

“Refugee Solutions or Solutions to Refugeehood?”

“In the world today there is no organisation that does more good for more people in the most difficult circumstances than the Jesuit Refugee Service”

Professor James C. Hathaway, a leading authority on International Refugee Law Tuesday, 17th October 2006



Rampe Hlobo SJ, Prof. Hathaway, Roger And Nova (Two Asylum Seekers)

Prof. Hathaway was speaking at a lecture entitled **“Refugee Solutions or Solutions to Refugeehood?”** celebrating 25 years of the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service. The lunchtime seminar in the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at the London School of Economics (LSE) was jointly sponsored by JRS UK and the Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life.

Prof Hathaway praised JRS’ ability to base their international lobbying on the ground reality of the refugee experience, holding its commitment to respect the dignity and autonomy of the refugee in stark contrast with official rhetoric emphasising the primacy of finding “durable solutions” to refugeehood or “curing” the refugee problem. In fact, he says, refugee law exists precisely in order to ensure that refugees enjoy true dignity and quality of life for as long as it takes them to decide for themselves how best to cope, to respond, and to rebuild their lives.

‘A regime which was actually established to guarantee refugees live in dignity until and unless either the cause of their flight is firmly eradicated or *the refugee himself or herself* chooses to pursue some alternative solution to their disenfranchisement, has now become a regime which labors nearly single-mindedly to design and implement top-down solutions which fix the “refugee problem.”’

He further emphasised the need for refugee advocates to read the Refugee Convention “cold” and not to buy into the propensity of states and the UNHCR to misinterpret the Treaty so as to give priority to the search for “solutions to refugeehood” over “refugee solutions.” He asserts that we are all guardians of the single most effective Human Rights system in the world and we should not

allow refugee status to be undermined and refugee rights diminished by any Government or International Institution. Put simply, refugee rights are not negotiable.

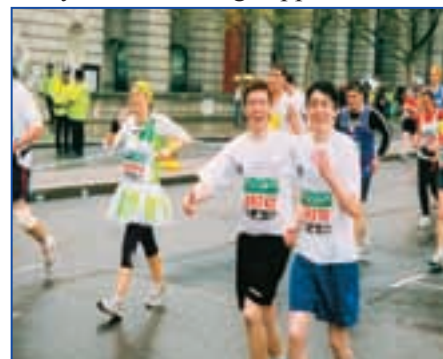
Ciara McKenna

Full text of the Lecture can be seen at: <http://www.jrsuk.net>

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A big thank you to all those who generously sponsored our London Marathon runners.

We received donations amounting to **£ 1,234.70** Thank you very much for your continuing support!



LONDON MARATHON Sunday 22 April 2007

If you are passionate about the work of JRS UK, and think you have what it takes to train and run 26 miles to raise funds for our work, we have a number of guaranteed places for the 2007 race. For full details please contact Louise at JRS. Minimum Sponsorship required.



Smiles... Five weeks' experience with JRS

I arrived at JRS in June for 5 weeks of volunteering. As a Jesuit I had spent the year in London for my studies in Philosophy and Theology and I wanted to do something different before going back to France. After these 5 weeks, the images that come to my mind are images of smiles.

A smile on Sou Huoy's face. When I arrived the first day at the office, I was very warmly welcomed by Sou Huoy's smile. And it is the same with everybody coming in. However busy she might be – and trust me, an administrative and financial officer never lacks work – she always smiles and communicates her good temper to the whole office. That reflects very well the friendly atmosphere I found here among staff, volunteers and visitors while sharing our 'simple lunches', chatting about the world cup or discovering our different cultures. The situations and life stories of many are very often tragic but humanity is stronger when we allow it to show.

A smile on M-'s face. At least once a week M- comes to the office. He is from Ethiopia and at the moment he lives in the street. No status, no home, no resources... That sounds terrifying, and no doubt it is. But here he is, looking tired or in better form but always with an incredible profound smile on his face. He stays for while in an armchair having a bit of rest, shares the lunch with us, receives a little help for transport and off he goes. We have exchanged only a few words but I realise that I will miss him till next week. I feel revulsion in me in the face of such a situation but also recognise how much he has taught me about humanity by his bright smile.

A smile on A-'s face. On a Friday I went with Bernard to visit A- at Harmondsworth detention centre. He was there for ten days: he was put in detention after having complied with an order to attend an interview about his claim for asylum. Ours was his first visit and he was incredibly grateful to us for coming. The smile on his face when we shook hands will stay in my mind. After the coolness of the process of entering Harmondsworth – checking documents, fingerprints, photo, waiting without explanation, body searching, security doors etc. - I was back to a human relationship.

These are the images I want to keep in mind after my experience at JRS. I spent a part of my time collecting materials on the web that could be useful to raise awareness in schools on refugee issues. I also worked on a couple of PowerPoint presentations for the same purpose. That was a good opportunity to raise my own awareness of what is, unfortunately, a major challenge to human dignity in all European countries. On the days when the office is open to visitors I gave a hand in the daily work: providing travel refunds, preparing lunch, opening mail.

All of that was immensely enriching. I went through various feelings: compassion, scandal, upset, hopelessness, resourcelessness, admiration. That filled my prayer, my discussion with friends, family and fellow Jesuits, my personal reflections. A lot to be thankful for and to keep with me when I start again my studies.

Grégoire Catta S.J.



Prayer for Refugees and Displaced People

God Almighty we pray for your people who, in this harsh and uncaring World, have known betrayal, lack of love, injustice and absence of peace.

May the pain they experience as a result of their separation from their families, their friends and their countries, be a reminder to us of the injustices prevailing in this world.

We pray, God Almighty, for the courage to help in whatever way we can, all refugees, asylum-seekers and the displaced people suffering all over the world.

Open our hearts Lord, to receive them, so that they may experience, through our support, your endless love and comfort.

Lord, we pray for the courage to challenge in whatever way we can, the injustices that lead to their displacement so that, one day, they may be able to know justice, peace and stability in their countries.

Rampe Hlobo S.J.



Children Fight and Die in Adults' Battles!

In November 1989 the United Nations (UN) adopted the convention on the rights of the child. It is a treaty that is meant to address the particular human rights of children and to set up minimum standards for the protection of these rights. It is the most widely accepted human rights treaty by UN member states. It is however, unbelievably ironic, that in this day and age, when we have international regimes and a legal framework that is meant to protect children and help them live their childhood like children, we still have over 300, 000 children around the world, actively fighting wars and battles for unscrupulous adults.



the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Information about the recruitment and use of child soldiers from different JRS projects in the field will be crucial for this advocacy work.

Participants in the meeting suggested that every JRS office should consider organizing or participating in a lobby/awareness day on child soldier related issues on Red Hand Day 2007(February 12, 2007). These activities will also mark the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol. Information will be provided from the JRS international office about activities and plans for the Red Hand Day. We will keep our readers informed about further activities in the field of child soldiers and how you can participate in the different campaigns.

Lightweight and easy to fire weapons are now available and consequently, children much younger than 18 years can be easily incorporated into active combat . JRS, among other NGOs has condemned the practice of using under 18s in armed forces, paramilitant groups, etc.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, of which JRS is a founding member, is involved worldwide in campaigning against the use of children in armed conflicts. During its international advocacy meeting in March JRS committed itself to strengthen its contribution to

Rampe Hlobo S.J.

JRS AGM

Representatives from nineteen countries, including those from the newly formed JRS Balkans, took part at the Annual General Meeting of JRS Europe held in Rodizio, from 11th to 15th October. Rodizio is



about an hour's journey by coach from Lisbon and a few minutes walk from the Atlantic. The theme of the meeting was "Building our Teams" and the facilitator was Max Peberdy, who, as consultant to JRS UK, was

well acquainted with JRS work.

There was plenty of group work. It was assumed everyone spoke English! We, in the UK team, were paired off with the Irish, and there was also the opportunity for smaller groups of twos and threes from different countries to come together. Meeting members from other JRS countries, in the workshops and socially, has always been a highlight of the AGMs. At the end of the workshops, there was a social evening where Shana got the whole audience aroused with her songs.

On the following day, an excursion was arranged to Sintra, one of the residences of the former kings of Portugal, and from there a short bus ride to Cabo da Roca, overlooking the Atlantic and the westernmost point of continental Europe.



On return, Mass was celebrated with the Jesuit provincial of Portugal on the roof of the building. After dinner, Natasha Marjanovich, an ex-Yugoslav immigrant, gave a moving performance of what it means to be a refugee. On Sunday, a trip to the detention centre at Porto concluded the Meeting. Many thanks to JRS Portugal who hosted us so well and to JRS Europe for their organization.

Harry Elias S.J.

Mission Statement

The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic non-governmental organisation, at work in over 50 countries, with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people.

The purpose of JRS UK is to accompany, to serve and to advocate on behalf of all asylum seekers from their first arrival until they are satisfactorily settled. This work is carried out in collaboration with other JRS offices round the world, other Church and secular organisations, voluntary and governmental, which are active in the same field.

Values

JRS is grounded in Catholic social teaching and draws on the principles of Ignatian spirituality in discerning with whom we work. All

members share a common set of values and principles concerned with justice, the dignity of the person and a responsibility to carry out the social mission of the Church.

DIARY

- ◆ Manchester: 14 Nov – 4 Dec 2006
 Refugee Theatre Season across Greater Manchester from 14 Nov - 4 Dec 2006.

Three weeks of groundbreaking theatre exploring war, diaspora and asylum that will change the way you see the world. For further details: www.can.uk.com/exodus

the office.

For further details: 02073570974 / uk@jrs.net

- ◆ 3 December 2006 Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees. Should you wish to organise an event, a selection of Liturgy materials can be requested from

- ◆ Tuesday 5 December 2006 "An Hour with Him" ECSR invites you to set aside an hour on Tuesday, 5th December, 11a.m -12p.m For further details: <http://www.ecsr.org.uk>



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