



# Together

NEWS FROM JRS UK SPRING 2020

**accompany • serve • advocate**

**“Solidarity is not vague compassion or shallow distress...On the contrary it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good...because in the end we are all really responsible for all.”**

— St John Paul II —

# Resources available from JRS UK

## Lent

This Lent, JRS UK has produced a weekly reflection for each of the Sundays in Lent. It will include the week's Gospel reading, a testimony from one of our refugee friends and questions to help you reflect on what you have read. We hope you will be able to join us on this journey through Lent.

For more information visit:  
[www.jrsuk.net/lent/](http://www.jrsuk.net/lent/)

## Stations of the Cross

Praying the Stations of the Cross is a powerful way to mark the season of Lent. We invite you to pray the Stations of the Cross using our resource, which was very popular when we released it last year. It follows the format of the Stations that many of you will be familiar with but with an additional reflection on the plight of refugees in our world today.

To download online:  
[www.jrsuk.net/praying-with-refugees/](http://www.jrsuk.net/praying-with-refugees/)

## Prayer Cards

JRS UK has prayer cards with both the JRS UK prayer and a prayer for the intercession of St Alban, the patron saint of refugees. Both cards are also bookmarks so can be a helpful reminder to pray for refugees whilst you enjoy your latest read.

## Parish & School Resources

JRS UK has plenty of resources for your parish, Confirmation group, school or workplace to get involved with JRS UK and learn more about the lives of the refugees JRS accompanies.

**For more information on our prayer cards and resources, or to request them by post, contact Nick at [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net) or call 020 7488 7322**

# Upcoming events you can join

## London Marathon – 26 April

There are 6 people running in support of the work of JRS UK in this year's London Marathon, with a target of £12,000 combined. We'll be cheering them on from the sidelines throughout the day, and supporting them with their marathon training.

Would you like to join us?

## London Legal Walk – 8th June

This will be the second year JRS UK takes part in the London Legal Walk, which takes place in the heart of London to raise much needed funds for charities that provide life changing legal advice and representation to those in need. Starting our Legal Project in 2019, Jess and Michael, our legal team, are eager to have as many people walk and fundraise to help support the ongoing demand for legal advice on asylum cases for our refugee friends. Last year we had 42 walkers – why not join us?

## Refugee Week – 15th – 21st June

Look out for a number of events 15-21 June as we celebrate Refugee Week, and work towards a welcoming and understanding asylum system with other charities and advocacy groups.

JRS UK will host an art exhibition at our office on Wednesday 17th June 6pm-8pm, sharing artwork created by refugees in JRS UK's creative arts group.

Save the date and stay tuned for further details on our Art Exhibition.

**If you want to support our runners, join the Legal Walk or find out more about Refugee week, contact [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net) or call 020 7488 7310 for more information.**

# Together, called to serve



Welcome to the new look of Together, our newsletter for supporters and friends! I hope that you enjoy the content and find the new layout easy to read.

This edition is a special one for Lent, highlighting our Lenten appeal and giving a longer space than usual for the story of one of our refugee friends, Akbar.

Akbar's story is a difficult read. It is painful to hear about the years of struggle he has endured, even more so when it becomes clear how much of his suffering has been as a result of the asylum system here.

I'm always grateful for the prompt of Lent to give more space to prayer and reflection. As I reflect though on Akbar's story and on the experience of so many we accompany at JRS UK I am struck by St Ignatius' words that

**“Love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words.”**

It is in deeds and in giving of ourselves, our time and our resources that we communicate the love of God to others. I see this so clearly in the care of our staff, volunteers and supporters, who together make up JRS UK.

We long for the day when refugees are welcomed with kindness, warmth and generosity. A day when no one has to endure homelessness or detention. The asylum system is hostile, cruel and disbelieving. But in our centre each week I see love made manifest in tangible acts of kindness. I see it too in the faithful support of our volunteers who visit people held in immigration detention. I see it in the generosity of those who collect toiletries for our refugee friends, and in the generosity of those who open their homes to host.

I also meet that generosity in the countless individuals, parishes and communities who donate money to enable us to run our Day Centre each week. Your generous support in so many ways enables us to go on serving.

This edition has a page about our Lenten appeal and the list of services where we urgently need funding to support the growing numbers of refugees who are denied the essentials to live by the UK's harsh asylum system. Anything you can do to support this appeal would be greatly appreciated.

In the meantime, I wish you a blessed Lent.

Best wishes

Sarah Teather, Director

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# JRS UK Lenten Appeal

This Lent, we are asking you to consider donating to JRS UK to help provide the ongoing needs at the Day Centre.



## The Day Centre

The Day Centre is open each Thursday to accompany more than 200 refugee friends each month. Providing small cash travel grants for bus passes, toiletries, a hot meal prepared by volunteers, and a place to relax, its purpose is to provide a safe and comfortable place.

A safe and comfortable space is rare for many of our friends whose accommodation often changes and is unpredictable. Our staff and volunteers are available to chat with our friends, providing support and advice on a range of issues which can arise from a life made destitute by the asylum system.

***“I was very satisfied that JRS gave me a travel grant...at least if it's raining, I can sit in the bus... if no place is available in the night I can sleep in the bus...”*** – Akbar

Most days, our friends are being forced to prove themselves over and over again as to why they have claimed asylum. In trying to convince Home Office officials, find housing, find legal support and be treated equally in a new country, our friends often have to relive traumatic experiences. JRS UK is somewhere our refugee friends belong, where they can simply be, seek support if they would like to, and feel loved.

Throughout the week, collaborations with arts, drama and sports groups offer classes and opportunities to learn a skill, express themselves and feel empowered during a difficult and overwhelming period. The Day Centre runs a host of activities to ensure our refugee friends can explore their skills, make connections with others, and above all, feel welcomed with love.

***“It's not just financial it's emotional and psychological help is [what] I get from JRS. It's like a family.”*** – Akbar

***With your help today, people like Akbar can rely on JRS UK for support when they are met with hostility.***

JRS UK offers intervention and responds to practical needs, but also creates spaces of hospitality, community, friendship and participation, which enables refugees to heal and shape their own future. Giving priority to situations of great need, JRS UK wants to make sure the needs that others are not attending to, are met.

***“Most important thing is [the] atmosphere [at JRS] – it is welcoming and supportive and always hope and [the] housing scheme. I think personally, without JRS I could have developed so many psychological problems if we do not receive any help.”*** – Akbar



*Busy in the community kitchen at our Day Centre*

Read more about Akbar's story of moving to the UK and claiming asylum on the next page.

Using the form enclosed, please donate today to ensure JRS UK can continue to accompany, serve and advocate for our refugee friends through the Day Centre.

# Friends run the London Marathon to raise money for JRS UK

**On the 26th April 2020, two long-time friends will put their training and fundraising efforts into action for the iconic London Marathon.**

Alannah and Andrea, both 29 years old, are running the marathon while fundraising for JRS UK after realising there is a need to support refugees and asylum seekers. Seeing similar experiences of refugees in their home country South Africa, both women were enthusiastic to do something that would make a difference here.

“Running is no easy feat for me but it’s a little bit of pain in order to help people who have had a much harder journey than 26 miles.” –Alannah

Hearing about JRS UK in her local parish, Alannah encouraged Andrea to join her in the London Marathon, to raise awareness and much needed funds for refugees who are left destitute by the asylum system.

Moving over to London, I was welcomed by my friends and family and immediately found myself in a supportive community. I could not imagine what it must feel like to arrive in a country, only to be met with more difficulties or to not feel welcomed.” –Alannah

Andrea, a legal executive who focused her Masters in Law on human trafficking, was naturally inclined to join, to support a cause that recognised the vulnerable people who are destitute and in detention.

With ambitious fundraising targets and rallying support from their network of friends, colleagues and family, these two ladies are raising awareness and funds for JRS UK to continue supporting forcibly displaced persons seeking refuge in the UK. Both Alannah and Andrea have hosted trivia nights in London and Dublin, raising well beyond their goal of £4,000!

Thank you Alannah and Andrea, as well as our other four runners, for your commitment to helping JRS UK in our mission to accompany, serve and advocate for our refugee friends.

“The road seems shorter when shared with a friend” and it can’t be truer than being able to share the journey and prepare for the marathon, both with my training and my fundraising efforts, alongside my long-time friend, Alannah. Being able to ring each other up and share the stress and excitement makes the challenge a little less daunting and turns into a bit of fun too.” –Andrea



*Alannah (far right) awarding a painting by a refugee friend to a raffle winner at her fundraiser.*

Want to donate to help Alannah, Andrea and our other runners reach their fundraising goal? Visit their fundraising pages at [www.justgiving.com/campaign/jrslondonmarathon2020](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/jrslondonmarathon2020)

# Testimony

*Akbar\* has been supported by JRS UK for almost 7 years. He shares with you some of his challenges and experiences of being detained and living destitute in the UK*

Akbar grew up in a loving home and has fond memories of life in his country as a boy:

*“When I was small as a boy, it was lovely country. I have loving parents, one sister, friends. Life was good. Very good.”*

After some time, Akbar found himself in the middle of dangerous socio-ethnic and political tensions. As his community and political party became targeted by the government who persecuted them and drove them underground.

*“Suddenly government changed its policy and start killing, extrajudicial killing... they arrest somebody and on the way to jail, they just suddenly killed them”*

In 2004 he came to the UK to seek asylum under the guidance of his political party. He claimed asylum in Croydon, South London, about a week after arriving in the UK,

*“[It was] I think after six, seven days [after I arrived] because I wasn't aware how to claim Asylum. It wasn't clear [...] It's not an easy thing [to do].”*

The process of claiming asylum was uncomfortable and frustrating for Akbar who sensed immediate hostility, and disbelief from immigration

officials. He was questioned with the same suspicion that many of those who claim asylum encounter - and the unreasonable suggestion that they simply return to a different area of their home country.

*“I observe the intervening immigration office. I observe. I read his face. He didn't believe it ... it was very, very difficult to [...] make him believe. I think they already have it in their mind - they don't believe.”*

Suddenly, Akbar's life changed for the worse. During an already complex and stressful process of claiming asylum, he was detained, without warning. He found the immigration officials to be misleading, unclear and disregarding of his situation. He was frightened:

*“I was in a shock first time because nobody informed me. They took me to Tinsley House in Gatwick, they detained me for 8 months [...]. It was a horrible experience. Look, a person, he was studying, he was hoping to become like a scientist or something, serve the community and suddenly he is, you know, in a prison kind of situation.”*

His ambitions and hopes were crushed by his experience of detention, which was traumatic, unsettling and painful. It was an isolating experience. For Akbar, it was difficult even to connect with those around him who were in the same position.

*“[I was] treated like a criminal. I saw a horrible things over there. Everybody was frightened and praying. I don't see any life in anybody's face. . It's like half dead people. Even prison is better than detention. ...if you go to prison, you expect [it]. But in detention, you*

*don't know how long you will be in detention. I saw some people two years over there in detention centre. It's really very hard.”*

Upon release he very quickly realised he had lost everything; his accommodation, opportunities, and even relationships which were now damaged by unjustified suspicion:

*“I came to the house where I used to live, this person refused to give me the place... thinking that I did some kind of crime and I was in prison. They don't trust me anymore. So even all my possessions, he had mostly thrown away ... eleven o'clock at night, he asked me to leave his house. So I went to Victoria Coach Station to sleep the night out there.”*

Akbar quickly found himself destitute, and homeless,

*“I was homeless for two, three weeks. Sometimes in a night shelter [where] many criminal and alcoholic people come - you don't really sleep at night because you have a fear somebody's next to you, someone violent and they just attack you with no reason.”*



Finding out about JRS UK meant that Akbar felt like he had some support, and a welcome for the first time in many years.

*“On my first day I was a little bit tense but then I found it very welcome place. I was very satisfied that JRS gave me a travel grant...at least if it’s raining I can sit in the bus...if no place is available in the night I can sleep in the bus...it was a great help I think, the biggest help I received from JRS. It’s not just financial it’s emotional and psychological help is [what] I get from JRS. It’s like a family.”*

Akbar says if it wasn’t for JRS’s Day Centre, lots of people wouldn’t survive:

*“Even if you are homeless and if you are sleeping outside, there is a big possibility that somebody will beat you. So I think JRS is doing a great job. It’s a big help for most marginalized and needy people in this country. Without this grant, nobody will be able to buy like travel card, toiletries, and clothes. Most important thing is [the] atmosphere [at JRS] – it is welcoming and supportive and always hope and [the] housing scheme. I think personally, without JRS I*

*could have developed so many psychological problems if we do not receive any help.”*

Thanks to the JRS ‘At Home’ hosting scheme, Akbar was able to recover his strength both mentally and physically:

*“If I didn’t find JRS hosting scheme, I think at the moment I [would be] in prison somewhere. Because it... for me, [...]right from childhood until the young, I was cared, my loving father and mother.... and no harsh environment for me. So that was a very, very harsh environment for me from all the directions from the government, from Home Office, from homelessness. So many so many problems, psychological problems, so much pressure. So all pressure is released at the moment.*

*But I think it is the greatest help in my whole life. I find JRS hosting scheme. This scheme is remarkable and the people where I go are loving, they are so much care about you, they provide you everything. Nice breakfast, lunch, dinner, accommodation, laundry. I think... what can I say? It’s the biggest help for [me].... it’s give me so much courage.”*

It is clear to Akbar that the UK government, with their hostile policy, forget about the inherent humanity of those who are vulnerable and seeking asylum.

*“At the moment, the government is very against Asylum Seekers or refugees. I don’t know why... it’s like hostile environment. They even not thinking how could a person survive without any job. When I was [in] detention, they release me, but they did not offer me anything. So they did not think, ‘where I will go? How will I eat?*

*How I survived? They don’t think, they are not worried about our survival, they’re just saying to go back to your country.”*

Akbar’s current status is frustrating and complicated as he continues to live with constant anxiety, day-to-day:

*“I developed a life here. So they put me this application, still waiting for this decision. It’s under consideration ... At the moment, I’m just kind of in a limbo situation, waiting for my application result.”*

But above all, thanks to the work of JRS UK, he is able to find the strength to feel hope for his own future:

*“I feel very comfortable and very optimistic and I think I will fight now more with the power and all my... whatever resources are available. I’m sure that I will find a place ... whatever I was used to, after some time, good time is coming. It’s giving me big hope.”*

*Akbar has endured a lot of hardship since arriving in the UK, after having fled violence in fear for his life. In some way, JRS UK could help him feel safe and welcomed. If you want to help support Akbar, and people like him, please consider contacting JRS UK today.*

\*Akbar’s real name has been replaced to protect his identity.



# Why Detention?

## Our resident policy officer looks at the impact of Immigration Detention and questions the reason for detaining displaced people.

I recently attended a panel discussion on immigration detention in the UK. The panellists were Mishka, a campaigner from Freed Voices, a group of experts by experience that advocates for detention reform; Mary Bosworth, Professor of Criminology at the University of Oxford who has particular expertise on immigration detention and deportation, and Matthew Gibney, Professor of Politics and Forced Migration at Oxford. The purpose was not so much to crunch numbers or policy detail – though these did come up where relevant – as to consider immigration detention from an ethical and philosophical perspective. The panellists introduced the practice of immigration detention in the UK: detention in prison-like conditions, without time limit or judicial oversight, for the purpose of immigration control. And then began to ask: What is this practice doing, and why, and what are the implications for everyone involved in it and for society as a whole?

There was a rich discussion, exploring questions about the purpose of immigration detention, which was also open to the floor. Is it really intended for removal – in which case why are some people detained for years, and why are over half of those detained released back into the community? Is it designed as a spectacle, to generate fear among migrant communities and so control them, and to demonstrate that the government is ‘tough on migration’ – in which case why is the practice so often hidden, and how can we facilitate a more productive discourse? Could detention for immigration purposes ever be justified, and if so, under what circumstances? Would we as a society allow indefinite immigration detention if those detained were primarily from other countries in the global north? There was disagreement and nuanced discussion on these topics, but there was a clear opinion among the panellists that there was something very wrong with the current system of immigration detention.

The issues explored here are very relevant to our work at JRS UK. Our detention outreach team of course accompanies and serves people detained in the two centres at Heathrow. A key part of our advocacy work, and of my job as

policy officer, is to create space for the voices of those in detention to be heard, and more broadly to shine a light on detention. This involves focusing on the human impact of a system that indefinitely incarcerates thousands of people a year and does so with very little accountability – the decision to detain is a purely administrative one that does not go before a judge. This system has a vast human cost; it tears apart families and communities, is bad for physical and mental health, and causes lasting trauma. Torture survivors often compare it to torture. For people who have been trafficked, detention recalls incarceration and abuse at the hands of traffickers. The existence and operation of immigration detention does indeed raise urgent ethical questions for us as a society.

I came away with a burning question about detention. Why do we do something so profoundly destructive at all?

Dr Sophie Cartwright, Policy Officer

### *How you can help*

Accompany people in detention through prayer by signing up to our Praying with Detainees email list [www.jrsuk.net/subscribe](http://www.jrsuk.net/subscribe)

Or

Donate today to support volunteers who accompany people in detention every week by filling in and returning the enclosed donation form or visit [www.jrsuk.net/donate/](http://www.jrsuk.net/donate/)



# Praying with Detainees

To accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and displaced persons is the core mission of JRS UK.

JRS UK staff and volunteers visit our friends in detention each week.

Detention is a stressful and mentally draining experience, especially for someone who has fled their home to escape immense suffering.

Knowing that along with advocacy work, prayers are being said for them, brings immense comfort for people in detention.

Where prison-like conditions wear down freedom, dignity and independence, some find hope and refuge in the merciful love of Jesus.

You can accompany refugees and asylum seekers by signing up to our monthly 'Praying with Detainees' emails. Receive a reflection, testimony and prayer to remember those who are waiting to be released from detention.

“God is love and mercy. He loves all no matter who we are or where we come from. In this family of humanity, we are loved by the Lord; He wants to give us freedom from all sadness. In hope of the Lord, we are generous and share our lives. In His courage and His way of the cross, we courageously face the difficulties that this world has brought and will continue to bring.”

Fr Joseph, Detention volunteer

These words of reflection are from Fr Joseph who has been accompanying refugee men in immigration detention centres near Heathrow for three years with JRS UK

Here is what some of our friends, who have been accompanied by JRS, have told us in detention:

*“I have been here for 4 months now. I am always thinking that I am criminal but I am not. I am only an asylum seeker. I am heavily depressed now, not wanting to go out.”* –Zamir

*“In my country, they tortured me physically, but here the Home Office is torturing me mentally. They destroyed my dreams and my life.”* –Yonas

*“I am very thankful for [my visitor], I feel she has been my best friend during this difficult time.”* –Kobi

\*All names have been replaced to protect the identity of our refugee friends.

Lord Jesus

give us courage to **accompany** others,

for in walking at their side you there present with us.

Give us joy that we might **serve** others, for in tending wounds of those who suffer, we sense your healing grace at work in us.

Give us wisdom as we **advocate** for others, for in defending the downtrodden we hear your voice speak up for us.

Grant that in all we do, we may give you glory Lord; we return all we have in love to you, for you have given everything to us.

Amen

# How can you help?

JRS UK is always looking for help as the needs of those made destitute by the asylum system continue. While we are advocating for their rights and trying to change the experiences of seeking asylum in the UK, there are always practical needs, some more urgent than others.

Here are some of the ways you can help our refugee friends today.

## Donate to our Day Centre:

Toiletries are distributed to our refugee friends each week, so you can imagine how many of these we go through, and that we are always looking for donations of:

- Shampoo (especially for women)
- Shower Gel
- Tooth Brushes
- Tooth Paste
- Sanitary Towels
- Deodorant
- Moisturiser
- Nappies
- Baby wipes



Creative activities are organised for our refugee friends to take part in each week, so our supply cupboard always needs re-stocking:

- Paints
- Water colours
- 20x A3 frames (black or white)
- 40x A3 canvas'

Visit our website for our Current Needs List, which is always kept up-to-date, and for details of how to organise a collection should read collection or deliver toiletries to JRS UK.

[www.jrsuk.net/current-needs](http://www.jrsuk.net/current-needs)

## Organise a speaker

If you would like to learn more about JRS UK or spread awareness of destitute refugees in the UK, reach out and we can come to you. Our Outreach officer can speak to your school, parish or community. Contact Nick on **020 7488 7310** or [nick.hanrahan@jrs.net](mailto:nick.hanrahan@jrs.net)

## Prayer

Accompany those held in immigration detention through prayer: [www.jrsuk.net/subscribe](http://www.jrsuk.net/subscribe)



Toiletries for our refugee friends to pick up at the Day Centre.



*Distributing travel and phone credit top-ups are some of the essentials provided to our friends at the Day Centre*

## Host

The At Home hosting scheme is a lifeline for many destitute refugees who find themselves sleeping on the streets. Our hosting placements are available thanks to families, communities and religious congregations opening their homes to one of our refugee friends. To be a host, individuals must be able to offer a room for a period of 3 months in Greater London.

Contact us to find out more on [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net)



*Many cups of tea and conversations are shared at the Day Centre each week.*

## Friends of JRS

### Every month:

- Our Day Centre is visited by more than **200** refugee friends
- More than **1,000** travel grants are given to our friends to use for accessing essential appointments (to see their solicitor, GP, etc)
- Up to **10** new friends register with JRS UK
- At least **10** of our refugee friends are homeless and looking for accommodation
- Over **100** detainees are accompanied by staff and volunteers who make visits to the detention centres in London.

**Can you help us every month?** By making a gift to JRS UK every month, our refugee friends can continue to rely on ongoing support, advice, a warm meal and toiletries every month. Become a **Friend of JRS** today by filling out the enclosed form or by visiting [jrsuk.net/friends](http://jrsuk.net/friends)

## Consider your Legacy

Leaving a Gift in your Will is leaving a legacy. As we look to the future, in a society where politics is increasingly hostile towards migrants, we want to ensure JRS UK can welcome refugees for the long-term as they rebuild their lives. We need you to help us.

By remembering JRS UK with a gift in your Will, your values of love and care for your neighbour will live on.

Contact us for a guide on how you can make this possible, thank you.

**“What I am hoping is that people will be very aware about the situation for refugees and that we might get donations in between times.”**

Frances, volunteer



## The Jesuit Refugee Service works in more than 50 countries around the world.

**JRS UK is made up of staff and many volunteers who work to accompany, serve and advocate for destitute refugees in the UK, of all faiths and none.**

If you can, please consider donating to JRS UK. With your support JRS UK can continue to accompany destitute and detained refugees in a spirit of hospitality, welcome and love.

### Donate today

Call 020 9488 7310

Email [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net)  
Visit [www.jrsuk.net/donate](http://www.jrsuk.net/donate)

Mail your cheque/postal order made payable to Jesuit Refugee Service to the address below.



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