

URGENT APPEAL - 156 refused refugees face Destitution

Last Updated Friday, 14 December 2012

156 refused refugees are being made absolutely destitute on the streets of Glasgow and we need your help.

{youtube}wFmBZf7lsvM{/youtube}

Please watch the 5 minute film documentary .

This is an urgent appeal for supporters and benefactors, individuals, registered social landlords, voluntary organisations, trade unions, politicians and anyone else to donate to our emergency hardship fund for hundreds of refused refugees currently being made absolutely destitute in Glasgow. We also appeal for volunteers to come forward and offer a temporary space in their home to someone who is destitute.

This is an ongoing situation – for more info, email home@paih.org or donate via Justgiving

Mahdi, from Iraq, suffers from kidney failure, and survives on charity handouts. He is unfit to travel, never mind return to unsafe conditions in his country of origin, Iraq.

Karzan and Shewa also face absolute destitution. He has physical scars all over his body from being beaten and tortured by his wife's extended family.

Their claims for protection have been turned down even though the UK Borders Agency acknowledges it is unsafe to return them to countries they came from.

The UK Borders Agency likes to call them “failed asylum seekers” - a term of abuse as well as a blatant lie in moral terms. We prefer to use the correct term – refused refugees – human beings who have been refused refuge in a safe country from unsafe conditions in their own.

What’s happening?

Y People, a Christian charity paid to provide asylum housing, has lost its contract.

Instead, the UKBA has awarded the contract to multinational SERCO, whose business it is to make money out of running prisons and detention centres. They are NOT a charity or a housing provider. SERCO is taking that contract over from November 2012 and wants vacant possession with only "supported" asylum seekers. Anyone unsupported will be put out.

Caught between public pressure and serving the contract, Y People has, up till now, turned a blind eye to the refused refugees living in the run down Red Road high rises and elsewhere in Glasgow. This unwritten arrangement made it easier for our charity to provide crisis payments for food, medicine and travel to the most vulnerable.

Mahdi, Karzan and Shewa, and 153 others are not entitled to stay in the Red Road flats.

They survive on handouts from Positive Action in Housing (£29,100 in crisis payments given out last year), Refugee Survival Trust (crisis payments), the British Red Cross (emergency packs, clothing vouchers and sleeping bags), Destiny Angels and local food and clothing networks organized by voluntary groups like Unity Centre and local churches.

They are victims of the UK government's Destitution Policy towards refused refugees. They cannot return to unsafe conditions in their own country and the UK Borders Agency accepts this. They are forbidden to work or request financial support from the public purse. They are not entitled to social housing or emergency homelessness accommodation.

Y-People is now telling refused refugees it can't afford to keep them and to get out. Officials are turning off their electricity, changing locks, putting up metal doors, effectively freezing and locking out the most vulnerable in our society from eerily rundown buildings with empty flats that no one else wants to live in. But, as Mahdi, says in the film document, "where do I go?";.

You would think that in a civilized society, it is inconceivable for people to be destitute while rundown empty houses exist which no one else wants to live in. Wrong.

If the current crisis was happening in any other country, aid agencies would have set up camps to provide food shelter and warmth. Unfortunately, no such response has been forthcoming in the UK towards refused refugees.

Positive Action in Housing is looking at the humanitarian assistance we need to provide, as are British Red Cross, Scottish Refugee Council and others. But we know the existing emergency provisions are simply not enough.

We are concerned about the pressures on existing fragile resources. We are concerned as to why we are being left to give out food, shelter and crisis payments, yet no one in Government or Glasgow City Council, appears to be doing a single thing about it.

Surely, on human rights grounds alone, it's enough to challenge the UK government on its destitution policy towards Scottish refused refugees, regardless of whether it is a reserved matter or not. Every single refused refugee we spoke to over the last few weeks said they would work for almost nothing if given permission to, rather than waste their lives and rely on handouts from government or charities.

We are desperate to avoid a tragedy similar to what happened just over two years ago, when a Russian family of three died (after jumping from the balcony of their fifteenth floor flat at Red Road) on the same day they were told their support was being stopped. Then, the UKBA and the Home Office talked of learning lessons, but it seems they have learnt precisely nothing by allowing 156 vulnerable people with no safe place to call home to be turned out onto the streets without any alternative.

Please do what you can to support this appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Robina Qureshi

DIRECTOR

What you can do

1. Donate to the emergency hardship fund for refused refugees via Justgiving and leave a message of support. Or donate via PayPal to donate@paih.org. Or send a cheque made out to Positive Action in Housing and send to: Destitution appeal, c/o Positive Action in Housing, 98 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1PJ. To pay by BACs emailhome@paih.org.

Every penny will go towards crisis payments for food, medicine, shelter and warmth, as well as practical support to get people good legal support and sign posted to emergency support. It doesn't matter how much or how little you or your organisation give, every penny counts.

2. Volunteer to offer a room or space in your home to someone who is a refused refugee. Email home@paih.org to confirm.

3. Drop bread (sealed) and fruit into Positive Action in Housing's offices anytime Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between 11 am and 4 pm, so we can give them out to the destitute

and those without financial support who visit our daily drop ins and appointments. Many people, including children, pregnant women and the elderly, are often hungry and going without. Email home@paih.org to confirm.

4. Write to the First

Minister in your own words and ask him what the Scottish Government is doing to help Scotland's refused refugees. Ask him to call on the UK government to allow those under threat of destitution to remain where they are, rather than be forced onto the streets. Email firstminister@scotland.gsi.gov.uk . Send copies to home@paih.org

5. Write to your MP and

the Home Secretary in your own words to condemn the UK's destitution policy and demand a limited right to work for all asylum seekers and an end to destitution. Send copies to home@paih.org

Contact details for The Home Secretary:

Theresa May, MP

Secretary of State for the Home Office

2 Marsham Street

London SW1 4DF

Fax: 020 7035 4745 (00 44 20 7035 4745 if you are faxing from outside UK)

Please email all these addresses:

mayt@parliament.uk

pscorrespondence@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

CITTO@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Privateoffice.external@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk