

# THE WEXFORD SANCTUARY DECLARATION

SANCTUARY AMBASSADORS OF WEXFORD, 2020

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## **PRESS RELEASE/BACKGROUND NOTE**

Sanctuary Ambassadors from Wexford are embarking on a campaign to ensure better conditions for asylum seekers in the county, and have recently finalised a manifesto. The group comprises of 30 asylum seekers representing more than 200 others from County. Since last November we have been meeting monthly to develop our skills in public speaking, working with the media and Irish history and politics. The objective of our effort is to prepare ourselves to make meaningful contribution to our host community of Wexford and the State of Ireland.

Following an exciting and educational day in February, when Brendan Howlin TD gave us a practical introduction to our voting system, the Sanctuary Ambassadors have been meeting by zoom to finalise our Wexford Sanctuary Manifesto, which will be sent to all political figures in the county as well as key national leaders. The document summarizes our requests for changes in the system of International Protection, and covers the areas of State of Direct Provision, Decision Making Process & rights to work.

## **Quotes from Authors**

*"It was traumatizing for me to leave behind my wife and young daughter. A speedy reunification would be healing for us all." South Sudan.*

*"Long periods of waiting adds to our anxiety. I long to get back to economic productivity." Somalia*

*"We were forced to leave our home, to seek sanctuary, but now I would love to use my skills as an experienced designer to help build homes in Ireland". Syria*

*"I have four teenage children and it's a challenge for six of us to live, sleep and study in two small rooms with no cooking facilities, especially during lockdown." Sudan*

## **Note:**

Several of the authors of the manifesto are available for interview – please contact the group on [wexfordamb@gmail.com](mailto:wexfordamb@gmail.com)

## WEXFORD SANCTUARY MANIFESTO

### OUR REQUESTS FOR REFORMS IN INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND INTEGRATION

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#### 1. Direct Provision

- Centres should be run by Not-for-Profit organisations, with independent monitoring.
- All managers should receive proper training and there should be more consistency and accountability, with time-limited contracts.
- All emergency centres should be closed or changed to official Direct Provision Centres with agreed standards and provision, as a matter of urgency.
- Minimum standards of IT, study space, self catering, children's play areas and transport to local centres should be established immediately.
- Asylum seekers, especially families, should not be in Direct Provision for more than one year.

#### 2. Asylum Decision Making System

- Speed up the decision making process and enable us to track our cases where delays are happening.
- Allow advocacy by elected representatives such as TDs to the Department of Justice on behalf of individual asylum seekers.
- Reform the delays and hardships caused by the Dublin 3 agreement.
- Once a positive decision is received, reduce excessive delays regarding the minister's letter and issue of GNIB card.
- Easing of process and expense of family reunification, including dependent children over 18.
- Availability of post decision supports to enable moving on.

#### 3. Right to Work

- Reduce waiting time for work permits to a maximum of 6 months.
- Remove embargo on Dublin 3 applicants receiving work permits.
- Enable us to showcase our skills to local businesses and embark on awareness raising programmes for local employers and businesses.
- Enable driving licence issue when work permits issued.

#### 4. Other Matters

- Ensure nationwide consistency of English language supports including EAL supports for school children.
- Including our voices in consultation and reviews of services.
- Enable strong community-based awareness-raising programmes around asylum and immigration, in order to help integration at all levels

**PLEASE NOTE:** This manifesto has been in progress for several months and is now being presented to our political leaders and representatives. We welcome the new government programme and request these measures be considered as interim solutions to the hardships. We also want to assure our leaders of our willingness to help in any way needed, using our skills and experience.