park, Everton

Our attempts to support the residents of Landmark started cautiously. We approached community groups, who were shocked that no official body had contacted them about the racial tension surrounding the blocks. We continued, encouraged by refugee support networks to do unofficial unpaid social work, but received little support from the tenants of Landmark themselves. When we visited and talked of long term strategies of integration, we were faced with desperation and anger. People were fearful for their safety, which was threatened not just by misplaced resentment within Everton but by the owners of the tower blocks themselves.

We agreed, reluctantly, to help with a demonstration in the city centre – reluctantly because many people felt it could cause a backlash. That attitude now seems extremely patronising and I wish we had taken our lead completely from the sense of anger and will within the tower blocks. The demonstration attracted media and political attention and only minor racist outbursts, if you ignore the attitudes of senior police officers.

It ended up with meetings between the residents' committee from the tower blocks and senior officials from the council. We were invited to attend these meetings, and beyond the political smarm it did seem that the council had been shamed into action. NASS was contacted and knew of Landmark's activities. It would take time, but progress appeared to be possible.

The next stage proved again that despite all we'd seen, we were still underestimating the firmer grasp that the residents of Landmark had on what was really going on. They had heard every promise on the planet and now they were prepared to starve themselves to make their point. Having friends willing to kill themselves to change attitudes, put the whole thing into horrible perspective. The hunger strike finished with more promises – from NASS and from Louise Ellman MP. But deadlines came and went with no action taken and no reason given as to why, and eventually, those involved were shipped off to Sunderland, an area where Landmark has further property.

Every official refugee 'support organisation' appeared to be part of a conspiracy to block change. Any real change has taken place through the refugees' determination. However, we are still sitting through meetings listening to council officials and members of Refugee Action talking of other groups encouraging asylum seekers to act irresponsibly and of the difficulty involved in challenging a company which they openly admit is behaving with no consideration for the well-being of their tenants. ■

People Not Profit: www.peoplenotprofit.co.uk
e-mail: peoplenotprofit2001@hotmail.com

taking

Asylum policy may no longer be nationally determined, but governments are still not averse to playing the political race card. And the press, having been schooled by politicians into the demonisation of asylum seekers, have not let up on the most scurrilous race reporting seen in Britain since the 1960s. But the fightback against the media is gathering strength. Protests are both local and national and new groups are joining the fight.

Against the Mail

In August the Westminster Disability Group was picketing the *Daily Mail's* offices after particularly vicious reporting in the *Mail* and its sister paper the *Evening Standard* against a disabled asylum seeker who had been put up in a hotel at Westminster council's expense. The press coverage unleashed so vicious a racist campaign that the asylum seeker was thrown out of the hotel.

Against the Express

It was journalists on their own paper, the *Daily Express*, who led a protest to management over coverage of the asylum issue in August. With six front page headlines within three weeks denouncing the 'Asylum invasion' and 'Asylum out of control', it was clear that new owner, Richard Desmond, was prepared to go to any lengths to find extra readers. NUJ members on the paper, which had under its previous ownership adopted a more liberal stance on most social issues, have led the fight. This was a story itself worthy of news and, on 15 August, BBC's *Newsnight* devoted ten minutes to the agitation caused by the *Express'* inflammatory coverage. Ironically, the *Express* defended itself on the basis that the 'appalling racism facing asylum seekers' including the murder of Firsat Dag in Glasgow showed 'these are matters which must be addressed urgently' – as though press coverage only reflects and never creates such racism! The 'Stop the Express' Campaign, which has been launched against the Express papers'

on the media



'deliberately abusing the most powerless group in society, to try to boost their sales and profits', has raised the issue of racist coverage with the Press Complaints Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality.

Against the Daily Record

And the coverage of Kurdish asylum seeker Firsat Dag's death in Scotland has led to the most sustained campaign against press racism. At the centre of the row is the supposedly left-leaning populist Scottish *Daily Record*. Three days after Firsat, 22, was stabbed to death in a completely unprovoked attack by two white men on Sighthill's housing estate, the paper

headlined a story, 'Stabbed Turk Firsat conned his way in as asylum seeker', while the editorial called him 'a con man who came to this country to make a fast buck'. Other papers had, with information provided by the none too objective Turkish embassy (Turkey's repression against the Kurds

being the reason so many are forced to seek asylum) revealed that Firsat had changed his name in the UK. But only the *Record* went out of its way to deflect the attention of its readers from a shaming racist killing to the supposed tricks that economic migrants get up to.

Never before in the press coverage of any racist death in Britain has the victim been 'blamed' in this way. And when the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees mounted a small demonstration outside the *Record*'s offices, the group was denounced as extremist 'Trots'. The confusion on the Scottish left as to how to defend working class interests without pandering to racism, was discussed in the last issue of *CARF*. But it is a battle still raging in Scotland. While the *Record* defended its position, refusing to 'bow to mob rule', its right-wing rival the *Scottish Daily Mail* was providing the more balanced coverage, with an account of Firsat's efforts to better himself and set up a business in Britain.

Against the BBC

The counterpoint to papers' partiality when reporting racialised stories is the studied (and irresponsible) impartiality when it comes to reporting on the racist far Right. Suddenly, this year, the British National Party has gained respectability, with its leader interviewed seriously and at length, as though his is a democratic party on a par with others. With absolutely no establishment voice raised in protest, it has fallen to Bill Morris (yet again) to remind the country of basic truths and values. The leader of the TGWU has taken the BBC to task for interviews with Nick Griffin on Radio 4's *Today* programme and BBC TV's *Newsnight*. Denouncing the interviews as 'political pornography' and 'legitimised racism', Morris has made a formal complaint. 'We believe in a free and democratic society,' he told the *Observer*, 'but you get to a point where free speech undermines the rights of people to live in a society which is socially cohesive.'

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media (RAM) Project campaigns on media representation: <http://www.ramproject.org.uk>

'Stop the Express' www.volpus.co.uk/stop.htm

Refugee put up in 4-star hotel at cost of £99 a day

AN ASYLUM seeker has been housed by Westminster City Council in a four-star hotel at a cost of £6,000 because there is nowhere else for him to go, it was revealed today.

Mohammed Fagey's room at the Thistle Kensington

By James Burleigh

weeks ago. The Home Office has turned down Mr Fagey's asylum application and he has lodged an appeal. Westminster council said

Demonstration outside Birmingham's *Evening Mail* office over alarmist headlines about asylum seekers



S O'Neill

Oakington: victory against detention

On 7 September, the campaign against Oakington 'Reception

Centre' received a massive boost when High Court judge Sir Andrew Collins declared detention there illegal and a breach of the detainees' human rights. Four Iraqi Kurds had challenged their detention there on the basis that there was no legal justification for it. Immediately detainees at other centres – at Haslar

and Campsfield – went on hunger strike to demand an end to detention without limit.

The opening of Oakington a year ago marked a change in government policy on detention of asylum seekers. Previously, asylum seekers were detained if immigration officers suspected (for whatever reason, and sometimes for no reason) that they would abscond and go underground, or if there were doubts about their true identity, or because they had come into the country illegally. But

asylum seekers were detained at Oakington simply for administrative convenience. The Home Office decided that asylum claims from certain countries – currently Albania, Bangladesh, China, the Czech republic, Estonia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Kosovo, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe – could be dealt with very quickly. It made sense to the bureaucratic mind to hold claimants from those countries so that they could be interviewed at very short notice. There was no other rationale for detaining the asylum claimants.

It was by invoking the new Human Rights Act that the challenge was successful. The Immigration Acts allow for indefinite detention of those seeking entry to the UK. But since the Human Rights Act, detention of immigrants is illegal unless it is to prevent illegal entry, or for deportation. The judge held that since the detainees were released after their asylum claims had been refused, their detention was clearly not deemed necessary for either of these purposes and so was arbitrary and illegal.

The decision has led to consternation in the Home Office,

which has already appealed to the Court of Appeal. The Campaign to close Campsfield is calling on lawyers and human rights groups to resist political pressure to overturn this ruling and continue the challenge against the existence of all immigration detention centres. ■

Campaign contacts

Barbed Wire Britain Network Against Refugee and Migrant Detention, 60 Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX1 2JJ
Tel: 01865 558 145 / 726 804
Web: www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk
Email: info@barbedwirebritain.org.uk

Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention (CARD), c/o CUSU, 11-12 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA
Tel: 01223 700 644 / 07931 855 888
Web: www.closeoakington.org
Email: card@closeoakington.org

Campaign to Close Campsfield, c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4
Tel: 01865 558 145
Web: www.closecampsfield.org.uk
Email: bmackeith@aol.com
suke.wolton.sant.ox.ac.uk

Close Harmondsworth Campaign, 10 Endsleigh Road, Southall Middlesex UB2 5QL
Tel: 020 8571 5019

National Coalition Of Anti Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS
Tel: 0121 554 6947 Fax: 0870 055 4570
Web: www.ncadc.org.uk
Email: ncadc@ncadc.org.uk

S. O'Neill



March through Cambridge against Oakington detention centre earlier in the year

REVIEW

Political asylum from the inside

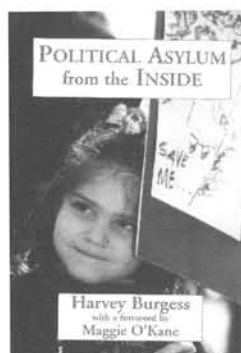
This book, written by a legal caseworker, is a fascinating and hugely ambitious attempt to say everything there is to be said about refugees. The chapter headings represent areas from which the asylum seekers come: Kurdistan; Algeria, Angola, Colombia, Albania/Kosovo and Pakistan. Around the story of an asylum seeker from the country or territory concerned, the author gives a political overview and history of the region, and additionally, takes the reader through withdrawal of benefits, asylum interviews, immigration appeals, representation, detention and removal, by recounting personal experiences in the context of the immigration laws, procedures and

rules. There is a lot of legal information mixed in with the case histories of the author's clients and his reflections on the devastating impact which exile has on their physical and mental well-being, an impact compounded by the grudging and suspicious reception they receive from the British authorities. Extracts from asylum interviews and from Home Office refusal letters give a flavour of the condescension and lack of humanity of the official response.

Events have moved on since the book was written: reforms include the introduction of legal aid for asylum appeals, a system for monitoring immigration advisers and the elaboration of gender guidelines reflecting the

experiences of women refugees. On the other hand, the dispersal of asylum seekers, an unusual and disreputable practice of certain local authorities when he was writing, has become central government policy, and removals and detention have both increased massively. These changes do not affect the book's central message, which is a demand that asylum seekers are listened to, and treated with a measure of dignity and humanity. As journalist Maggie O'Kane writes in her foreword, the book is one that should be read by everyone who works with or cares about refugees in Britain. ■

Political Asylum from the Inside, by Harvey Burgess, is published by WorldView Publishing, PO Box 595, Oxford OX2 6YH.





RIOTS AFTERMATH

Summer of rebellion, autumn of silence

With the summer over, the burst of media interest in the youths of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford has passed. In mid-September, the judge presiding over the trial of Walter Chamberlain's attackers stated categorically that the incident was not racially motivated. The assault on Chamberlain had fuelled tensions in Oldham earlier in the year when newspapers loudly announced that he had been attacked for 'being white'. But when this lie was finally knocked on the head in a court of law, there was barely a mention in the press.

Oldham police have now arrested 14 Asian men since May and charged them with riot – the most serious public order offence – on the basis of CCTV footage as well as video tapes which the police have obtained by court order from BBC, Sky, ITN and Granada film crews. Bradford police have made 107 arrests in relation to rioting over the July 7 weekend.

Meanwhile we have yet to see the widespread public debate about problems of racism which we were promised would emerge out of the summer's events. Instead the concept of 'self-segregation' – the main idea taken from Lord Ouseley's Bradford report – has become an all-too-easy way of blaming Asian communities for the city's troubles. In Oldham, there seems to have been some confusion over the drop-in centre, which was set up in the wake of the May riots to provide somewhere the public could go to express their

views on race issues. Apparently people have been turning up asking, 'Is this where I go to complain about the Asians?' Of the submissions received, 82 per cent were from whites.

Yet beyond the official review panels and police investigations,



youth and community organisations in many of Britain's deprived, multiracial areas are responding with positive schemes to address the underlying issues which led to the riots. A number of projects in Oldham which aim to allow young people from all communities to meet and address shared issues of unemployment and poverty, as well as racism, have been running since before May. Now they stand a better chance of receiving the financial backing they deserve. Elsewhere, initiatives like the Link-Up events (see box below) are providing a forum for black youths to meet and engage in political discussions about policing, education, jobs and other issues. It is this kind of unglamorous, unrecognised and, often, unfunded local work which is our best hope for preventing the further fragmentation of our communities. ■

Link-Up Young Black Britain

Since the beginning of the year, the National Youth Agency, National Black Youth Forum and local partners, have been organising a series of events in different parts of Britain in which young black people from different communities can talk and take action on issues that affect them on a day-to-day basis – racism, poverty, policing, etc. Events have taken place in Yorkshire, the North East and, on 1 September, at Birmingham's Drum arts centre, to cover the Midlands area. In a number of workshops on asylum, policing and the criminal justice system, globalisation, employment and education, there was a rare opportunity to grapple with these issues among others of the same age group. With tensions in Birmingham high following the summer riots elsewhere, debate on race issues was particularly charged. 'At street level there is a real vibe in Birmingham at the moment. Maybe older people can't feel it, but as I travel around I see what's going down,' explained 21-year-old Ajay Dattani. 'You don't really get racism in predominantly black areas, but if you move beyond these, then it is a different story.' ■

For information on future Link-Up events, contact National Black Youth Forum, 2nd Floor, Cambridge House, Cambridge Grove, London W6 0LE or National Youth Agency, 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD.

THE LINK-UP

Midlands

Following the success of the first Link-Up event in the Midlands, the National Black Youth Forum and local partners are organising a series of events in different parts of Britain in which young black people from different communities can talk and take action on issues that affect them on a day-to-day basis – racism, poverty, policing, etc. Events have taken place in Yorkshire, the North East and, on 1 September, at Birmingham's Drum arts centre, to cover the Midlands area. In a number of workshops on asylum, policing and the criminal justice system, globalisation, employment and education, there was a rare opportunity to grapple with these issues among others of the same age group. With tensions in Birmingham high following the summer riots elsewhere, debate on race issues was particularly charged. 'At street level there is a real vibe in Birmingham at the moment. Maybe older people can't feel it, but as I travel around I see what's going down,' explained 21-year-old Ajay Dattani. 'You don't really get racism in predominantly black areas, but if you move beyond these, then it is a different story.' ■

Newsletter produced by young people at the Midlands Link-Up event.

campaigns & reports

More Injustice

In the last issue of *CARF* (No 63) we reviewed the film *Injustice* and urged *CARF* readers to go see the film. But where can you see it? Police Federation lawyers are trying to stop public viewings of it.

In September, the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton cancelled a week – long run of the film. Why? They were scared – scared of Russell Jones & Walker, Police Federation solicitors – taking action. The firm did not even send a snotty letter as they had at previous showings, the mere threat of action cowed the Ritzy's owners into withdrawing the film. The identified police officers have maintained their innocence of any wrongdoing in the cases shown in the film.

However, the film makers Migrant Media refuse to be silenced, and plan to continue showing the film at private locations to make sure it's seen. ■

Details on showings and how to buy the film from: Migrant Media Tel: 020 7254 9701 or www.injusticefilm.co.uk

Free Samar and Jawad



After waiting nearly a year, Samar and Jawad's appeal against their conviction of conspiracy to cause explosions will resume on 16 October. The appeal was suspended in October 2000 after only four days, to allow the defence to introduce 'new' evidence previously withheld under Pii (Public interest immunity) certificates, that the security services had been aware of other suspects.

Please support the campaign, which will be holding a picket on 16 and 17 October. ■

Picket details: Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London WC2, 10am-12.30pm and 2-4pm, nearest tube: Holborn/Temple.

Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad, BM Box FOSA, London WC1N 3XX

Web: www.freesaj.org
e-mail: postmaster@freesaj.org.uk

Stop the cover up

Satpal Ram was sentenced to eleven years for a murder in 1987, following a racist attack in which he defended himself. He has now served fifteen years. Why isn't he a free man? A year ago, his immediate release was recommended by the Parole Board, yet he remains in prison. Why?

The Parole Board sent its decision, that Satpal should be immediately released, to the Home Office in October 2000. Home Office civil servants and then home secretary, Jack Straw, delayed, and delayed, and delayed some more. On 16 January 2001, they sent the decision back to the Parole Board asking for clarification. The Parole Board replied that it had no additional information and still maintained that Satpal should be immediately paroled. Jack Straw rejected the recommendation outright. Prisons minister Paul Boateng came up with a compromise. Satpal would be gradually decategorised and eventually released on condition that the rejection by Straw of the Parole Board's recommendation was not made public.

For a long time this 'deal' did not come to light. Satpal's legal team was hopeful that the Criminal Cases Review Commission – the body



which investigates alleged miscarriages of justice – would agree that the original trial had been flawed and allow the case to go back to the Court of Appeal. (Satpal had not been allowed to

enter a plea of self-defence, interpreters had not been provided for witnesses, a vital witness was not called and procedural errors were made by lawyers.) But, at the beginning of September, after deliberating for over a year, the Commission provisionally rejected the submission from Satpal's legal team. Gareth Peirce, Satpal's lawyer, is challenging the decision and hopes to overturn the ruling.

Satpal was finally sent to an open prison in July, but was recently charged with assault on prison officers (which he denies) and sent back to HMP Blakenhurst high security prison. There the governor of Blakenhurst stopped a visit, free of handcuffs, to his dying mother. She died on 7 September without seeing her son for a last time. ■

The Campaign will be organising various protests over the coming months so please ring for details.

Free Satpal Campaign (London), PO Box 30091, London SE1 1WP
Tel: 07947 595367
E-mail: freesatpalcampaign@hotmail.com

Wormwood thugs

'If you behave like a vicious thug you will be punished like a vicious thug,' Judge Byers told a senior prison officer as he sentenced him to four years imprisonment for

attacking an inmate in March 1998. Three officers have been found guilty and given prison sentences for assault occasioning actual bodily harm for the 'sadistic attack' on Steven Banks in the segregation unit of

Wormwood

Scrubs prison. With Banks in a headlock the officers had taunted him with the words: 'Do you know how easy it is to break a neck? There is going to be another death

in custody.' Earlier this year, another three officers from Wormwood Scrubs were sentenced for a separate assault on another prisoner.

That the evidence came out at all, that warders have stood trial, that they have been found guilty, all adds up to a great victory. Prisons are some of the most brutal places in Britain and the most secret. Anyone who has been in prison or has a friend or relative there knows of the downright callousness of staff, the routine racism and the use of force which goes unchecked and unpunished. An unofficial reign of terror by prison officers in many prisons ensures that, through retribution and just the threat of it, complaints are limited. And, if any officer is actually identified for wrongdoing, then the staff immediately close ranks and the strong Prison Officers' Association is there to vindicate its member.

That something was seriously wrong at Wormwood Scrubs prison in London was known unofficially for some twenty years. But, until now, nothing could be proven. Through the painstaking work of solicitor Daniel Machover, who represented more than 40 alleged victims, the spotlight is belatedly being shone on the violence and racism at the prison. And it is not just Machover who is now calling for a public judicial inquiry into Wormwood Scrubs. He is supported by former chief inspector of prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, who believes that former home secretaries Michael Howard and Jack Straw, to whom he had voiced his concerns about the violence, should be summoned before an inquiry to explain their failure to act. ■

Black Prisoner Support Scheme, 4th Floor, Fenchurch House, 12 King Street, Nottingham NG1 2AS



SUSPICIOUS DEATHS

Support Justice for the McGowans

Over two years ago Errol McGowan, a black doorman, was found hanged by a flex from a doorknob in a friend's house. The police believed he had committed suicide, but many indications pointed towards a racist murder. All along the line, the police have shown a reluctance to take racism seriously. They did not follow

up Errol's many complaints of serious racial harassment and threats prior to his death; they did not collect forensic evidence from the death scene; they did not try to prosecute local racists, even though they had been identified.

A memorial booklet, which situates Errol's case in the context of what it was like to grow up black in the Telford area of Shropshire, has been published by the family for the September picket of Wellington police station. They are demanding an independent inquiry into West Mercia police's inadequate handling of the case and they need financial support. ■

Memorial booklets are available in packs of 25 (cost £1 each) from Justice for the McGowans, P.O. Box 216, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire, TF1 4WU

Demonstration after the deaths of Errol and Jason McGowan



Christopher Alder update

At the beginning of August, five police officers appeared before Hull Crown Court on little used charges of misconduct in public office, for

involvement in the death of Christopher Alder in Hull police station in 1998. Christopher died on the floor of the custody suite of Queens Garden station. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has refused to prosecute the officers for manslaughter despite a verdict of unlawful killing at the inquest in August 2000. (see CARF 58)

Now, lawyers for the Alder family have received two new reports, the first by a professor of cardiology at Belfast University and the second by an accident and emergency consultant. Both reports conclude that Christopher could have been resuscitated in the police station.

These reports have been sent to the CPS, and the family and the Campaign are awaiting news on whether manslaughter charges will be added. ■

Justice for Christopher Alder Campaign, c/o Red Triangle Cafe, 160 St James Street, Burnley, Lancs BB11 1NR

United Families and Friends Campaign, c/o Inquest, Ground Floor, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2PJ Tel: 07770 432 439



With contributions from: A. Sivanandan on globalism and racism ■ Lee Bridges on the criminal justice system ■ Gareth Peirce on the Terrorism Act ■ Frances Webber on the Human Rights Act ■ Liz Fekete on the emergence of xeno-racism ■ Jenny Bourne on Macpherson and institutional racism ■ Arun Kundnani on popular racism ■ Plus commentaries on racially motivated murders, deaths in custody, asylum seekers in Glasgow and Leicester and the riots in Oldham and Bradford

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2-6 Leeke Street, London
WC1X 9HS

web: www.irr.org.uk
e-mail: info@irr.org.uk

Available October
2001 - £6/£9

RACE & CLASS

diary of race and resistance

AUG-SEP 2001

RACISM

24 JUL 24-year-old Ali Zaheed Bukhari suffers collapsed lung after white gang racially abuse and attack him and two friends in New Malden; police arrest 12 people

28 JUL 15-year-old Asian boy left in coma after vicious racist attack by two skinheads in Sutton, Surrey

5 AUG Dispersed Kurdish refugee, Firsat Dag, stabbed to death on Sighthill estate, Glasgow ■ Kurdish asylum seeker has throat cut in racist attack by gang of 20 in Hull

7 AUG 20-year-old Chinese man on take-away delivery racially abused and attacked by three white men in Norwich

8 AUG 22-year-old Iranian, Davoud Rasul Naseri, stabbed in the back in racist attack on Sighthill estate, Glasgow

9 AUG Hounslow police officer forced to resign after found guilty of using racist language while investigating a 1999 burglary

10 SEP Merseyside Fire Service staff stage walk-out in support of officer suspended for running racist website

17 AUG Three white men racially abuse, then attack, Syrian man on train between Glasgow and Hamilton

20 AUG Racists draw swastikas on 6-year-old boy and send him into an Asian owned shop in Bradford

21 AUG 15 Asian boys on holiday in Isle of Wight attacked by gang of white youths; five hospitalised

26 AUG Three men hospitalised after locals and asylum seekers clash in Hull

27 AUG 100 Asian youth riot in Chadderton area of Oldham

30 AUG 20-year-old Matthew Dorrian pleads guilty to manslaughter of Gian Singh Nagra, an asylum seeker in Elm Park, London

14 SEP Islamia School in Brent, north-west London, forced to close over safety fears

15 SEP 19-year-old Asian woman beaten with baseball bat by two skinheads in Swindon ■ Southend mosque vandalised

16 SEP 28-year-old Hamidullah Gharwal, Afghani taxi driver, paralysed from neck down after racist attack in Twickenham by gang of three white men who cite terrorist attacks in the US; three men arrested ■ Windows of Glasgow central mosque smashed

17 SEP Mosque petrol-bombed in Bolton

21 SEP 19-year-old Barry Coombes jailed for six years on charges of GBH with intent after vicious attack on Turkish asylum seeker Cumali Sinankili in 2000; two other men cleared of all charges

Continued overleaf

diary of race and resistance

AUG - SEP 2001

IMMIGRATION

27 JUL Home Office announces feasibility study to assess potential of 'smart', credit-card-sized passports

30 JUL Two Lithuanian asylum seekers arrested seven miles from France as they attempt to paddle across the Channel to Britain on inflatable air beds

1 AUG Insurance brokers Hanover Park Group threaten to withdraw insurance cover from landlords who let to asylum seekers

3 AUG 16 asylum seekers (including nine children) found at Waterloo under Eurostar

6 AUG Five child asylum seekers arrested in Hampshire after seen clinging to bottom of lorry recently arrived from France

7 AUG Scottish Office minister George Foulkes announces that no more asylum seekers are to be sent to Sighthill estate, Glasgow

8 AUG 36 asylum seekers begin hunger strike at Cardiff prison in protest at their detention ■ 20 asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow leave the city after racist abuse and harassment

9 AUG NASS tells asylum seekers fleeing Glasgow to go back there ■ Pre-boarding immigration checks at Prague airport by British immigration officials suspended

12 AUG Home secretary orders review of dispersal system

14 AUG Asylum seekers at Cardiff prison end hunger strike

15 AUG Eurotunnel seeks judicial review of government plans to impose fines of £2,000 per stowaway discovered in tunnel

16 AUG Somali family apply for judicial review of NASS decision to send them to Glasgow, separating them from family in London

17 AUG Home Office minister Lord Rooker suggests that people applying for British citizenship may have to learn to speak English

18 AUG Two asylum seekers in a rubber dinghy are picked up by fishermen off Dover coast

20 AUG 20-year-old Kosovan asylum seeker drowns after jumping from a ferry deporting him from UK to Calais ■ Department of Health to advertise overseas to fill 1000 vacancies for GPs and consultants

21 AUG Henry McLeish, Scottish first minister, orders review of services affecting asylum seekers

22 AUG Dispersed Eritrean refugee, 35-year-old Nassar Ahmed, found hanged in Nelson, Lancashire after his asylum claim is refused

27 AUG Czech government allows British immigration officers to resume checks on

passengers bound for the UK

29 AUG Five asylum seekers apprehended off Dover coast after paddling from France in a rubber dinghy

30 AUG 44 asylum seekers attempt to walk to England through the Channel Tunnel

31 AUG Home Office condemns Eurotunnel security measures as 'ineffective'

2 SEP *Observer* reveals that government has given private company Sodhexo permission to use detainee labour at Harmondsworth, paying only 34 pence an hour

3 SEP First Scottish detention centre for asylum seekers opens in in Dungavel, Lanarkshire, run by Premier Custodial Group

■ German lorry driver arrested after 40 stowaways, including three children, found 'packed like sardines' in his lorry ■ British immigration officials sent to Bosnia to reduce number of asylum seekers and clamp down on people trafficking

4 SEP 18-year-old Afghan asylum seeker Khesrow Younis shot in leg inside Eurotunnel compound

5 SEP French magistrate jails first asylum seekers, five Iraqis and two Afghans, for one month for breaking into Eurotunnel compound ■ Immigration minister, Lord Rooker, announces that no more asylum seekers to be sent to Landmark tower blocks in Liverpool ■ Immigration officials allow only 40 Albanian fans into UK for World Cup qualifier, rejecting over 135 applications over fears that fans would not return to Albania

6 SEP Fight breaks out at Sangatte camp; Iraqi Kurd is stabbed

7 SEP High Court rules that detention of asylum seekers at Oakington was illegal

8 SEP Asylum seekers detained at Campsfield go on hunger strike

9 SEP French security guard placed under investigation for shooting of Khesrow Younis ■ NUJ to lodge complaint against coverage of asylum by *Daily Express* after its journalists complain of editorial interference

10 SEP Asylum seekers detained at Haslar and Lindholme go on hunger strike

11 SEP French courts reject Eurotunnel's attempt to close down Red Cross camp at Sangatte

14 SEP David Blunkett announces ID cards may be introduced as a result of US terror attacks

17 SEP 15 Czech, Chinese and Vietnamese people arrested in Czech Republic in connection with smuggling of 58 Chinese found dead in Dover in 2000

19 SEP David Blunkett refuses to end £2,000 fines per illegal immigrant for Eurotunnel

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

31 JUL 23-year-old Aftab Wahid jailed for 28 days after swearing at a policeman and threatening to fight him in Bradford riots

3 AUG Five Hull police officers plead not guilty to charges of misconduct in public officers over death of Christopher Alder in 1998

9 AUG Judge rules that four TV companies must hand over footage of riots to Greater Manchester police

14 AUG Date in April 2002 set for inquest into death of Jason McGowan, found hanged in suspicious circumstances in Telford in 2000

17 AUG Kent police announce introduction of plastic bullets

25 AUG Police make 19 arrests, in attempt to pre-empt violence at Notting Hill carnival

28 AUG Passports of 537 alleged football hooligans confiscated to stop them causing trouble at England v Germany match

4 SEP Judge rules that government breached human rights of Mubarek family by failure to investigate racist killing by cell mate

6 SEP Two specialist units of police and immigration officers set up in south-east to counter people smuggling

11 SEP David Blunkett offers high ranking police officers cash inducements to stay in the job rather than retire

13 SEP Police arrest four people in connection with murder of Stephen Lawrence; Stephen and Pauline Dobson and two others later released on bail ■ In dawn raids police arrest 12 people in connection with Bradford riots taking total to 93 arrests ■ Mr Justice Elias gives Attorney General permission to take Mirror Group Newspapers to High Court over article causing collapse of Leeds' footballers trial

14 SEP Family of Errol McGowan seek release of report into police investigation of his death, which made 57 recommendations

29 SEP Met police commissioner Sir John Stevens warns of likely 'disturbances' if snatch squads are sent into black areas to arrest and deport illegal immigrants

FASCISM

31 JUL Home secretary David Blunkett bans NF march in Birmingham on 4 August

18 AUG Police arrest 30 fascists on their way to far-right demonstration in Sunderland

23 AUG Iain Duncan Smith forced to sack Edgar Griffin (father of BNP leader Nick) from his election campaign

30 AUG Southern Poverty Law Centre in US reveals that Mark Cotteril, former NF member, has been illegally raising funds for the BNP through American Friends of the BNP

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