



[19th November 2007 - for immediate release]

Asylum Aid Press Release

Charity finds a creative way to communicate asylum issues

A new initiative by Asylum Aid, a national charity that gives legal advice to asylum seekers, aims to overcome the difficulties of engaging members of the public with complex and unpopular causes such as asylum.

Debora Singer, the coordinator of the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid, has written a short play based on the experiences of women asylum seekers who were represented by her colleagues at Asylum Aid. The charity hopes that presenting information in this way will encourage new audiences to take an interest in its campaigning work.

"The impact of a play can be much stronger than making a speech," said Debora.

"I have done a couple of creative writing courses and when I heard about the dreadful ways in which women asylum seekers' cases were dealt with, I felt it lent itself to dramatisation."

Entitled "Random Acts," the play lasts 15 minutes and tells the story of a woman tortured because of her human rights activities. She escapes detention in her home country only to find herself in detention in the UK whilst her asylum claim is considered. Forced to represent herself, she encounters the baffling process of the asylum tribunal. Her future hangs in the balance: will she be able to stay in safety in England or be returned to danger in her home country?

Asylum Aid is working in partnership with Actors for Refugees to get “Random Acts” performed at a variety of events. The first performance will be at St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, London EC2 on Tuesday 4th December.

“I thought Debora’s idea of writing a play would provide a good way of reaching a wider audience,” said Maurice Wren, Asylum Aid’s Director.

“I hope that the play will raise awareness of the difficulties women face when they come to this country seeking protection from human rights abuses abroad.”

The play forms part of Asylum Aid’s campaign promoting the need for gender sensitivity in dealing with asylum claims. This includes recognising that women’s experiences of persecution may be different from men’s, ensuring that women have female interviewers and interpreters, and providing childcare during asylum interviews, so that women do not have to disclose sensitive information about their experiences in front of their children.

[ENDS]

Notes to editor

1. Asylum Aid is a registered charity that provides free legal advice and representation to asylum seekers and campaigns for their fair treatment in the UK. The Refugee Women’s Resource Project provides legal advice specifically for women asylum seekers, backed up by a programme of research, advocacy, outreach and training. In 2006 the RWRP won the Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize Group Award, in recognition of its groundbreaking work supporting women seeking protection in the UK. www.asylumaid.org.uk
2. The first performance of “Random Acts” will take place at St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG on Tuesday 4th December at 6.30pm, in conjunction with a performance of “Asylum Monologues”, a play by Sonja Linden. Booking (advisable): events@stethelbergas.org Suggested donation: £5.
3. To obtain a photograph of Debora Singer, or arrange an interview with her, please contact Melanie Gower, Policy & Communications Officer. Email melanieg@asylumaid.org.uk. Tel: 020 7354 9631. Images of the performance of Random Acts will be available from Asylum Aid after 5th December.