
Children in Detention in UK

Threat to take children of failed asylum seekers into care

It appears that the UK is also taking a strong line against asylum seekers, threatening to take their children into care if they fail in their bid for asylum and refuse to leave Britain.

Home Office ministers said that they had to tackle the “perverse incentives” which stop people returning home voluntarily, because officials would not meet their target for removing failed asylum seekers if they relied on compulsory expulsion alone. Families that refuse a paid flight home and government help with resettlement currently receive benefits worth £16,000 a year.

In opposition to this policy, the cross-party committee says today that the policy could drive some families underground and provide others with an incentive to “go illegal” while abandoning their children in local authority care at public expense.

Instead of trying to step up the number of voluntary departures, it says, ministers should concentrate on “a vigorous government policy of swift compulsory removals”. The current rate of about 1,500 a month is “unacceptably low”.

She said the number of children taken into care would be kept as low as possible. “We will achieve this by ensuring that families who are refusing to cooperate with voluntary departure processes will be targeted for compulsory removal, so that we can ensure that all their members leave the country together.” The committee report is published today in advance of tomorrow’s Commons second reading of Mr Blunkett’s asylum and immigration bill.

The MPs support the government’s plan to restrict the appeal rights of rejected asylum seekers, but say that it should not be implemented until improvements have been made in the initial

decision-making process. The policy could lead to a crop of new legal challenges, the committee said. The concerns were that driving failed asylum seekers underground might make it harder to remove them. According to The Greater London authority up to 200 asylum seekers a week in London were being denied benefits because they had failed to claim refugee status as soon as they arrived in the UK.

Source: **The Guardian December 16, 2003**

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Suggested graphics or photos to accompany the article are most welcome. The closing date for receipt of material is 23 February 2004 but please advise the editors as soon as possible if you are planning to submit.

If you have an idea which you would like to discuss, please phone Judy Cashmore 02 9880 2286

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