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INFORMATION UPDATE

Publication of the 2015 Annual Report of

THE OFFICE OF THE REFUGEE APPLICATIONS COMMISSIONER

The fifteenth Annual Report of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner has now been published on the ORAC website.

Our Annual Report 2015, which the Refugee Applications Commissioner is required to transmit to the Minister for Justice and Equality under the Refugee Act, 1996, provides an update on the operations of the office for the year with particular reference to delivering on the goals and objectives set out in the Office's *Strategy Statement 2013-2015*.

Key points in our Annual Report for 2015 are:

Refugee Status

- The total number of applications for refugee status received was 3,276. This represents a 126% increase in applications compared to 2014. This is the highest number of applications since 2008.
- The total number of asylum applications processed to completion in 2015 amounted to 1,552 cases. In addition, ORAC completed some 1,480 subsidiary protection cases.
- Prioritised asylum applications were completed within a median processing time of 10.8 weeks from the date of application. Non-prioritised cases were processed to completion within a median processing time of 29 weeks.
- Some 2,912 sets of fingerprints of asylum applicants were sent to the EURODAC fingerprinting system with 345 hits, involving 231 applicants indicating that those applicants had made asylum applications in more than one Contracting State.
- The Commissioner continued to be represented at appeal hearings before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) and, in consultation with the Tribunal, ORAC ensured that the maximum number of hearings per week could be serviced. 725 hearings were serviced during 2015.
- There were only 11 judicial reviews initiated against ORAC in 2015. This low figure was influenced by the continued support including training provided to caseworkers and Case Processing Panel Members, the ongoing improvement in ORAC's quality assurance procedures as well as jurisprudence on recourse to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal rather than utilising the route of judicial review except in exceptional circumstances.

Subsidiary Protection

- In 2015, some 900 subsidiary protection interviews were scheduled and 1,480 cases finalised.
- Some 297 new applications for subsidiary protection were also received by ORAC in 2015.

Additional key points in the 2015 Annual Report include:

- The leading five countries for 2015 in respect of new applications for refugee status were Pakistan (41.3%), Bangladesh (8.7%), Albania (6.5%), Nigeria (5.7%) and India (4.4%). This compares with Pakistan (20.2%), Nigeria (9.8%), Albania (6.8%), Bangladesh (6.8%) and Zimbabwe (5.9%) in 2014.
- The main countries in 2015 in respect of new applications for subsidiary protection were Pakistan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Algeria.
- 33 applications for refugee status were received from unaccompanied minors, which accounted for 1% of the total number of applications received.
- ORAC issued 302 outgoing transfer decisions under the EU Dublin Regulation in 2015 on the basis that these cases were the responsibility of other EU States.
- 88% of asylum applications were made in Dublin at the ORAC headquarters with the remainder being made at other locations such as airports.
- ORAC continued to prioritise applications for refugee status made by persons in detention in line with statutory requirements. A total of 35 applications were received from persons in detention in 2015. This figure constituted 1% of all applications received.
- 272 applications for family reunification were received from the Minister for Justice and Equality for investigation, which was an increase of 63% on 2014.
- 319 applications were deemed withdrawn from the asylum process for various reasons including applicants failing to co-operate or attend for interview.

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