

## REFUGEE WEEK 20<sup>TH</sup> -25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2005

### **A STATEMENT FROM BISHOP PATRICK O'DONOGHUE, CHAIRMAN, OFFICE FOR REFUGEE POLICY, CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES**

The fact that the world still finds a need for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and refugee NGOs, serve as a sobering reminder of the international community's continuing failure to prevent violence, persecution and poverty and other root causes of conflict and displacement.

The UNHCR tells us that the world's refugee population continues to fall, but protracted refugee situations remain, as people continue to flee their homes in countries such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Iraq and Uzbekistan et al. It is clear that the problem of forced migration has not gone away, and it is likely to remain one of the major concerns of the international community in the 21st century.

It is important that we celebrate the staying power of UNHCR and other refugee NGOs, but equally important we ought to celebrate the courage of the millions of refugees and displaced people who have survived the last 50 years. Often losing hope, they are amongst the great survivors of the 21st century and they deserve our respect and support.

In this year's Refugee Week, we remind ourselves about **persecution** as being one of the main causes of forced migration and displacement; we remember the Refugee Convention, particularly the principle of non-forcible return of people to territories where they may face persecution. But most of all, we celebrate the enormous socio-economic and political contributions refugees make in their adopted countries.

The sacred concept of asylum must always be preserved for the persecuted – its values are timeless and grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition of 'welcoming the stranger.'

+Patrick O'Donoghue  
Monday, 13 June 2005

For more information contact:  
Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue 01524 596 050 or 01524 384 830  
John Joseet 020 7901 4862