

Stop the war on asylum seekers

The war in Iraq has already forced tens of thousands of people to flee the country, increasing significantly the world's refugee population.

They follow the millions of refugees from earlier wars either waged or fuelled by the US and Britain, such as in Afghanistan and the Balkans.

And yet, at the same time, the government is making it harder for asylum seekers to enter this country. It is preparing to ditch all of its obligations to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and other agreements.

Blair claims he is waging war for humanitarian reasons, but his government's treatment of asylum seekers is inhumane.

Blair claims his government cares for genuine asylum seekers, but his ministers are now actively investigating ways they can dump all asylum seekers into United Nations camps neighbouring war-torn areas of the world.

The government believes that, by being tough on asylum seekers, it can outflank the Nazi British National Party, but this will just encourage even more racism.

Everyone who opposes war should also be defending the victims of war, and that means defending asylum rights and asylum seekers.

It means taking on the lies of the *Sun*, *Mail* and *Express*: lies encouraged by the home secretary David Blunkett and other mainstream politicians.

The local council elections outside London take place in May. We must stop the racist rivalry where New Labour, Tories and the BNP vie to show us who

is the toughest on asylum; an obscene competition which only the BNP would win.

The BNP is already distributing leaflets blaming asylum seekers for social ills such as the lack of housing, inadequacies of the health service and education. It has homed in on absurd media claims that asylum seekers are terrorists, criminals and carry diseases.

No-one can remain silent on this issue.

We need a powerful counterblast, laying the blame for the decay of public services where it rests, with the government.

We must pressure trade union leaders, politicians, faith leaders and so on to speak out against the demonisation of asylum seekers.

Everyone can do something.

- Make sure your public meeting/teach-in against the war has an asylum seeker or asylum rights campaigner on the platform
- Make sure your anti-war stall has leaflets, badges and materials backing the defence of asylum seekers
- Make sure you have the arguments and facts to convince members of the public and to defeat the racists
- Make sure local demonstrations and lobbies have "Stop the War on Asylum Seekers" placards
- Make sure your union branch passes resolutions backing the campaign to defend asylum seekers
- Respond to letters in the local press
- If you can, set up a local group with like-minded people in your locality

Useful websites

Anti Nazi League: www.anl.org.uk

Asylum Aid: www.asylumaid.org.uk

Barbed Wire Britain: www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers: www.defend-asylum.org

Independent Race and Refugee Network: www.irr.org.uk

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants: www.jcwi.org.uk

National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns: www.ncadc.org.uk

Refugee Council: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Speak out against racism - Defend asylum seekers: www.naar.org.uk

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