



**West End Refugee Service**

*strength through support*



## Issue 61 April 2015

Welcome to the April edition of the WERS newsletter!

### Migrant deaths in the Mediterranean



Heartbreaking stories of African migrants drowning in the Mediterranean in their desperate attempt to reach Italy are appearing all too often on our television screens. Unseaworthy vessels, overcrowded with men, women and children, often do not make their destination. This past week over a thousand people, many of them children, were drowned after two boats capsized after leaving Libya. The Mare Nostrum European Union search and rescue operation controversially ended in November last year, leaving only a border patrol in Italian waters. As a result thousands of migrants risk death daily with little hope of rescue as they attempt to reach safety in Europe.

We have heard this week that the despicable traffickers often only put enough fuel in the vessels to go part of the way, mistakenly assuming that the migrants will then be rescued by Italian border control.

WERS supports the new Save the Children campaign which is strongly urging leaders of the UK political parties to commit to “restart the rescue” of thousands of migrants crossing the Mediterranean and demand that the EU reinstates rescue operations to avoid further deaths in treacherous bids to reach Europe. The decision makers believed

that, by stopping the search and rescue operation, people would be deterred from making these dangerous journeys. This has been proved to be completely wrong. Figures for the first 3 months of 2015 have shown no drop in the numbers of migrants heading for Italy.

Save the Children has been responding to the needs of children arriving in Lampedusa, Sicily, Calabria and Apulia and is deeply concerned at the reports of violence experienced and witnessed by children in Libya. Children arriving have experienced harrowing journeys and are in desperate need of psychological support. Adequate care and protection should be provided to all children, in particular those who have suffered violence.

### WERS' Project Director role



For the next six months, Carol Gorman will be seconded to a job share with me in the Director's role. She is taking on this responsibility in addition to her current part-time Volunteer Co-ordinator role.

My mum lives down south and this new arrangement will allow me to spend a bit more time with her. I will be working Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Carol will be in WERS Monday to Friday. I am looking forward very much to having Carol working alongside me and I think it will be an excellent partnership which will be great for WERS!

## Men's clothes – we need some more urgently!



We are very short of men's clothes and would welcome donations for the store. Spring is a great time for a clear-out of the wardrobes!

## MRN Our Vote 2015 campaign

Migrant Rights Network has launched their "Our Vote 2015" campaign which calls on the next government to introduce a just and inclusive immigration system. Visit their site where you can directly e-mail your parliamentary candidates at: <http://www.our-vote.org/write-to-your-next-MP>

## Refugee Week 15-21 June 2015



This year there will be the usual awareness-raising stall in the Grainger Market when Mythbuster leaflets and free Refugee Week pens will be given out to passers-by.

This will be on **Wednesday 17 June**. If you would like to join the team of volunteers on the stall let us know.

The sessions are broken into 1 hour slots but if you can stay a little longer or cover 2 slots that would be great. It is a good day and there are always people on hand to help first-time volunteers.

Lindsay Cross

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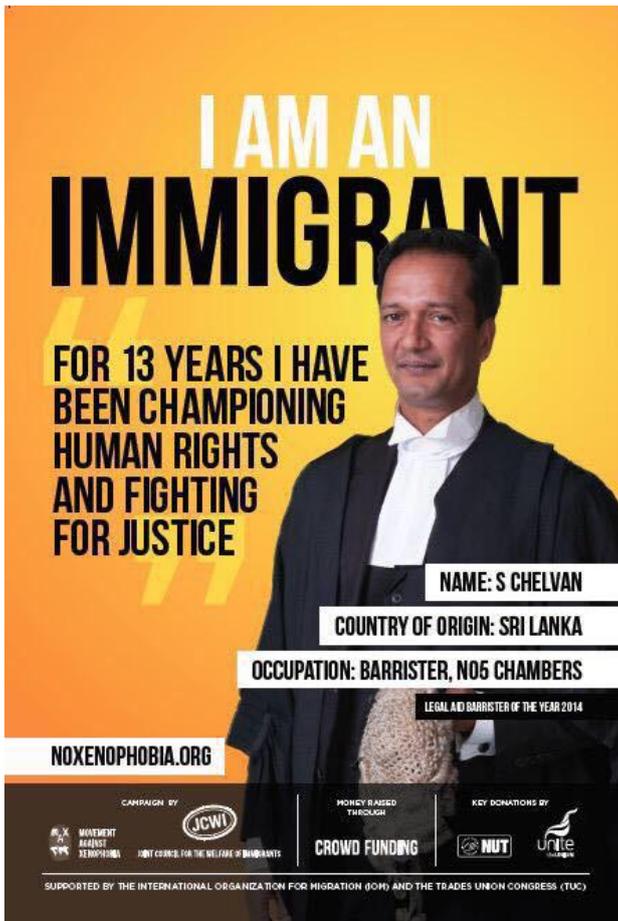
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Have you seen the excellent 'I am an immigrant' posters around Newcastle? They have been produced by the Movement Against Xenophobia and, with the general election fast approaching, are a timely reminder of the wonderful contribution immigrants make to the UK.

The full set of the 15 posters can be downloaded at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/fnrczrcsharr0na/iaai-posters-jpgs.zip?dl=0>

