

Email: [benf@asylumaid.org.uk](mailto:benf@asylumaid.org.uk)  
Mobile: 07779 113 450  
Tel: 020 7354 9631



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## **New Human Rights Watch report shows detained fast track not appropriate for women seeking asylum, says Asylum Aid**

**Asylum Aid today welcomed the release of the Human Rights Watch report *Fast-Tracked Unfairness* and said this research confirmed the view in the *Women's Asylum Charter*<sup>1</sup> that 'the detained fast track is incompatible with a gender-sensitive asylum process'.**

Asylum Aid was also critical of the misleading statement by Meg Hillier MP, Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, that the UK Border Agency makes sure 'the most complex cases wouldn't actually go through the fast-track process' on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour today.

According to the UK Border Agency, the suitability criteria for inclusion in the detained fast track is that a case should be one where a quick decision may be made. However, the Women's Asylum Charter notes that women who have experienced harm such as rape or domestic violence in their countries of origin will need time to build up trust in the officials who interview them. Interpreting such cases in relation to the Refugee Convention is complex and a fair decision is not possible within the rapid process of the detained fast track system.

The UKBA should take note of the recent announcement by the Metropolitan Police to ensure all officers dealing with rape victims have been trained in the psychological effects of this crime. This is just the latest of many reforms the Police have brought in to obtain the 'best evidence' that will lead to the correct verdict by providing a more sensitive system for women who allege rape or domestic violence. It is no longer possible for the UKBA to justify using fast-track detention for women making similar allegations.

### **Debora Singer, Policy and Research Manager at Asylum Aid, said,**

"The new Human Rights Watch research supports the demands in the Women's Asylum Charter and increases the pressure on UKBA to start the internal reforms that are necessary to ensure a gender-sensitive culture. As the reforms within the Metropolitan Police show, the complexity in dealing with women's cases and the time and support required for their asylum cases, means placing women in the detained fast-track cannot be justified. Whilst detention of all asylum seekers is unacceptable, the UK Border Agency must at least cease detaining women who have experienced such gender-based harm."

**ENDS**

### **Notes**

1. The Women's Asylum Charter has been endorsed by over 200 organisations including Asylum Aid, Oxfam and Liberty. To read the Charter, the Explanatory Notes and the list of endorsers, please see <http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/pages/charterbackground.html>
2. For an interview with Debora Singer, and to discuss the report further, please contact Ben Folley on 07779 113 450.