



CoRMSA NEWSLETTER

Edition 7 – 5th February 2008

South African Police Services Raid on Central Methodist Church

On the night of Wednesday 30th January, a large contingent of SAPS officers from the Johannesburg Central police station raided the Central Methodist Church in central Johannesburg where large numbers of Zimbabwean asylum seekers and other vulnerable people had sought sanctuary. Police claimed to be looking for drugs, firearms and 'illegal foreigners' although all arrests appear to have been related to immigration offences. Around 800 of those originally detained were released on the same night after it was found that they were in possession of the correct documentation. During the raid police were accused of not presenting a warrant when entering the church, assaulting church staff as well as people inside the church, and stealing the church's poor relief funds and television sets and cellphones from people inside and outside the church. CoRMSA has requested an investigation by the Provincial Police Commissioner into these allegations.

Legal assistance to the detainees has been provided by Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) and the Legal Aid Board (LAB). Charges against 69 detainees were dropped on 4th February and a further 300 detainees were released later the same day. 15 people remain in custody and are being represented by the LRC. Doctors without Borders and the AIDS Law Project have also been involved in court proceedings. LHR are investigating the legality of the raid given allegations that the warrant was issued to search for guns and drugs only in the central Johannesburg area and did not mention a search of the Central Methodist Church.

Meeting with the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs

On 4th February CoRMSA met with a representative of the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs (SCRA) to address a number of issues that have been raised by CoRMSA partners. The SCRA outlined the process followed in dealing with applications for certification for permanent residence and indicated that there was often a delay in receiving applicants' files from the Refugee Reception Offices. This was often the reason for significant delays in dealing with applications for certification. Although the SCRA has taken steps to address this issue no considerable improvement has been noticed. Other delays may occur due to the SCRA requiring further information to process an application. Where the SCRA requires such further information it writes to the applicant or else the legal office the applicant applied through. Should the applicant no longer be present at this address, this could result in delays

in the process. Where the Standing Committee receives correspondence on behalf of a client from more than one lawyer or organisation, its policy is to respond to the office from where the initial correspondence was received unless the mandate of the original representing office has been terminated.

Many refugee clients have voiced concerns over cessation of refugee status. The SCRA outlined that there is no standard policy about specific nationalities (such as Angolans or Rwandans) not being issued with refugee status any more. Instead, each case is dealt with on its own merits and people applying for certification need to be careful to indicate the reasons that a return to their country of origin would make them vulnerable to persecution. Legal partners can assist with applications for permanent residence where necessary.

Asylum Seekers ‘Fined’ for Expired Permits

CoRMSA has been informed that certain Refugee Reception Offices (notably the Durban Refugee Reception Office and the Marabastad Refugee Reception Office) have been forcing asylum seekers whose permits have expired to pay fines ranging from R1 000 and upwards. Whilst Section 37 (d) of the Refugees Act does provide for a fine or imprisonment, there is no specification on the amount. CoRMSA has written to the Director of Refugee Affairs and the Director-General of Home Affairs regarding this issue.

ABSA to Open Accounts for Refugees

ABSA Bank has announced that it will now be opening accounts for recognised refugees. Following investigations by African Disabled Refugee Organisation (ADRO) in Cape Town and CoRMSA in Johannesburg that found ABSA branches stating simply that they do not open accounts for refugees, CoRMSA addressed this issue with ABSA Head Office. As a result, ABSA will now be sending out a circular this week to all its branches stating that refugees with Section 24 permits or refugee IDs will be able to open accounts. Asylum seekers with Section 22 permits will not be able to open accounts with ABSA for the meantime. Refugee clients need to provide the original copy of their Section 24 permit or their refugee ID and provide proof of address such as a letter from the landlord or a bill with the client's name and address on it. ABSA has indicated it will be verifying the validity of each refugee permit given concerns around fraud raised by the Department of Home Affairs. From next week, if any organisation is informed of a person with refugee status who has been prevented from opening an ABSA account despite presenting the required documents, please inform us and we will address it with ABSA Office.

Renewal of Refugee Status

CoRMSA has been provided with a copy of the directive from the Directorate of Refugee Affairs regarding the renewal of refugee status. The directive is specifically concerned with refugees whose countries have “stabilised” and requires Refugee Status Determination Officers (RSDOs) to interview refugees before renewing their status. If it is decided that the conditions in the country of origin have changed significantly, the matter will be referred to the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs. For this reason, it is vital that refugees talk specifically about the circumstances that affect them individually in these interviews rather than talking about general conditions in the country. The emphasis of the interview is to

establish the risk of persecution that the refugee faces should he/she return to his/her country of origin. CoRMSA and its partners will try and provide further information on this.

Access to the Durban Refugee Reception Office

Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) in Durban is still experiencing large number of clients complaining about the lack of access to asylum process. Scores of people have been asked to come back on the 28th March 2008 for their names to be put on the list. Clients have indicated that hundreds of people have been asked to come back on the 28th so it is likely that on the 28th they will again be sent away without any documentation. The Durban Refugee Reception Office's response to enquiries has been that they are short-staffed. In the meantime the Refugee Reception Office has been referring clients to the LHR for protection letters until the clients are issued with Section 22 permits. LHR has as a result received a significant number of persons being referred by DHA for protection letters in the past week. LHR, the Durban Refugee Service Providers Network and CoRMSA are looking into this issue.

CoRMSA Membership and Annual General Meeting

On 12th February, CoRMSA will be holding its Annual General Meeting. This is a chance for the member organisations to consolidate plans for the year, elect a new executive committee and review new membership applications. Organisations wishing to join the Consortium need to supply a covering letter providing an overview of the organisation and including the NPO registration number and constitution (where applicable). The letter must also be accompanied by a letter from one of the current member organisations supporting the application. Organisations applying for membership must have been working in the refugee/migration sector for at least a year prior to their application. Membership of CoRMSA ensures participation in all CoRMSA planning meetings and input into CoRMSA's advocacy agenda. Please submit all new applications for membership prior to 11th February. Applications can be emailed, faxed or hand delivered. Organisations wishing to attend the meeting as observers, please notify us prior to 10th February. Only one observer from each organisation will be permitted.

Refugee Rights Training in Mpumalanga

The South African Human Rights Commission continues with its training programme for its provincial offices and provincial stakeholders on basic refugee law and issues affecting non-nationals. On the 27th-28th Feb 2007 the Commission will host a two day workshop at their Nelspruit provincial office in Mpumalanga. This workshop is aimed at sensitising participants on the rights of foreign nationals as well as building and strengthening collaboration for a co-ordinated approach at provincial level. Interested parties are welcome to contact Ms Joyce Tlou on 011 484 8300 or e-mail her at jtlou@sahrc.org.za.

The Forced Migrant Working Group

The Forced Migrant Working Group is a Johannesburg-based network of refugee and migrant service providers including Community Based Organisations that meets monthly to discuss updates and challenges within the sector. The network appoints a temporary chairperson who holds the position for three months. All organisations working with refugees or migrants

or with activities that affect this target group are welcome to attend. Meetings usually take place on the last Wednesday of each month from 10am -12pm in the Seminar Room of the South West Engineering Building at Wits University. Some of the issues discussed at the last meeting included access to and security outside the Marabastad Refugee Reception Office, the introduction of 'fines' for asylum seekers whose permits have expired and a number of other issues. The next meeting will take place on 26th February. Any new organisations wishing to attend or requiring more information, please contact CoRMSA on 011 717 4047.

Profile: Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town

The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (SCCT) strives to both alleviate poverty by promoting development in the Western Cape and by offering assistance to refugees and their children. The ultimate aim is that of fostering integration between local communities and refugees / migrants. SCCT operates from a 4-story building at 47 Commercial Street in the centre of Cape Town.

Although SCCT is particularly involved in refugee related issues and needs, its development activities are aimed at offering opportunities **to everybody**, South African citizens, migrants and refugees. These include:

- **DIGITAL LITERACY training** which teaches basic computer concepts and skills so that people can use computer technology in everyday life to develop new social and economic opportunities
- A 4-day **LIFE SKILLS** workshop, which teaches basic life skills necessary for successful entry into the working world.
- An **ENGLISH SCHOOL** offering 4 levels of training runs daily. Admission is free and continuous, but a placement test is required.
- A **SEWING LABORATORY** equipped with 5 machines offered to tailors already working within the informal sector. Some 7 tailors are now hosted at the Centre for a period of one year with the aim to help transform their 'home activity' into a sustainable business.
- The **EMPLOYMENT HELP DESK** aimed at providing information and support in matters related to work and study. SCCT assists employment seekers of all work areas by helping writing CV's, by providing information on procedures and advertised employment, also by providing possibilities of offered training courses.
- Scalabrini's **WELCOMING PROGRAMME** for newly arrived-refugees, distributes food parcels, clothes, blankets every week (Wednesdays 08h30-12h30) and offers assistance in finding temporary accommodation. The Welcoming Programme includes weekly workshops given in French and English that educates the refugee on local conditions and on how to access education, medical, legal and social assistance.

Scalabrini runs a networking programme through the MIGRATION RESOURCE PROJECT (MRP) which focuses on the debate on migration in South Africa and the SADC region. It tackles questions on the intersection between migration and the local labour market. Hosting round table discussions and workshops with stakeholders and partners it aims to stimulate debate and sharing of thoughts.

In further attempt to facilitate integration between the different communities and to offer a platform for the displaced people to enter the South African art networks, SCCT hosts the VOYAGE ENSEMBLE ART project which is a travelling visual art exhibition and a film documentary showcasing the work of artists (migrants/refugees and South Africans).

Finally, SCCT administers LAWRENCE HOUSE, a children's home for refugee children situated in Albert Road, Woodstock. Presently it is home to 22 abandoned and orphaned refugee children between the ages of 5 and 18. For further information contact Scalabrini on 021 465 6433.

Report Back: Africa Unite Human Rights Training in Malmesbury

From 18th – 20th January, *Africa Unite* held a weekend training workshop at Goedgedacht Farm in Malmesbury with a group 20 young adults from various communities of the Western and Eastern Cape. The participants who included refugees were drawn from the following areas: Gugulethu, Philippi, Parow, Khayalitsa, Paarl, Atlantis, Worcester, George, Knysna and Queenstown.

The training covered the following topics:

- Human Rights education and principles;
- International and national instruments promoting and protecting the rights of people;
- The rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- Understanding Xenophobia and
- Facilitation skills.

The workshop was aimed to equip the young adults with the necessary skills and resources to act as peer educators in order for them to run similar training in their communities. During the workshop all the participants were excited to learn and showed great interest in their newly acquired knowledge on Human Rights.

One of highlights of the training was when the participants were divided into four groups. Each group represented an African country - Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa - with its head of state and its cabinet ministers. Each head of state was asked to present his country's profile, politics, resources and human rights record. This allowed each group to do research on that country, particularly its politics and human rights record.

By the end of the workshop participants acknowledged that the training was an eye opener and an opportunity for meeting other youth from different backgrounds, including refugees. All were in agreement that they never knew the different types of Human Rights, such as civil, political, socio-economic and even migrants, refugees and asylum seeker rights. New friendships were established and this was an excellent learning experience for all the youth present. A certificate of completion and a training manual were issued to each participant that would enable participants to conduct similar Human Rights and counter-xenophobia awareness programmes in their own communities such as schools, churches and other appropriate places.

Job Vacancy: SURVIVOR CORPS – AFRICA REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Survivor Corps is looking to fill the position of Africa Regional Director, which will be based in Johannesburg. The African Regional Director manages the regional “hub” office and serves as the lead program representative for Survivor Corps. This vital frontline position reports directly to the Vice President for Programs and to Executive Management. Working closely with the global office, the African Regional Director is responsible for managing and mobilizing human and financial resources for regional program initiatives.

The Regional Director is responsible to build and manage relationships with partner organizations implementing peer support services. The Regional Director works with technical assistance staff and consultants to offer training in survivor rights advocacy and conflict management. Survivor Corps works through local partner organizations to increase the number of conflict survivors with access to peer support and opportunities for employment and civic participation. The Regional Director will recruit and work with survivor advocates, service providers and community leaders to increase public participation in survivor-driven campaigns. The Regional Director will coordinate partner needs assessment and evaluation, and ensure technical and financial assistance as needed for Survivor Corps to achieve priority program objectives.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

I. Regional Representation of Survivor Corps

- Liaise with international, intergovernmental, regional, national, and local governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations on survivor issues for the purpose of establishing relationships across the region.
- Research and advise on the possibility of joining or creating national or regional campaigns involving issues of concern to conflict survivors; mobilize partners and technical assets in support of campaign opportunities.

II. Partnership Development and Management

- Develop and execute a regional strategy for training and engaged grant-making to advance Survivor Corps mission.
- Oversee regional activities, including trainings, workshops / conferences, as well as the development, implementation and monitoring of Survivor Corps grants to partners.
- Ensure compliance with donor, financial and administrative procedures.
- Participate in international strategic planning and program management meetings.

III. Resource Mobilization

- Cultivate opportunities for public and private funding for regional activities.
- Develop regional and project proposals in collaboration with global development staff.
- Develop and execute communications outreach to promote survivor peer support and public awareness of survivor campaigns, including drafting survivor and partner profiles for web and fundraising outreach.

IV. Reporting and Administration

- Submit monthly reports to VP on regional progress, needs, challenges and staffing.

- Submit annual review of all activities and plans for the next year.
- Develop and monitor annual plans and budgets for regional activities.
- Supervise regional office support staff, as needed.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Ten years' progressive work experience in program design and management.
- Master's or graduate studies in international development or business preferred.
- Demonstrated leadership with track record of initiative and creativity.
- Diplomatic skill to facilitate and manage a wide range of stakeholder relationships.
- Experience with survivor issues, peer support, rights advocacy and community-based rehabilitation programs.
- Ability to manage program budgets and finances.
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills.
- Flexibility with frequent travel within the region and participation in global meetings.
- Fluency in English, and languages relevant to the region.

CONTACT:

Please send cover letter and résumé to:

Landmine Survivors Network

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Please remember to submit information you would like to see included in a future newsletter. CoRMSA reserves the right to edit all submissions prior to publication.