



(formerly Stonewall Immigration Group)

PO Box 51524
London SE1 7ZW

PRESS RELEASE

As Clarke Is Sacked, Lesbian And Gay Asylum Seekers Speak Out

On 4th May, at a packed meeting in London's Conway Hall, lesbian and gay asylum seekers spoke of their traumatic experiences and fears for their safety if deported. For most it was the first opportunity that they had had to meet other asylum seekers who were fleeing persecution because of their sexual orientation. Meeting the day before Charles Clarke was sacked as Home Secretary, they spoke out for those who have to go through the immigration system at a time when the press is lambasting the government for being too soft.

The meeting heard testimony from a lesbian from Ghana released a few days before from an Immigration Detention centre, whilst Jamaican asylum seekers, both lesbian and gay, gave graphic accounts of how dangerous it can be to come out to friends and family. A Zimbabwean detained for 18 months spoke of the difficulties faced by asylum seekers demonised by the press. An Iraqi asylum seeker spoke of how gay people were now being murdered by extreme Islamic groups and an Ethiopian spoke movingly in support of his gay friend who could find no-one else to turn to in his own community for support.

The meeting had been organised by the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG) and it was supported by the attendance of other groups including Outrage, Refugee Action, Black Lesbians UK, Bail for Immigration Detainees and Imaan. It was addressed by supportive gay immigration solicitors and barristers who explained the complex asylum process and the very high threshold that has to be met to be granted asylum in the UK.

Sarah Booker of UKLGIG said "This meeting was of great importance to the vulnerable lesbian and gay asylum seekers in our community. It provided a safe place for people to exchange views and experiences, feel support and obtain good quality advice. We will be holding more meetings in the future."

Editors' Notes

Resources for Journalists and the Media

Further information about the Lesbian and Gay Asylum Seekers Support Project can be found at www.uklgig.org.uk

UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group

UKLGIG has been in existence since 1993 and was formerly known as the Stonewall Immigration Group. The group was founded in order to assist same-sex, bi-national couples win the right for foreign partners to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis of their same sex relationship. The work of the Group resulted in the introduction of the unmarried partners concession in 1997 which entered the Immigration Rules in October 2000. Many of Group's recommendations have been included in the Civil Partnership Act which was implemented in December 2005.

With the successful implementation of the Civil Partnership Act, we have shifted our focus towards the problems faced by lesbian and gay asylum seekers. We are contacted with increasing frequency by those who are seeking the protection of the United Kingdom, because they are persecuted due to their sexual orientation, in their home country. There is little support for such individuals in the United Kingdom and this is why we have set up the Lesbian and Gay Asylum Seekers Support Project.

For further details contact

Sebastian Rocca
Executive Director
UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group
Tel: 020 7922 7812
Email: sebastian@uklgig.org.uk