

## CATHOLIC BISHOP SPEAKS OUT AGAINST

### "DRACONIAN DETERRENCE MEASURES"

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SAYS LEADING CATHOLIC BISHOP

**BISHOP Patrick O' Donoghue, the Catholic bishop who chairs the Bishops' Conference, *Office for Refugee Policy*, has spoken out against the "restrictive and draconian deterrence measures" governments of the developed world apply against refugees. Speaking today, as the Church prepares for *Refugee Week* he said;**

"There is no greater symbol of the challenge that confronts the international community in its efforts to promote justice and peace than the plight of the world's refugees. Refugees are the product of failure - the failure of states and societies to promote peace, reconciliation, development and human rights. In some parts of the developing world, the very structure of the state has collapsed, provoking internal displacement and movement across international borders. Most refugees remain in developing countries in border regions close to areas of conflict; whilst a minority flee to developed countries for protection.

Against this background, some profoundly disturbing trends concerning refugees can be noted:

- *Governments' in the developed world are imposing restrictive immigration controls and draconian "deterrence measures" against refugees. The recent UK government's proposal to develop asylum processing camps outside the borders of the EU is but one example.*
- *There is growing hostility and xenophobia, even violence, against refugees in the UK. Refugee Helpline received 1,700 reports of harassment, verbal and physical attacks on refugees in 2002. Sections of the tabloid media's hostile coverage of refugees has no doubt contributed to this unhealthy political atmosphere.*

As Refugee Week approaches, we as Christians remember the enormous economic, social and cultural contributions that refugees make to our country and re-affirm our faith in the common humanity of all peoples; this includes the oppressed and the persecuted. Our faith compels us to ensure that the human rights and physical integrity of refugees are always upheld in law and institutions."

**A STATEMENT FROM BISHOP PATRICK O'DONOGHUE, CHAIRMAN, OFFICE FOR REFUGEE POLICY, CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE.**