



24 June 2022

PRESS RELEASE FROM REFUGEES FOR JUSTICE

## **Refugees for Justice welcomes launch of Inquiry into treatment of asylum-seekers in Glasgow during Covid-19 pandemic.**

**Independent Inquiry, led by leading Human Rights lawyer Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, will help secure justice for those whose lives were changed by tragic events at Park Inn in June 2020.\***

Refugees for Justice, the Glasgow-based, refugee-led grassroots organisation, is today (26 June) welcoming the launch of the **Commission of Inquiry into Asylum Provision in Scotland**, led by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC. However, its fight for a full public inquiry into why refugees in the city were abruptly forced out of their homes and into unsuitable hotel accommodation during lockdown will continue.

**Dylan Fotoohi, director of Refugees for Justice, says:**

*'We thank Baroness Helena Kennedy for heeding our call for an independent investigation into the events that resulted in the deaths of two asylum-seekers during lockdown - one by suicide; one shot dead by police after suffering a mental health crisis. These were two separate, tragic, incidents, which happened a few weeks apart in 2020, but we believe they had a common root - which was the decision by the Home Office and its housing contractor Mears Group, to disregard the needs of refugees by forcing them out of their homes and into hotel rooms during the pandemic, with no safeguarding or support.'*

Refugees for Justice continues to urge the government to set up a statutory inquiry, with the powers to compel witnesses and force disclosure of evidence. It is supporting a High Court legal challenge, brought by one of the Park Inn stabbing victims, calling for a public inquiry. The case will be heard in the High Court in London next week.

Refugees for Justice is committed to working for positive reform and has presented a proposal to the Scottish Government, COSLA, and Scottish Local Authorities outlining an alternative model for the provision of asylum support and accommodation in Scotland. Supporters of the proposal include a wide range of human rights organisations, individuals, and faith groups, such as the Church of Scotland (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The proposal calls for the provision of asylum support and accommodation to be taken out of the hands of private companies, and to be

delivered by the public sector in Scotland, to improve safeguarding, promote inclusion, and ensure accountability.

## **\*Background**

**In April 2020, during the first major COVID-19 lockdown, 321 asylum-seekers, were moved out of their Home Office-provided accommodation in Glasgow, and into six city centre hotels. Many of those moved report that no account was taken of the impact on their mental and physical health, and they were left in hotels without adequate support or access to essential services. Those moved included victims of trafficking and torture. In April 2020, Adnan Elbi, a refugee who was moved into MacLays Guest House, took his own life. In June 2020, another refugee who was moved to Park Inn, Badreddin Abdalla Adam, stabbed and injured six people, including hotel staff, fellow asylum-seekers, and a police officer. He was then shot dead by police. A leaked Home Office report shows that Badreddin was experiencing severe mental health problems, and had made 72 calls seeking help from different authorities, before the day of the attack.**

Refugees for Justice also welcomes a report published by Baroness Kennedy to herald the launch of her Inquiry, in which she draws together available evidence about asylum provision in Scotland and sets out emerging themes for the Inquiry to consider in depth.

In her report, Baroness Kennedy concludes that 'the asylum system is broken', and that the buck for its failings stops with government. She also notes: '...those seeking asylum are excluded from work in all but exceptional circumstances; they cannot contribute to the economy. It is forbidden. They are also restricted from participating in society, in community life, due to the Home Office's ability to move them around the country, broadly at will.'

### Notes for editors

1. The **Commission of Inquiry into Asylum Provision in Scotland** will be formally launched on 26 June, the second anniversary of the Park Inn tragedy. Baroness Kennedy will be speaking; along with representatives from Refugees for Justice; asylum-seekers who were moved into hotels during the pandemic and witnessed the attack; and politicians from across the political divide. Further details, on request.
2. Media are invited to attend the launch at 2pm, on Sunday 29 June, at the Merchant House, George Square, Glasgow, but are requested to register first, by emailing: [info@asyluminquiryscotland.com](mailto:info@asyluminquiryscotland.com)
3. For more information about Baroness Kennedy's Inquiry, see <https://www.asyluminquiryscotland.com/>
4. For more information about the High Court legal challenge on 29 and 30 June 2022, contact: [fiona@impactsocialjustice.org](mailto:fiona@impactsocialjustice.org)