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11th June 2010

The Right Honorable Damien Green MP
Minister for Immigration
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr Green

Re: Leave to remain for vulnerable young people and families

We write at time when you are new in office. We look forward to wise working in the ways of asylum and immigration. We are aware of pressure from many quarters to limit immigration and asylum claims and for that pressure to lead to cruel decisions to remove vulnerable young people and families. Indeed we know several families facing such situations and there are others we do not know personally.

We are concerned that you do not make hasty decisions about removing vulnerable young people and families from the UK. We are concerned about reports that the government intends to remove young Afgans to a resettlement centre in Afganistan at a time when that country is far from stable. We are particularly concerned about another young person:

Rima Andmariam, HO Reference: A1374575/2

Rima Andmariam, now 17 years old, arrived in the UK in March 2008, fleeing persecution in Eritrea and then racist neglect in Italy. She currently lives in Scoltand with Robert Swinfen and Alison Phipps in Glasgow since March 2009, and they have become a close-knit family unit. Rima has a strong case for asylum from Eritrea, but under the Dublin Regulation is liable to be returned to Italy. She has come to love Robert and Alison as her Dad and Mum, and they have very strong parental feelings for her too. For the past year they, with some help from friends, have provided her entire support as if she were indeed their foster daughter. Rima is extremely vulnerable and in need of a secure family to recover from the trauma and chaos of the past three years of her life. She is doing very well, but is far from ready to live on her own and both wants and needs to continue living with her British Mum and Dad.

Salem Zaouche and family; Oaudia, Nabil, Ilysa, Celia, Mellissa and Ilyas, currently living in Halifax, West Yorkshire.

Salem is from Algeria. He has been volunteering at a food drop in Halifax for some time. There are health issues around several family members. We understand that a recent Judicial Review has recommended removal back to Algeria. We want to state strongly that this should not be allowed to happen.

We urge you to intervene in these cases to allow Rima and Salem Zaouche and family to remain in the UK because of the many strong relationships they have made here.

Both Rima and the Zaouche family have been through Judicial Review. We are concerned that in the early days of a new government regretful decisions on removal should not be made in haste. Rather we would like to see the new government make plans for a much fairer policy on immigration and asylum claims that is not fuelled by pressure to respond to the right wing press and the scare tactics of the uneducated few about imagined threats to this country. We are not threatened by immigration. We are made by it and it makes us who we are.

It is our belief that policies that involve people should never be allowed to become rigid, inflexible rules. It is on this basis we would urge you once more to exercise discretion in these cases permit Rima and the Zaouche family to remain in this country. We continue to pray for them and for you.

Yours faithfully,

Janet Lees

Bob Warwicker