



Charity no. 1120185
Patron Clio Barnard

Annual Report 2019-2020



Kent Refugee Help is a small user-led charity, now in its thirteenth year. Our main focus is working with foreign national prisoners in London and Kent prison establishments. Some of our clients are in prison under immigration regulations, being deemed too high-risk to be placed in a removal centre. Others may be refugees; former unaccompanied minors; EU migrants; those with long residence who came to the UK fleeing human rights violations with their parents when very young; people who are undocumented or stateless. All are trying to navigate the complex legal system they are caught up in, with very little help or advice available. Many are facing deportation at the end of their sentence without legal representation. We are there to listen and take forward in whatever way is appropriate for each client.

During the year 2019-2020 we continued to hold 2-monthly surgery at HMP Pentonville and at HMP Rochester, until the beginning of March when it was no longer safe to go to prisons because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to continue our support of people in prison and those who have been released, who will need financial and other support to see them through the pandemic, we are in the process of applying for emergency funding grants to help support a list of vulnerable people and hope to report on our successes in the next financial year.

During the year we have also received individual referrals from HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Rochester, Elmley, Swaleside, Huntercombe, Maidstone, and Stoke Heath. There is complex ongoing work with several former detainees from the DIRC (Dover Immigration Removal centre), which closed in 2015. This work is done by the previous case worker on a voluntary basis. Men on bail, waiting for their asylum case to be resolved, are most of the time forbidden to work, must conform to reporting restrictions, and are frequently tagged. This is akin to 'prison in the community'. This situation continues. KRH believes indefinite detention of any person for administrative purpose is discriminatory and must be challenged. This year together with the Permanent People's Tribunal we challenged this by organising a book launch event entitled 'How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights'.





Social contact is maintained with the former detainees throughout the year, culminating in the Christmas party which was very well attended and included paintings and prints from our former client, artist and poet-performer Leroy Letts.

We would like to thank all our funders, individual donors and organisations who have helped us to continue our work. We would like to thank the Friends Meeting House for providing us with a free venue to hold out meetings.

KRH Personnel

Trustees: Bahriye Kemal, Andrew Jordan, Chris Perks, Antti de Ruano,

Caseworkers: Kate Adams, Raga Gibreel

Admin. support: Lesley Grove of Accuracy Accounts, Caroline Gipson VA.

Website: Nick Tompsett (volunteer)

Volunteers: Hakki Aganoglu, Catherine Carpenter, Pete Keenan, Maria Ruano, Liza Seed, Lucy Williams, Sue Powell

Although we no longer find Sureties for bail, we acknowledge that some of our former Sureties are still in touch with and support the people they stood bail for, some of whom have to wait many years for the resolution of their case.

We continue to work with **the Prisoners' Advice Service, Kent Law Clinic** and **BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees)**

Finance and Funding

Our prison work this year has been funded by the **ARM Trust, The Allen Lane Foundation, the Vulnerable Persons Fund** administered through the **Kent Community Foundation**.

Donations from individuals and church groups have continued to be generous. We see this as proof of a strong public desire to see more positive action to welcome and support refugees in the UK. Donations are treated as 'unrestricted' funds, which we use for the many individual needs of our clients. Because of this money we have been able to save a family from destitution by making a regular monthly payment to them. In addition to small amounts to cover emergency food, travel and phone top-ups, we have paid for gym membership, clothing and footwear. The amounts are small, but each one makes a positive contribution to the lives of our clients.

As the financial year ends, we are faced with an unprecedented health emergency in Covid 19. As the country goes into lockdown, we are in the process of applying for funding to assist our clients during this emergency, as we know they will be disproportionately and severely disadvantaged by it.



Leroy Letts and Liza at the Outside In, Environments Exhibition at Piano Noble Gallery,
Kings Place, London November 2019

Leroy Letts' painting, *Eyes of the Cloud* was selected as one of 90 artworks out of 800 to be exhibited at Environments organised by the Arts charity Outside In. Outside In provides a platform for artists who face significant barriers to the art world due to health, disability and social circumstances and isolation. Our volunteers Catherine Carpenter, Liza Seed, and caseworker Kate Adams attended the private view. Liza was instrumental in inspiring and encouraging Leroy to paint when he was detained, so as to create powerful works.

Eyes of a Cloud was painted when Leroy was in Brook House IRC We also used the painting *Eyes of a Cloud* for our poster for the event entitled 'How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights'

Casework and Volunteer Reports

Casework in Context

This year there have been significant events affecting the lives of refugees and migrants and our work with foreign national prisoners has to be seen in context. In February 2020 a campaign to resist the deportation of 50 Jamaicans, including foreign national offenders attracted wide publicity and sympathetic media coverage. This resulted in foreign prisoners being portrayed as people with strong bonds in the UK whose family and private life would be violated by deportation, rather than simply criminals with no rights to stay here. Consequently 17 people did not board the chartered flight which was a huge achievement; though sadly a former client of ours did fly leaving behind his much-loved partner and children.

On 23 March, the country went into lockdown, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This means we will not be allowed to visit our clients in prison for the foreseeable future. We are hoping to secure emergency funding to assist them financially, to enable them to make phone calls to their families and agencies during this time. The funding would also enable us to support clients who are no longer detained, as they will really struggle to survive. We will report on that more fully next year.

All these issues impact upon our clients' lives. We need a further shift to restore legal aid and end automatic deportation for foreign offenders and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) which institutionalises destitution; policies contained in the Hostile Environment Legislation.

Casework Statistics

This year I have been in contact with 63 people from the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea Conakry Kurdistan, Lithuania, Morocco, Nigeria, Poland Portugal, Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Sudan, Syria Turkey, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. In collaboration with my colleague Raga Gibreel, I have coordinated advice workshops at HMP Pentonville and Rochester on a bi- monthly basis. Additionally, I have supported prisoners in HMPs Maidstone, Elmley, Swaleside, Wormwood Scrubs, Huntercombe and Stoke Heath with telephone contact and visits.

Referrals from HMP Rochester for the workshop were increasing until the last two sessions when all movement in the prison was frozen and we were unable to see anyone. The majority of referrals have been for legal advice regarding challenging deportation and making applications to remain in the UK. There is no automatic legal aid for this and the cost of these applications is prohibitive with legal fees estimated at £2,500. However Exceptional Case Funding exists (ECF), a discretionary form of legal aid for people who are unable to represent themselves because of the complexities of immigration law. I supported two of my clients in making successful applications for ECF using a template provided by Bail for Immigration Detainees (Bid). This meant they were then able to find a legal aid lawyer to represent them. Applications and appeals are currently on hold due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

We were delighted when one of my clients obtained leave to remain for herself and two young sons after many years of struggle. Her husband's fresh asylum claim is still outstanding

but her Home Office Caseworker said he believed his situation would now be looked at compassionately. Her husband is severely mentally ill and his wife is his carer as well as parenting their two boys. We hope the situation will be resolved very soon and salute the courage and endurance of this family whom we have been glad to help financially over a long period.

I wrote to Emily Thornberry the MP for Islington South whose constituency covers HMP Pentonville. Her staff manager advised that Emily had written to the Lord Chancellor pressing for better conditions for prisoners and better assistance and security for staff. She said she would take up individual cases on request.

I was contacted by a remand prisoner in a London prison who had been granted criminal bail but the Home Office were holding him for immigration reasons. He had been assessed as having respiratory difficulties while in prison which indicated a vulnerability to Covid-19 though he was not tested. I referred him to Bid who were able to place him with an excellent immigration solicitor who obtained his release on bail and is also pursuing an unlawful detention claim. The prisoner contacted me when he was released and told me he was going to make a donation to Kent Refugee Help if he won his compensation. Prisoners are so vulnerable and desperate in this situation they are overwhelmingly grateful for any assistance.

Kate Adams, Caseworker

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Statement for the Annual Report

This year we have supported a range of clients who have been subject to the hostile environment, including clients related to the Windrush scandal and clients with health problems.

Our triumphs are sometimes as little as helping a prisoner overcome a communication hurdle, but we are aware that there is little we can do given the limited availability of Legal Aid. Our clients also face more difficulties on release, where their accommodation is generally of a poor standard. Some clients, if lucky, get Section 4 Home Office provided) accommodation, which could be either a hostel or house usually with a shared room. Other clients are released on to the streets.

One of our positive stories is, the story of Mr. W at HMP Rochester. A prison officer spotted a foreign national prisoner who did not speak a word of English and was struggling with cancer, so she referred him to KRH for support. We managed to arrange a few visits with a volunteer interpreter, which enabled communication between the prison officials and the prisoner regarding his wellbeing. The results were brilliant and appreciated by all concerned.

Mr. R.S from Trinidad lost his two children and a wife in a car accident. It was a great shock for him. He was hospitalised and treated for the shock. He was not able to access bereavement counselling in prison. KRH supported him through visits, and he found the visits helpful. We also assisted him to keep in touch with his family and friends, and tried to help him access Legal Aid. Sadly, he was not able to access Legal Aid, his claim was not successful and he was deported.

Rights and Restrictions

Communication is a big hurdle and most prisoners find it difficult to get solicitors and appeal convictions. Those who secure lawyers struggle to communicate or understand their rights, so our workshops provide a means for them to communicate and understand their rights, despite language barriers.

Transfer of prisoners with long term illness is another challenge, where many experience disruptions to their medication. At the new prison, due to a screening routine, the prescribed medicine gets confiscated on their arrival. Prisoners have to be re-examined before their medication is re-issued. This sometimes takes more than a week. The delays noticeably affect prisoners with substantial and long term illness.

Mr. F.L, who was originally from Jamaica, was 60 years old, and had lived and worked for over 20 years in the UK without a previous criminal record, waited 10 days for his blood pressure medication prior to transfer. The absence of the medication resulted in him having symptoms such as headache, dizziness, tingling and numbness. He refused to make a complaint about this for fear of ill treatment. Unfortunately, because of the limitations of legal aid we were not able to get him a solicitor and his family could not afford a private solicitor either, so his application for asylum was not successful and he was deported. In his words, ‘communication was a major obstacle. It even caused friction with my family. The multiple transfers and distance didn’t help.’ Since his deportation to Jamaica in February 2020, KRH still support his family.

Raga Gibreel, Caseworker

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Volunteer and Former Client Report

A Prison Diary (F’s statements to the KRH volunteer)

I am a failed Asylum Seeker who has lived in the UK for some 16 years now; I am semi-literate due to my childhood circumstances and am effectively stateless, also as a result of the latter.

When I first came to the UK I was self-supporting, working with documentation provided by literate friends, which subsequently proved to be illegitimate. Since those days and my failure to establish LTR, I have relied upon the kindness of friends, KRH and others, for support.

I made myself available for removal at the H.O.’s discretion from the U.K., maintaining bail conditions as rigorously as possible given a complete lack of funds (NRPF) for travel and so on in the meantime. I suffer from several chronic medical issues, rendering me significantly disabled; severe oedema in both knees and subject to acute asthma attacks, chronic head pain.

I am currently serving a prison sentence, not unrelated I believe, to dual issue ‘moral panics’, linked with prevailing racially focussed, ‘hostile environment’ attitudes. At the beginning of my sentence, I was sent to a standard HM Prison, where despite the trauma of renewed internment, medication and medical interventions, including removal to a local hospital at one point, were typically available; also for the first time in my life, I was able to



have literacy classes, I gained certificates for these early stages.

When transferred to a 'Foreign Nationals Prison' in November, I was sad to find that no language classes were provided and when recently I collapsed and suffer from ongoing major head pains, the Doctor apologised and stated that I should really be taken to hospital for an MRI scan, but there were no funds to either fulfil drug needs or provide a hospital transfer.

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It would be difficult for me not to feel after all this, that the Hostile Environment is reinforced with in the Foreign National Prison system.

Thank You from Kalfan

Kalfan is an ex-client, who has been working on a community allotment. He was given four chickens, and had been paying for their feed by doing odd gardening jobs. Due to lockdown, he was unable to buy feed, so we sent him some money to pay for this until he can resume his gardening work.

Subject: Thanks from Kalfan

Good afternoon Kent refugee help i will like to said thanks for everything you help me for along time time now since 2005 on Dover from the day until now im so grateful and i never forget in my life ever. Im doing very well and my medication is working very well never been hospital for 3 years now thanks for gym and allotment make me feel im not alone thanks and thank you very much God bless you all ameen all the best and best wishes from kalfan bin mansoor x

Email sent to us from Kalfan

Events

How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights



How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights

Violations of refugee and migrant rights with impunity

Join us
14th March 2020, 11-3 pm
The Friends Meeting House,
6 Friars, Canterbury CT1 2AS.

Contact
info@kentrefugeehelp.org.uk
www.kentrefugeehelp.org.uk



Book Launch for the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, London Hearing

Immigration raids, indefinite detention and
corporate profit, prison and deportation.
Gather to hear the evidence and continue
the resistance!

Speakers

Don Flynn, PPT Steering Group and former
Director of Migrant Rights Network
Aniti De- Ruano, Kent Refugee Help
Umit Ozurk, Euro Mediterranean Network
Wan Chung, Min Quan Advocacy Group

Refugee Art and Poetry

On March 14th 2020 KRH organised an event entitled *How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights*.

The event was made up of a book launch, talks by campaigners and charities, and a literary and arts performance.

The event began with the book launch for *How the Hostile Environment Creates Sites without Rights*, which consisted of the Evidence presented to the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) in November 2018. KRH gave written evidence to the PPT and attended the oral hearing.

The book was introduced by Don Flynn from the PPT steering group. We also heard from Waling- Waling-Supporting Migrant Workers Campaign, Kent Refugee Action Network and Samphire about their work supporting refugees and migrants locally as part of contesting the hostile environment.



This was a very successful session and we hope to work with members of the PPT again in the campaign against the Hostile Environment and for migrant rights.



The afternoon session focused on literature and arts, and was co-organised by KRH trustee Bahriye Kemal and her students at School of English, University of Kent.

The session focused on ways literature and arts challenge the hostile environment, with emphasise on the significance of place, space displacement in relation to displaced people, such as refugees, asylum seekers and detainees.

The session included poetry and prose readings, songs and an exhibition of art work by displaced people of various background, including Jamaican, Syrian, Kurdish, Spanish and Irish, Palestinian.



Leroy Letts, a former client, shared songs and artwork about hostility. Megan Eales, a student from the School of English, read an essay on graphic novels, photographs and poetry related to refugee camps. Ada Enright, a student from School of English, read five poems on displacement. Francisco Javier Navarro Prieto read from his award winning book *El bello mundo*, poetry by Syrians.

The borders by Kadar Samad

This sky, it doesn't resemble
My sky,
The sky over there
Full of my childhood memory
This Moon it doesn't look like
My Moon
The moon over there
Lighting the night of love
Those stars, they don't look similar to
My stars
The stars over there
Brightening the soul of kindness
This Season it doesn't look like
My season.
The season over there
You feel the colour
You see
The whiteness of winter
The greenness of spring,
The yellow of autumn and the summer
In the end
We are Human beings
Our blood is red
I want to get rid of those borders
Which make a separation?
Between me and the others



Kadir Samad reading his poem

A Zine of Literary and Artistic Responses to the
Hostile Environment that Creates

Sites without Right



Edited by
Bahriye Kemal, Leroy Letts, Bejan Matur, Kadir Samad, and undergraduate students –
Susannah L. Crosby, Megan Eagle, Ada S Enright, Joe Street, Francisco J. Prieto, Amy Tol
– from the School of English University of Kent.

Contents

Living in Sites without Rights

Leroy Letts
Calm Before the Storm
Strength of Bob
Eyes of a Cloud

Kadir Samad, The Border

Bejan Matur,

Students Mapping Identities in Contemporary Spaces

Megan Eagle, Graphic Novelists, Photographers and Poets
Susannah L. Crosby, About a Citizen of
Joe Street, Abouts Stars from North and South
Ada S Enright, Five Poems by Displaced People
Amy Tokel, Poetry for Palestine
Francisco Javier Navarro Prieto, Syrian and Spanish Poets Meet

Decade of Living and Challenging Sites without Rights with KRH

Jade Amoli-Jackson, Moving a Country
Aso, Waiting
Nasrin Parvaz
Painting
Heathrow 1993
Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre

Kadour Milnyali,
My Story
Desert Spirit
Volcano

This zine consists of poetry, prose and artwork that challenge and respond to the hostile environment that creates sites without rights. It is made up of previously published work alongside new work.

The zine has been edited by Bahriye Kemal, Leroy Letts, Bejan Matur, Kadir Samad, alongside undergraduate students – Susannah L. Crosby, Megan Eagle, Ada S Enright, Joe Street, Francisco J.N Prieto, Amy Tokel –studying on the modules Mapping Identities and The Contemporary at the School of English University of Kent. Leroy, Bejan and Kadir, who have captured the actual experiences of living at the midst of sites without rights in Jamaica, the UK, Iraq and beyond, here share a selection from their own work. As part of their module topics – including Syria, Borders, Spatiality, Displacement and Mediterranean Migration – the students researched and submitted relevant literature and/or art work that responds to the hostile environment with particular emphasis on the writing, reading and construction of places and spaces without rights. The zine also consists of a selection of work by displaced authors and artist who have contributed to Kent Refugee Help's efforts in challenging the hostile environment within the past 10 years.

As part of the event Bahriye Kemal, the students and the displaced people co-created a zine. The zine consists of a range of works, such as paintings, poetry, short stories, essays by refugees, asylum seekers, former clients.

Christmas Party



Leroy and J in front of his paintings



Amy is a foster carer for an unaccompanied minor

Last Christmas, we held a celebration at the Whitstable Labour Club, which was very well attended. As part of the event we sold some paintings and prints by former prisoners and our supporters.

Training

Kent Refugee Help is now registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). That means that KRH is authorised to provide legal advice and representation in UK immigration law. Our registration number is N201900073. Our registration runs for one year until 11 November 2020 and can be renewed annually. We have one regulated adviser at level 3 (the highest level) able to represent clients up to hearings at the First-Tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) and the European Court of Human Rights. We are already giving legal advice mainly on a one-off basis to begin with but we are looking to expand on this in the future. On registering with the OISC, KRH also joined the well-established Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), involved with policy work, for example.

One of our caseworkers will be starting OISC level 1 in May, which has been kindly funded by Refugee Action

Looking Forward...

Despite the Covid-19 Pandemic, the state of the world and hostile environment towards people seeking asylum has not changed, and the need for our work continues to increase all the time. We are very grateful to the support of our volunteers and friends upon whom we depend for so much.

Our work in supporting refugees and migrants is more urgent than ever, and we will do our utmost to make their voices heard.



Eyes of Cloud by Leroy Letts

*Eye blue Dark below Eyes of
the cloud Just eyes of the
memory What your mind
shapes Thats what you see
moving in the cloud The eyes of
the cloud is watching everyone
Everything that moves on the
land Reflection of the sunshine
Reflection of the beating of my
heart Eyes wide open*