

Children's Rights Alliance members and friends,

Attached below is the press release issued today (November 20) by the Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC) with an accompanying letter addressed to the Minister for Justice calling for a halt to the deportation of Irish citizen children and their non-national parents, and to uphold the rights of these Irish children as equal citizens.

This letter to the Minister of Justice has been signed and endorsed by a growing list of individuals and organisations, including Mary Robinson.

The Children's Rights Alliance asks you to add your name to the support letter, which is open for signature to individuals living in Ireland and abroad. We are hoping to collect thousands of signatures on this letter in support of the campaign and to present it to the Minister for Justice on International Human Rights Day (Wednesday, 10th December 2003).

Please encourage your friends and families to add their names as well.

To add your individual name, please email it to cadic@eircom.net . Please include your county, city or town, and your organisational affiliation if you wish it to be attached to the letter.

If you are endorsing the letter as an organisation (and you haven't already contacted us), please email it to info@cra.iol.ie .

Thanks for your support.

Regards

Ray Dooley

Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children Press Release

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE MUST RECOGNISE THAT ALL IRISH CHILDREN ARE EQUAL

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has begun to force Irish children to leave Ireland, as he deports their migrant parents. The Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC) has called on the Minister to halt these deportations, and uphold the rights of these Irish children as equal citizens.

On Universal Children's Day, CADIC has reminded the Minister for Justice that the Supreme Court confirmed that all Irish children are equal citizens, irrespective of their parentage. However by deporting families of Irish children, it will mean that Irish children may be forced to live in other countries where their rights, provided for by the Constitution and international law, will not be protected. Many will be treated as aliens unable to benefit from free education, decent health care and freedom from abuse.

“Irish citizen children must not be forced into situations where they may be exposed to a risk of torture, extreme poverty or hardship. The Government has an obligation to provide that all Irish children's rights to education and basic health care be respected,” said Mr. Ray Dooley, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance.

CADIC is concerned that the current policy followed by the government is failing to treat Irish children of migrant parents as equal citizens in Ireland.

“In the 1980s, Ireland abolished the term an ‘ill-legitimate child’. Twenty years later, a new generation of Irish children are being treated as if they were ‘ill-legitimate’ citizens, again only because of the status of their parents,” Joanna McMinn, Director of the National Women's Council of Ireland said today.

Children of 11,000 parents, who lawfully applied for residency to the Department of Justice before February 2003, are currently at risk of being forced to leave their own country. These families currently live in a state of uncertainty and fear and CADIC, joined by Mary Robinson, Patricia McKenna, and members of the opposition parties are urging the Minister for Justice to follow the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism to grant them residency.

Previously migrant parents had a right to apply for residency in Ireland, in order to raise and care for their Irish children in Ireland. In February 2003, the Minister abolished this possibility and the Department of Justice stopped processing all applications not already determined. The Supreme Court made it absolutely clear that all Irish citizen children have equal citizenship status and rights. However, the Minister has failed to demonstrate how the rights of these children are being protected in the decision to deport their parents or how they will be protected if they are forcibly remove from Ireland.

According to Ms. Eleanor Edmond, Solicitor with the Free Legal Advice Centres, **“We will likely witness legal challenges to the deportations in order to seek clarification from the courts on the decision making procedures which should be in place to safeguard the best interests of the child,”**

CADIC also calls on the Minister to put in place a procedure whereby other migrant parents of Irish citizen children, have an opportunity to apply for residency. The procedure must be based on upholding the best interests of Irish citizen children, and must be fair and transparent.

CADIC will be hosting a Press Conference at 1.30pm on Thursday, 20 November 2003 in Buswells Hotel. A letter to the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform signed and endorsed by over 65 individuals including, Mary Robinson, Patricia McKenna, Ivana Bacik, Roddy Doyle and Fintan O’Toole will be forwarded to the Minister.

Ms. Hilka Becker, Legal Consultant; The Immigrant Council of Ireland; Tel: 01 8656525 / 087 9481911

Mr. Ray Dooley, Chief Executive, Children’s Rights Alliance; Tel: 405 4823 / 087 9678345

Mr. Jean-Pierre Eyanga, Integrating Ireland, Comhlamh; Tel: 01-4783490/086-3767403

Joanna McMinn, National Women’s Council of Ireland; Tel: 01 6615268 / 6611791

Sr. Breege Keenan, The Vincentian Refugee Centre; Tel: 01 8102580

Dr Ronit Lentin, Dept of Sociology, Trinity College; Tel: 01-6082766

Mr. Sean Love, Executive Director, Amnesty International (Irish Section); Tel: 01-6776361

Ms. Salome Mbugua, AkiDwA-African Women's Network; Tel: 087 4150906

Mr. John McDermott, Manager, The Refugee Information Service; Tel: 01 8382740

Mr. Peter O'Mahony, Chief Executive Officer, Irish Refugee Council; Tel: 01 8730042

Ms. Eleanor Redmond, Solicitor, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC); Tel: 01 – 67942399;

Ms. Aisling Reidy, Director, Irish Council for Civil Liberties; Tel: 01 8783137/ 087 2897558

Sr. Joan Roddy, The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, Refugee Project; Tel: 01 5053157

Fr. Frank Sammon, The Jesuit Refugee Service; Tel: 01 8556814

The Letter:

Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children
c/o Dominick Court, 40 - 41 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1

Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform
Michael McDowell TD
Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
72-76 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

20 November 2003

Dear Mr McDowell,

On Universal Children's Day, we write to you to express our disquiet at the current policy of deporting migrant parents of Irish citizen children. Our concern echoes similar concerns of the human rights organisations, migrant organisations, migrant support organisations and groups organised under the CADIC umbrella, as well as those of the Irish Human Rights Commission and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI).

The Human Rights Commission has noted in its recent submissions to you that prior to the Supreme Court decision of January 2003, the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform had a procedure whereby families of Irish children could lawfully apply for residency. The Human Rights Commission also noted that many of those families who had been in the asylum procedure, abandoned their claims on advice that they could rely on their application for residency. Those families were advised, often by government officials as well as lawyers, and legitimately expected, that they would be able to remain and raise their Irish child in Ireland. Now many families who lawfully applied for residency are having their applications returned to them and are being told that they will not be processed any further, and no consideration will be given of their claims pending the initiation of the deportation process.

This sudden retrospective change in policy is placing the families of Irish citizen children under undue strain, confusion and hardship. The fact that you have announced that these families would not be entitled to free legal advice, is also putting these families under extraordinary financial pressure. The Human Rights Commission recommends that, rather than continue these families' state of uncertainty, you be asked to allow these families to remain in Ireland. Granting these families residency will not affect the integrity of the asylum process. Bearing in mind the high cost of deportations and the potential contribution to be made by these migrant families, many of whom are highly educated professional people, it also makes economic sense to allow this group of people to remain.

We support the HRC's recommendations wholeheartedly and ask you to allow the

families of Irish citizen children, whether former asylum seekers or not, to remain, thus ending their limbo and uncertainty, and treating them fairly and with dignity, rather than criminalizing them.

At the same time we are asking you to put in place a transparent and fair procedure for determining future applications for residency from families of Irish citizens. As the Human Rights Commission has stated to you, the rights of the Irish children of these families should form a primary consideration in this procedure. In accordance with their rights under the Irish Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child you should factor in not only their risk of exposure to threats to the right to life and bodily integrity, but also the impact their forced removal would have on their welfare and rights to education and health care, and how disruptive or traumatic removal from the State would be for the children concerned.

All Irish children are entitled under the Constitution to be treated as equal citizens of the nation of Ireland and it is therefore essential that this is reflected in your policies on residency for all Irish children and their families. We would therefore call on you to adopt, as a matter of urgency, the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission and the NCCRI and to resolve the plight of these Irish citizen children and their families in a just and humane way.

This Letter has been endorsed by:

Mary Robinson, Ethical Globalisation Initiative, New York
Patricia McKenna, MEP, European Parliament
Ciaran Cuffe, Green Party, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Joe Costello, Labour Party, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Finian McGrath, Independent, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Joe Higgins, Socialist Party, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Aengus O'Snodaigh, Sinn Fein, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Caoimhghin O'Caoláin, Sinn Fein, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Sean Crowe, Sinn Fein, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Arthur Morgan, Sinn Fein, T.D. Dáil Éireann
Martin Ferris, Sinn Fein, T.D. Dáil Éireann

Signatories

John Arden, author, Galway,
Roddy Doyle, author, Dublin,
Robbie McVeigh, author, Derry,
Fintan O'Toole, The Irish Times, Dublin
Donal Toolan, disability rights activist
Nuala Kelly, Irish Human Rights Commission
Michael O'Halloran, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
ATGWU,
Banúlacht, Dublin,
BARN, Blanchardstown Asylum Seekers and Refugee Network, Dublin
Cairde, 19 Belvedere Place, Dublin- Patrick Connolly, Chief Executive Officer,
Catholic Youth Care
Cherish, Dublin,
Community Workers Cooperative, Galway,

Cork Women Graduate Association, Cork,
Development Studies Centre, Kimmage Manor, Dublin - Tom Campbell,
Donegal Gender Equality Project, Co Donegal,
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Dublin,
EWM-Women with Disabilities Project, Dublin,
ICTU, Dublin
INTO, Dublin - Mary Enright,
NTDI, Dublin - Lindie Botha,
Louth African Women's Support Group, Dundalk,
Galway Refugee Support Group
Gay Community News, Dublin - Marie Mulholland, General Manager,
Inner City Renewal Group - Seanie Lambe,
Inner City Organisations Network - Tom Redmond,
Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice - Margaret Burns,
Meitheal Management Team,
NASC, Immigrant Support Centre, Cork
Dublin,
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland, Dublin,
One Parent Exchange Network, Dublin
One World Spirit (Dundalk Refugee Support Group), Dundalk,
Partners Training for Transformation, Dublin,
Pavee Point
Residents Against Racism, Dublin
Ruhama, Dublin,
SIPTU - Regional Executive Committee, Des Derwin,
Sligo Rape Crisis Centre, Sligo,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Mairead Mahon,
Tallaght Partnership - Anne Prendiville,
Young Christian Workers Movement (YCW), Dublin,
Women in Media and Entertainment, Galway - Margaretta D'Arcy, Chair,

From Trinity College Dublin - Prof Ivana Bacik, Faculty of Law; Dr Barbara Bradby,
Department of Sociology; Colm Brethnach, Department of Geography;> Dr Andrew
Finlay, Department of Sociology; Robbie Gilligan, Children's Research Centre; Dr
Nalini Persram, Department of Political Science,

From University College Cork - Dr Shane Kilcommins, Faculty of Law,
Siobhan Mullaly, Faculty of Law, Dr Darius Whelan, Faculty of Law,

From University College Dublin, - Dr Kieran Allen, Department of Sociology; Prof
Kathleen Lynch, Equality Studies; Ailbhe Smyth, Director, Women's Education,
Research and Resource Centre; Patricia Towey, Equality Studies Centre,

From NUI Galway - Donncha O'Connell, Faculty of Law; Diarmuid O'Donovan,
Department of Health Promotion, Prof. William Schabas, Director, Irish Centre for
Human Rights,

From DIT School of Social Sciences and Legal Studies - Kevin Lawlor,

From Anglia Polytechnic University, UK- Prof. Bronwen Walter

From Oxford University, Refugee Studies Centre - Dr Alana Lentin,

From Falmouth College of Arts, UK - Dr. Angeline Morrison,

From Hertford College Oxford - Dr Aoife Bhreatnach,

From Center for the Study of Culture, Race and Ethnicity, Ithaca College, New York -
Dr Elisa Joy White,

From Bowling Green State University, Ohio - Department of Ethnic Studies
Robert Buffington, Associate Professor of History; Jeannie Ludlow, Lecturer,
Women's Studies Programme; Eithne Luibheid, Assistant Professor; Michael T.
Martin, Chair and Professor; Susana Pena, Assistant Professor,

From University of California, Santa Barbara - Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,

From University of California, Berkeley - Judith Butler, Maxine Elliot Professor in
the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature

From Keogh Institute for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame - Prof Luke
Gibbons,

From Massachusetts College of Art, Fellow W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-
American Research, Harvard University, Boston - Prof Noel Ignatiev

CADIC includes:

Amnesty Ireland (Irish Section), Akina Dada Wa Africa , the Children's Rights
Alliance, Conference of Religious Of Ireland, the Free Legal Advice Centres, the
Immigrant Council of Ireland, Integrating Ireland, the Irish Council for Civil
Liberties, the Irish Refugee Council, the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Refugee Project
of the Catholic Bishops, Refugee Information Service, Residents Against Racism,
National Women's Council of Ireland, the Vincentian Refugee Centre and Ronit
Lentin, chair.

Contacts:

Ms. Hilka Becker, The Immigrant Council of Ireland; Tel: 01 8656525 / 087
9481911

Mr. Ray Dooley, Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance; Tel: 405 4823 / 087
9678345

Ms. Eleanor Edmond, Solicitor, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC); Tel: 01 -
8745690;

Mr. Jean-Pierre Eyanga, Integrating Ireland, Comhlamh; Tel: 01-4783490/086-
3767403

Joanna McMinn, National Women's Council of Ireland; Tel: 01 6615268 / 6611791

Sr. Breege Keenan, The Vincentian Refugee Centre; Tel: 01 8102580

Dr Ronit Lentin, Dept of Sociology, Trinity College; Tel: 01-6082766

Mr. Sean Love, Executive Director, Amnesty International (Irish Section); Tel: 01-
6776361

Ms. Salome Mbugua, AkiDwA-African Women's Network; Tel: 087 4150906
Mr. John McDermott, Manager, The Refugee Information Service; Tel: 01 8382740
Mr. Peter O'Mahony, Chief Executive Officer, Irish Refugee Council; Tel: 01
8730042
Ms. Aisling Reidy, Director, Irish Council for Civil Liberties; Tel: 01 8783137/ 087
2897558
Sr. Joan Roddy, The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, Refugee Project; Tel: 01
5053157
Fr. Frank Sammon, The Jesuit Refugee Service; Tel: 01 8556814