

- Racism is not just about intolerance and prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers. It's there to deflect people's anger about economic problems onto a convenient scapegoat, confusing and dividing people in the process.

ARC Statement

The anti-racist campaign is an open and democratic alliance of people who came together to combat the anti-refugee and anti-immigrant hysteria initiated and encouraged by politicians and the media. We support equal rights for refugees and immigrants; work, welfare, housing and entry into Ireland. We also oppose the racist treatment that has been experienced by travellers (an Irish ethnic minority).

We are against immigration controls and refuse to separate people into 'deserving' (refugees) and 'non-deserving' (immigrants). Millions of Irish people have emigrated in search of a better life. 150 years ago there were eight million people living in Ireland, today the number has only climbed back to five million. For the Irish government to deny people entry is particularly hypocritical and discriminatory.

Racism does not offer any solution to poverty here. It is an attempt to hold foreign born people responsible for the Irish government's neglect of working class communities and their underfunding of welfare services. Racism divides ordinary tax paying workers and unemployed people on the grounds of colour, and deflects us into fighting among ourselves. Meanwhile the government gives away our tax money in grants to big business and tax amnesties for the rich.

The main problem we face is not small groups of racist thugs, it is institutional racism: state racism aided by the compliance of media, union and church leaders. While opposing all outbreaks of racial prejudice, we understand that the biggest problems faced by refugees and immigrants (denial of entry, denial of employment rights etc.) are caused by government.

We strive to combat racist myths; and to organise large numbers to oppose racist lies, agitation and legislation. We are NOT a charity but it is the aim of the ARC to empower people to help themselves. We ARE a campaign that brings ordinary people together in order to make our actions more effective. We welcome all anti-racists: Irish, Travellers, refugees and immigrants.

The ARC needs you

If you feel that racism is a problem and you would like to join in the fight against racism then get involved with the campaign.

The ARC is an extremely open and democratic campaign and is being initiated with the intention of building a broad, active organisation of native Irish and immigrants.

The ARC meets on Wednesday at 8pm in the Irish Vietnamese Centre at 45 Hardwicke Street, Dublin 1.

Anti Racism Fact Sheet

THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS COMING TO IRELAND

Various incorrect numbers for the amount of refugees and asylum seekers have been floating around in the media e.g. "5,000 Refugees to Ireland" (Sunday World 20 May '97).

On the 24th September the state's financial support for the legal protection team of the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) was withdrawn. At that time it was dealing with just over 3,500 cases of refugees and asylum seekers. This gives some indication of a figure that would be nearer to the truth.

It is also important to compare the numbers applying for asylum here in comparison to other EU States. It's not just bigger countries like Germany that would receive 129,000 such applications for asylum last year. Switzerland received 80,000 Yugoslavian refugees after the break up and consequent conflict.

THE RIGHTS OR MORE CORRECTLY THE LACK OF RIGHTS REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS HAVE IN IRELAND.

If an individual is seeking asylum from the Irish government they are not allowed to work or to study until they are recognised as conventional refugees or have been granted humanitarian permission to stay in Ireland. The numbers who have been granted asylum status are pitiful. Between January 1996 and July 1997 the total only came to 200.

The issue of whether the Refugees' Act will give rights to refugees and asylum seekers is a complex one. Some provisions of the act will be beneficial to them but several sections of the Act are worded in a way that in effect gives a broad scope by which immigration officers, the Garda etc will have a free hand to implement deportation policies at their personal discretion without regard for the actual rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

The rights of refugee and asylum seekers are being disgracefully ignored by the racist way in which they are being stopped when travelling into the country or from Belfast to Dublin human rights are being flaunted on a daily basis.

Refugees and Housing

- There are 5,000 - 6,000 families in Dublin on the waiting list for a house. A serious housing crisis now exists in Dublin and other areas. House prices are up 25% since 1995 and continue to grow, putting a house out of many people's reach .
- "Refugees flood to spark homes crisis"(Irish Independent 12 June '97). Refugees and asylum seekers are not being housed any faster than Irish people. They suffer from the housing crisis as much as anyone. Most are not even placed on the waiting list and are fortunate they get a house if they do. Tensions often arise between Irish people and refugees. Irish PAYE workers and unemployed have been abandoned by the State in terms of facilities and housing. Racist lies put out by the government and the media play on people's fears.
- The housing crisis is not the result of any increase in refugees coming to Ireland. This situation has arisen from the stranglehold of private developers and landowners on the building industry. They're not there to build homes for those who need them, they're there to make a profit . Also speculation in land means that prices soar when land is rezoned.
- Of course we all know whose side the government is on. Former Foreign Minister Ray Burke resigned recently due to his own involvement in lucrative land rezoning fiddles.

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