



CoRMSA NEWSLETTER

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Refugee Status Extensions

The Durban Refugee Service Providers Network recently raised concerns regarding DHA's new practice of renewing refugee status for one year rather than two years. The Directorate of Refugee Affairs responded to CoRMSA's enquiries informing us that the Refugee Reception Offices have been advised to review the status of each applicant who applies for the renewal of his or her refugee status. Only in cases where there may be evidence suggesting that the circumstances under which a person was granted refugee status have changed, will a person's status be renewed for one year rather than two. These cases are then referred to the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs. This would not apply if a person sends written representation to a Refugee Reception Office within the 90 days prior to their status expiring motivating for their status to be renewed for two years. This is also a measure designed to investigate if refugee status has been awarded through incorrect means such as through corruption.

Whilst we clarify the situation, CoRMSA's suggestion to refugees renewing their status is to make written representations outlining in brief the reasons why they left their country as well as why it would not be safe yet to return. If in doubt, we suggest contacting a legal service provider such as Lawyers for Human Rights, UCT Law Clinic or Wits Law Clinic. CoRMSA will provide further information on this as it becomes available

Access to Banking Services

The African Disabled Refugee Organisation (ADRO) reported earlier this month that its clients were not being allowed to open accounts at a number of branches in central Cape Town. This has been an ongoing issue that a number of organisations have been working on but there remains a lack of clarity on the issue. CoRMSA is in the process of exploring the issue and calls and emails to various departments at various banks have not yet been responded to so we are unable to state conclusively what the process is at this point.

What we have been able to establish is that some branches of FNB are assisting refugees and asylum seekers. For those with Section 22 or Section 24 permits, they can open a Smart Account. They would need to supply proof of address and the **original** Section 22 or Section 24 permit. Some branches of FNB also appear to allow those with valid refugee IDs the same financial services as South Africans with green IDs. In Johannesburg, the Killarney branch assists refugees and asylum seekers and the Braamfontein branch assists only those with valid refugee IDs whilst in Cape Town, ADRO recommends the Maitland branch. CoRMSA

will provide further information once we have established each bank's formal policy regarding refugees and asylum seekers.

Access to Johannesburg General Hospital

CoRMSA received information from Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in November 2007 regarding refugees/asylum seekers' plight when trying to access the Johannesburg Hospital. Many of their clients were reportedly turned away from the hospital without receiving the necessary medical attention allegedly because they are non-nationals. Following interactions with various stakeholders, JRS was able to secure a meeting with the CEO of the hospital, Mr Sagie Pillay on 16th January and was also by representatives from UNHCR, Southern African Centre for Survivors of Torture and CoRMSA.

A number of issues were discussed and consensus was reached on how asylum seekers/refugees should be referred to the hospital. The CEO agreed that where asylum seekers/refugees (with or without permits) had been denied access, these matters should be taken up with the hospital's Clinical Director on a case by case basis.

It is also important to be aware of the way in which referrals to Johannesburg General Hospital are handled. The hospital only handles referrals from clinics and other hospitals or else emergency cases. It also provides services only to those residing in the broader area around the hospital including Hillbrow. Non-nationals accessing the hospital need to provide their original Section 22 or Section 24 or refugee IDs rather than photocopies. The hospital is currently not providing health care for undocumented non-nationals despite the Department of Health directive to the contrary.

Deportees 'Shackled' on the way to Lindela

Concern has been raised regarding the alleged shackling of those arrested on immigration charges whilst on their way to Lindela. A report appeared in the Cape Times on Tuesday 15th January that cites an Immigration official who claims that the estimated 400 people arrested and deported since the Operation Umbrella campaign launched in the Western Cape in October 2007 were "shackled at prison and chained to their bus seats for most of the trip". This is an illegal practice and CoRMSA partners are looking into this.

Durban Refugee Reception Office

Reports from Durban indicate that all is not well at the Durban Refugee Reception Office. The office is reportedly operating with one RSDO and if he is not in, people's refugee status cannot be extended. New asylum seekers are being given appointment dates on which they need to report back at the office to be seen by a Refugee Reception Officer. This is causing problems for asylum seekers as they have to remain undocumented for long periods of time and are thus vulnerable to arrest and deportation. CoRMSA has contacted the Acting-Director of the Durban Refugee Reception Office and has brought this matter to the attention of the Director for Refugee Affairs.

Attacks on Non-Nationals in the Eastern Cape

In the past month, attacks on Somali nationals have taken place in two locations in the Eastern Cape. In the first incident on 6th January in Duncan Village outside East London, two Somalis were found burned to death in their shop. Police later arrested seven people in connection with the incident after they were found in possession of property belonging to the deceased.

In the second incident, on the 15th January a number of shops belonging to Somali nationals were attacked in Jeffrey's Bay near Port Elizabeth after a Somali shop owner allegedly shot dead a teenager alleged to have stolen frozen chickens from his shop. A crowd of residents then attacked Somali owned shops and many Somali nationals sought shelter at the police station. The Mayor of Jeffrey's Bay called a meeting to address the issues and this was due to have been held on Monday 21st January.

The Somali Association of South Africa (SASA) has been very active in both incidents liaising with the police after the first incident and being actively involved through its Port Elizabeth branch in the Jeffrey's Bay incident. CoRMSA extends its appreciation for their efforts in this regard.

Attacks on Non-Nationals in Soshanguve

Attacks have also taken place on Zimbabwean and Mozambican nationals living in Soshanguve outside Pretoria. The attacks started after four non-nationals allegedly broke into one of the spaza shops owned by a local trader. Residents apprehended the suspects and allegedly burnt one of the suspects to death. After this incident, residents have reportedly been targeting foreigners calling for them to leave the area. Reports indicate that shacks have been burnt and shops belonging to non-nationals looted. Many non-nationals are also reported to be fleeing the area. Information received by CoRMSA indicates that meetings have been held with all the parties in an attempt to resolve the matter. The Department of Home Affairs' Counter-Xenophobia Unit is involved in the mediation process.

Access to Marabastad Refugee Reception Office

CoRMSA has received reports from organisations that access to the Pretoria Refugee Reception Office remains a challenge. Reports indicate that asylum seekers are still being turned away without being issued with S22 asylum seeker temporary permits. Some of the asylum seekers who were previously given appointments to report at the Rosettenville office to collect their permits, are reportedly being sent back to Pretoria to start the process all over again. This is a major concern to CoRMSA and we are addressing the issue with the relevant offices.

Xenophobia in Durban

The Albert Park community forum held a meeting on 19th January to address the issue of non-nationals living amongst them. It is reported that the Albert Park community indicated during this meeting that they want non-nationals living in that area to leave. The community is said to be calling for non-nationals to leave as they feel that non-nationals are contributing to high crime levels, overcrowding and other negative incidents that are happening in this

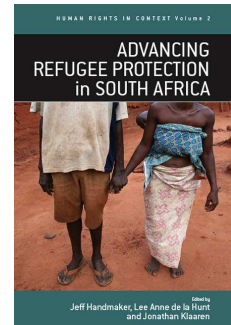
neighbourhood. A follow-up meeting may be called to address these issues as no resolutions were reached in this meeting.

Sacred Heart College Update

In our November 2007 newsletter, we reported on the partnership between Coordinating Body Refugee Communities (CBRC), Refugee Ministries Centre and the Sacred Heart College to host 6 classrooms for refugee children to attend school. It is with great pleasure that we inform you that registration of all those who were accepted has been finalised and classes are currently under way.

New Refugee Publication Due in March

A new publication focusing on refugee protection in South Africa is to be launched at the School of Law at Wits in Johannesburg in March. *Advancing Refugee Protection in South Africa* focuses on the development and implementation of refugee policy in South Africa from 1996 to 2006. It is edited by Jeff Handmaker, Lee Anne De La Hunt and Jonathan Klaaren who have each made large contributions to the sector during this period. Additional topics addressed include issues around detention, gender, children and health and welfare policy for refugees in South Africa.



Profile: The Trauma Centre – Political Violence Programme

The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture is a long standing member of the Cape Town-based *Tutumike* refugee service providers network. In addition to providing services for refugees they also assist ex political prisoners, returned exiles, ex combatants and survivors of human rights violations and police brutality. Whilst services are primarily based in the Western Cape, the Centre does provide some outreach to the Eastern and Northern Cape. Clients are referred after they have been seen by the Intake team, by other institutions and service providers.

The services provided by the Trauma Centre are very diverse and consist of individual and group counselling (which incorporates various methodologies – (psychotherapy, EMDR, Cognitive Behavioural therapy , body mapping); advocacy; psycho education; awareness raising, networking and annual commemoration of two days promulgated by the United Nations (World Refugee Day and International Torture Day).

The program is presently serviced by five therapists seeing an average of 40 clients per month. Group work sessions for the month involve an average of 20 people. The Trauma Centre is also a member of a number of networks in order to build the capacity of the sector. These networks are based locally (Community Healing Network), nationally (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) and internationally (African Network for Centres for Prevention and Survivors of Torture as well as the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture (IRCT) survivors).

Torture is a wilful attempt to break down an individual's personality, body and soul. It can sometimes leave a penetrating, deeply damaging and lasting psychological impact on victims. The aim in the program is thus to heal the psychological wound of trauma, and

prevent the survivor from remaining fixed at the point of torture. This is an attempt to restore self respect and dignity and reintegrate the client with others. By attempting to reintegrate memories in a meaningful way, clients make possible new relationships and mental ties with others. Thereby encouraging a sense of solidarity and belonging in communities.

Story telling is an integral tool as the person often has no words to describe what has been experienced. Both refugees and survivors of human rights abuses have suffered enormous losses such as the loss of relatives, contact with them and home country, loss of social position, support network and cultural contact, unemployment, police harassment and xenophobic attacks. Breaking the silence is important and empowering people to advocate for themselves, thus moving on, making meaning and reintegrating as dignified individuals. The role of the Trauma Centre is to listen, to respect and always encourage people 'to hold the hope'.

Profile: The Somali Association of South Africa

The Somali Association of South Africa is a registered NPO founded in 1997 that aims to serve the Somali community in South Africa. It has representatives throughout the country with the head office in Johannesburg. The organisation deals with administration and advocacy on behalf of Somalis living in the country and its membership is open to all Somalis, not only asylum seekers/refugees. It also provides translation and interpretation services to various service providers.

SASA has been active in fighting the xenophobic incidences that are directed at Somali nationals. SASA has indicated that since 1997 to date, there have been about 350 Somali killings in South Africa. Most of these have been motivated by crime, business competition and xenophobia. SASA is also involved in advocating on behalf of its members with different government departments including Home Affairs, Health and the South African Police Service. For more information on this organisation contact the Director, Ahmed Dawlo on 011 838 6746 or visit www.somalia.co.za.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Position Available

The International Organisation for Migration is looking to hire Research assistants in the conduct of the "Research Assessment of Trafficking in Males from East Africa and the Horn of Africa to South Africa."

Qualifications & experience: Degree/Higher education in any social sciences field• Experience in conducting independent field research• Familiarity with concepts and existing development related to human trafficking highly desirable• Excellent analytical, drafting and writing skills• Proficiency in Microsoft Windows and MS Office applications• Ability to function effectively under stressful conditions such as heavy workloads, extensive travel and deadlines• Excellent knowledge of English and 1 or more Ethiopian languages, or Kiswahili or Somali a requirement.

Duties include

- Assist in development and pre-testing of research/ assessment data collection tools;
- Draft a detailed research workplan containing *,inter alia*, timelines, sources, geographic locations for data collection and deliverables;
- Identify potential sources of information on the trafficking of

men and boys from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa by, including but not limited to, approaching community and diaspora based organizations as well as individuals to gain access to communities from Ethiopia, Somalia(Southern Somalia, Puntland, Somaliland), Kenya and Tanzania residing in South Africa; • Conduct field research; •Collect information, create contacts and interview immigration “agents”, smugglers and potential human traffickers;• Compile and analyze relevant data collected to prepare periodic briefs on progress and, produce final report as per prescribed format and structure; • Take up duty travel in South Africa and, as required and approved, to countries in the region for data collection purposes

All interested applicants should send

- a) their completed CVs with at least two references and full contact details (3 pages max)
- b) One page letter of motivation and a letter of application

to: IOM/MRF Pretoria *Ref. Male Trafficking Research*, by E-mail Pretoriacv@iom.int , Fax no. 012 342 0932 or Mail P.O. Box 55391, Arcadia 0007, Pretoria. Short listed candidates will be contacted shortly. Women are highly encouraged to apply.

The closing date for applications is 28th January 2008.