

17 June 2005

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## World Refugee Day

### Celebrating Sanctuary in Edinburgh and Glasgow, 20<sup>th</sup> June

Refugee Week begins with a dual celebration of the cultural diversity that refugees are bringing to Scotland, in our countries' two most cosmopolitan cities. They are among the first of more than 75 events, ranging from theatre performances and book readings, to exhibitions and open air carnivals, taking place throughout Refugee Week.

Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm said:

*“Scotland has a long tradition of welcoming refugees, and it's important to ensure that refugees get the opportunities to contribute fully to life here. Refugee Week celebrates their history, talent, and cultures. The events taking place across the country allow us to acknowledge and celebrate what they bring to our communities.”*

**In Glasgow**, “Welcome to the Asylum”, from 7.00pm at Buddha's Back yard, in the merchant city, uses music, theatre, film and rap to explore the experience of being a refugee in Scotland in 2005. The event is being opened by River City Star Joyce Falconer.

Joyce Falconer said:

*“Scots sometimes forget that they have often been refugees and immigrants themselves across the world for many centuries. Hopefully events like this will help us better understand our own history and help us to be more compassionate towards those who come to Scotland looking for safety”.*

Scottish Refugee Council Chief Executive, Sally Daghlian added:

*“World Refugee Day asks us to think about the millions of people whose lives have been devastated by war, conflict or human rights abuses, forcing them to flee their homes and live in exile as refugees. The majority of these refugees languish in squalid conditions in refugee camps and shelters across the world. Refugee Week in Scotland is a time to show solidarity with those few refugees who have sought sanctuary here and celebrate the diversity and creativity they bring with them.”*

**In Edinburgh**, “Celebrating Sanctuary: Celebrating Success”, from 6.30pm St George's West Church, Shandwick Place, is an Amnesty International project which profiles the stories of eight individuals who have fled persecution and made their homes in Scotland. The evening event will launch a new publication and exhibition which highlight the contributions that refugees across Scotland are making to their communities and to Scottish society. Later, there will be an opportunity to see two great pieces of refugee theatre: The Asylum Monologues by the refugee theatre company Ikaze plus guest speakers, poets and story tellers; and the Burma Play, a performance followed by a discussion.

Rosemary Burnett, Programme director for Amnesty International Scotland said:

*”Myths and stereotypes about refugees and asylum seekers are rife. This project gives people the chance to encounter the real human stories behind the headlines and to celebrate the energy, diversity and skills which refugees bring to Scotland.”*

**ENDS**

***Full details of all events during Refugee Week are available on our website at [www.refugeeweekinscotland.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweekinscotland.org.uk)***

***For further details, please contact : Andrew Dougal, Press & Communications Officer, on 0141-223-7927, mobile 07734-030763, or email [andrew.dougal@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:andrew.dougal@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)***