

## KENT REFUGEE HELP

Charity no. 1120185

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Patron: Professor John Fitzpatrick OBE

Kent Law Clinic

# Annual Report 2012 – 13

**Kent Refugee Help** is a small, user-led charity working for the release and support of migrants currently or previously detained in Dover Immigration Removal Centre (DIRC). Our activities are based on the belief that indefinite detention of any person for administrative purposes is discriminatory and unjust, and must be challenged. Our case-workers assist bail applications by helping detainees to find sureties and supporting family and friends to travel to court. An important feature of our work is the continuing support we offer former detainees and their families following their release into the community.

During the year 2012 – 2013 KRH has continued direct case-work with detainees and former detainees, including financial support for educational and vocational qualifications. KRH has also continued to work closely with Bail for Immigration detainees (BID), the Dover Detainee Visitor Group, and the Kent Law Clinic. We have organised information and training sessions, recruited and trained volunteers, and recruited and supported sureties.

### Personnel

**Case-workers:** Kate Adams (volunteer), Pete Keenan

**Administrative Support:** Lesley Grove of Accuracy Accounts and Alexia Padgham of Your VA

**Trustees:** Sue Powell, Astrid Ryans, Ewen Macmillan, Lyn Innes

**Volunteers:** Hakki Aganoglu, Matthew Bodycombe, Alia Kalowit, Bahriye Kemal, Camille Le Baron, Frances Radiguet, Sophie Wilson. Also essential support from Sureties, present and former detainees.



Jean Karera, his daughter, and KRH surety Helen Clark celebrating Jean's release from detention

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KRH continues to enjoy the support of the Kent Law Clinic. Catherine Carpenter, John Fitzpatrick, and the Clinic's new Immigration solicitor, Sheona York, together with the student Immigration and Asylum Team, generously shared their time and their legal knowledge with our case-workers, volunteers, and clients. Their help has been invaluable for men detained in Dover and after their release.

From Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) Francis Pilling has worked closely with our caseworkers, with volunteer assistance from Kate Adams running a monthly workshop for detainees, and supplying referrals for those our case workers may be able to assist in gaining their release.

We have also received crucial assistance from several volunteers: These include Hakki Aganoglu, who has given considerable time and effort to developing and administering the KRH website with Kate Adams. Frances Radiguet assisted Pete Keenan with record keeping for several months before going to work on a farm in the French Alps. Camille Le Baron, currently studying for a degree in Politics at the University of Kent, has provided the following comments on her experience with KRH:

*I volunteered at KRH as an Assistant to the Caseworker in 2012. This was the opportunity for me to gain first-hand experience on the issues the detainees of the Dover Immigration Removal Centre faced on a daily basis. As a politics major at university, I had only had basic theoretical knowledge of the EU and British immigration laws, and had never seen them put in practice. It was only as I started working at KRH that I realised the legal, financial and social difficulties the detainees were confronted with at the detention centre. This was a great human experience for me, and I am particularly grateful to KRH for providing me with it.*

Sophie Wilson is another volunteer who worked with Pete Keenan this year before taking up work in an immigration related role with a local authority. Sophie wrote:

*Working with Pete and KRH enabled me to gain an insight into case work that I had previously not had, it afforded me the opportunity to gain skills, experience and knowledge that I have been able to transfer and practically apply in my current position as a youth and support worker. My time working for KRH also allowed me an insight into the world of asylum seekers and the many issues and barriers that they face. This has proved invaluable to me and I am now doing intensive work with unaccompanied underage asylum seekers, helping them integrate into the areas they are placed, with education, skills and independent living. [Additionally I am involved in] supporting community work alongside local mosques. Without my experience volunteering for KRH I would not have been practically prepared to undertake the work that I now do. Not only this I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and working under the guidance of Pete.*

## Celebrating 6 years working with detainees and ex-detainees

Sarah Hughes, who gave excellent volunteer assistance for several months last year has informed us that she has had her PhD proposal accepted by Durham University – the basis of which is an analysis of Asylum Detention. Congratulations Sarah!

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KRH suffered a sad loss this year with the death in February of **Eddie Barns**, who had worked with KRH for several years. We quote from his obituary published in the *Guardian* on April 30: 'His heroes were not only the great theorists of socialism, for he was unashamedly a socialist till his death, but also those who exposed and confronted the abuse of power whether in Northern Ireland, Nicaragua or Britain. Many lives are the better today for having known Eddie.'

The full obituary can be accessed via <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/apr/30/eddie-barns-obituary>

A Memorial Gathering to celebrate Eddie's life will be held on Saturday 15th June 2013 at Sue Powell's house, 6 Church St, Wye. RSVP [sue.powell1@virgin.net](mailto:sue.powell1@virgin.net). This event will mark the launch of the EDDIE BARNES MEMORIAL FUND which will be used to meet the emergency needs of KRH clients.

### **CASEWORK REPORT 2012 – 2013**

TOTAL NUMBER OF REFERRALS: 98  
TOTAL MEN RELEASED WITH KRH ASSISTANCE: 38  
MEN RELEASED WITH SURETY: 15  
MEN RELEASED WITHOUT SURETY: 20  
RELEASED THROUGH VOLUNTARY RETURN: 3  
RELEASED WHEN GRANTED LEAVE TO REMAIN: 2

These figures reveal a 50% increase over the number of referrals the previous year (62), as well as a smaller increase in the number released with our help. The demands on our caseworkers are heavy, and we have had to use additional funds to cover the extra hours worked.

Some referrals are received directly from the monthly BID workshops held at the DIRC by Francis Pilling (with Kate Adams as a volunteer); others come from the staff of Dover Detainees Visitors Group (DDVG), while some are self-referrals who have heard about us from other detainees. This year, as in previous years, we particularly wish to acknowledge the support of Victor at DDVG.

The caseloads of the caseworkers, legal advisors, and sureties who support detainees are greatly increased by the fact that release may come only after many bail hearings and legal actions, and after the removal of many obstacles such as lack of surety, or of suitable post-release accommodation, and the difficulty in obtaining documents.

## Celebrating 6 years working with detainees and ex-detainees

Many men detained in Dover have no friends or family in the UK (or sometimes in their country of origin), so there is always an urgent need for sureties. The role of surety can be challenging, and KRH does its best to offer support. We are in the process of updating the Surety guidance pack developed several years ago to reflect our experience and also to take account of changes in legislation and social policy.

This year has produced some dismaying changes in legislation profoundly affecting our work with detainees in Dover. Most significantly Legal Aid is no longer available to immigration detainees, who fall outside the new, much more narrowly defined/restricted categories available to detainees and Asylum applicants; for example Article 8 Rights (the right to family and private life), are no longer allowed to be pursued under Legal Aid as 'new matter' take ups by L.A. solicitors. In the past Article 8 has been one of our chief lines of defence against arbitrary removal for many of our clients. In the first part of last year we had developed a very good and effective working relationship with several groups of solicitors, offering protection to clients from forced removal to countries and situations where their lives and wellbeing were likely to be directly under threat. This protection is no longer available under Legal Aid.

Support for ex-detainees, who are often allocated accommodation in bleak housing, distant from medical, educational, and even eating facilities, is an important concern. Our caseworkers and sureties act as advisors and friendly contacts, helping to locate the support they need. KRH has during the past year assisted several ex-detainees with fees and expenses enabling them to embark on educational and vocational programmes. We provided one ex-detainees with a bicycle so that he did not have to pay bus fares for travel to his classes and to shops.

Celebrating 6 years working with detainees and ex-detainees



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### Funding and Finance

This last year we were funded by the second instalment of a three year grant from **The Lankelly Chase Foundation**. We were awarded a small grant from **Garden Court Chambers** special fund towards the cost of Sureties travel costs to attend Bail hearings. Donations were also received from St Hugh's College, Oxford, thanks to the support of our former volunteer Yasmin Dunkley, and from **Wye Church**.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the staff and management of the Friend's Meeting House in Canterbury, who have allowed us to use their premises free of charge for the past several years.

### Outreach

Kate Adams organized several events to promote her poetry collection, *The Cheering Rain* and talk about the work of Kent Refugee Help. This included a special event for *Refugee Week* at The Friends Meeting House in Canterbury where ex-detainees were invited to share stories of their country and culture. In July Kate gave a reading at the Cowley Club in Brighton, attended by members of *The Migrant English Project* and *Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group*. The event was covered by Stephen Silverwood for *Refugee Radio*, a Brighton based charity: [www.refugeeradio.org.uk](http://www.refugeeradio.org.uk)

KRH held a stall at the Miners' Festival in Aylesham in August 2012, and at the Carnival Against the Cuts in Canterbury March 2013.

On September 2012 Kate Adams and Pete Keenan assisted Bid South in running an advice session about bail on the Cultural Day at Dover IRC. 21 clients were taken on.

Kate Adams helped to gather, stories, poems and personal testimonies for the publication *Visa Stories: Experiences between Law and Migration* co-edited by Bahriye Kemal, Filippo Menozzi and Tinashe Mushakavanhu, to be published by Cambridge Scholars this year. In October 2012 an event at the Poetry Cafe in Betterton Street, London, showcased some of the pieces from the Visa Stories collection. The event was organized by Bahriye Kemal and Kate Adams and hosted by Alia Kawalit on behalf of Exile writers ink. <http://www.exiledwriters.co.uk/cafe.shtml>. It was covered by *Refugee Radio*.

In April 2013 Kate Adams read from *The Cheering Rain* at an *Evening of Refugee Poetry and Music* at the Red Rooster Cafe in Brighton. The event featured the Sudanese poet Al Saddiq al-Raddi.

## Celebrating 6 years working with detainees and ex-detainees

### Training

Kate Adams organized a legal training day for volunteers and sureties in November 2012 entitled *Article Eight: The Struggle for Family and Private Life*. Sheona York, solicitor at Kent Law Clinic assisted by her student, gave a comprehensive presentation on *Article 8 and Family Migration, Changes to the Law*, explaining the effects of legal aid cuts and new immigration rules on the rights of former foreign national prisoners facing deportation. A former detainee who had won his unlawful detention case after four and a half years in detention spoke about his experiences and campaigning to assist others and raise awareness. Shanti Haft spoke about current and planned benefit cuts which would impact negatively on people granted status. A former detainee and his surety also spoke about their joint activity to progress his case. The day was well received by students from Christchurch College and Kent Law Clinic as well as many of our sureties and others.

### Looking Forward

We have met recently with the new management team at DIRC, and look forward to a constructive relationship with personnel there, with more coordination and interaction with other NGOs concerned with the welfare and release of detainees.

KRH also continues to develop campaign strategies in alliance with other Refugee NGO's under the Detention Forum banner and are currently profiling potentially supportive M.P.'s on a National level, within the Judicial Oversight Working Group.

Together with academics at the University of Kent and Rebecca from Article 26 we have liaised with the University's Vice-Chancellor and management committee to agree a fee waiver and fellowship for an asylum seeker seeing to embark on a degree course at Kent. We hope that the first student to benefit from this scheme will begin his or her studies at Kent next year.

We will continue to fund-raise and seek support for additional case work hours, as well as funds to help ex-detainees with transport costs, fees, and other expenses so that they can gain educational and vocational qualifications. We will also seek to recruit people prepared to act as sureties and offer bail for detainees seeking release.

As one of our case workers writes, 'The satisfaction at having a hand in the relief of fellow beings subject to the iniquities of current immigration legislation, is I suppose what drives us all; summed up by a quote from a detainee who was about to be released, after a very long period in detention: *"Thank you so much for everything that you have done for me and the lady who came to visit me – I call her 'Nanny' – you save my life, you save my life"*.' He also quotes a text message from a generous detainee whose removal we weren't able to prevent: *'Dear ....., don't worry mate, u did ur best to help me. I was looking 4 someone who can help me and I found u. So no matter, you were the first people to show care for me since I came to the UK.'*

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From a man detained for a long period, released with the help of a KRH surety after 16 unsuccessful bail hearings: “... *you are role model... you help in trouble...one in million can do like you.*” (This man was awarded compensation for overlong detention. From which he generously donated to KRH).

We gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement we have received during the past year, but recognise that we will all need to increase our efforts to deal with the very tough challenges the current economic and political climate pose for us in the coming year.