



Amnesty International Regional Conference: Refugees

Speakers

Saturday 8th October, Cambridge

Keynote Speaker

Fathieh Yazdi, feminist and Human Right Activist



Fathieh Yazdi is a feminist and a Human Rights activist. She was born in Mashad, Iran and lived in Britain from 1970 to 1979 as a foreign student and then returned in 1982 as a refugee. She studied here and raised her three daughters, and from 1982 she has mainly worked in charity organisations. She was an adviser at Ipswich Women's Aid for 10 years and then at the Refugee Council for the next decade, advising on women and refugees' rights.

She was a member of the editorial board of an Iranian feminist journal in the 1980s-90s. She has retired from her main jobs but continues with her involvement in human rights activities and working for equality for women and does this mainly through social media.

At the conference, she will talk about why she had to flee and the reasons why people flee their homes; the journey to a safe place and life as a refugee; adapting to and integrating in the new community and culture and changes in the ways refugees have been treated in time, as well as differences between experiences of migrants and refugees.

She will recount her experience working as an adviser with the Refugee Council, changes to welfare and housing rights as well as how to go about understanding the needs of refugees from different backgrounds in the UK and understanding the culture of refugees and the host community.

She will talk about her voluntary work for refugees both in UK and in Greece and will conclude by highlighting the ways that people can help refugees today.

Saskia Mahal, Member of the Co-ordination Committee of Save Me Mainz

Saskia Mahal is a member of the Co-ordination Committee of Save Me Mainz. Save Me Mainz, founded in early 2009, is a local initiative under the umbrella of a national alliance, which champions the resettlement, and admission of refugees as well as their rights and participation in society.

In addition to raising awareness, informing the public and political campaigning, the coordination committee of Save Me Mainz has been overseeing the programme "Welcome Mainz", which supports living a "Willkommenskultur" (welcome culture) in the city.

As part of the programme, the coordinators visit refugees in mass accommodations to assess their needs and initialise support networks. One of their main aims is to build bridges between locals and refugees that have come to Mainz, for example, by mediating language tandems and help for every-day tasks as well as organizing getaways and joint cooking sessions. Save Me Mainz is committed to connecting and communicating with other local initiatives and campaigns and is, as such, part of a bigger local network.

Steve Symonds, Amnesty UK's Refugee and Migrant Right Programme Leader

Steve Symonds is Amnesty UK's Refugee and Migrant Rights Programme Director. He has worked in this area for nearly two decades, firstly as a lawyer representing asylum-seekers in their asylum and welfare support appeals, and later by advising and training lawyers, as a policy advocate and campaigner. He has been with Amnesty UK since July 2014, primarily working on the response to the global refugee crisis, but also on other issues including migrant domestic workers' rights, anti-trafficking and immigration legislation and children's rights to British citizenship

Ali Criado-Perez, nurse at Médecins sans Frontières

Ali Criado-Perez is a registered nurse, with a background in Accident and Emergency. She has been working with Médecins sans Frontières since 2007, providing medical care in a range of emergency and conflict zones, from treating lead poisoning in Nigeria, to providing healthcare to communities cut off by guerrilla warfare in Colombia, to fighting the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone. Last year she was Medical Team Leader on a search-and-rescue mission for refugees crossing the central Mediterranean between Libya and Italy. She has recently returned from a three-month mission

providing health care to Syrian refugees in a camp on the Turkish/Syrian border. This autumn she is speaking about refugees, on behalf of MSF but on the Amnesty platform, at two of the Party Political Conferences. She knows that one day she should retire, but she can't seem able to! She has three children and when she is not on a mission she lives in Rutland.

Nancy Herz, Deputy Board Member of Amnesty Norway

Nancy Herz is a 20-years-old Deputy Board member of Amnesty Norway, columnist, activist and law student. Nancy has been a member of Amnesty since 2011, and has on several occasions held lectures about the refugee crisis. Nancy has a Lebanese background, and although she has been a Norwegian citizen her entire life she has experienced war first-hand twice. Nancy will be talking about the Norwegian perspective and take on the refugee crisis, but also her personal experience with having family and friends in a country which borders to Syria and why civil society should be involved (both in Norway and Lebanon).

Syd Bolton, UK Human Rights Lawyer

Syd Bolton is a children's rights solicitor (currently non-practising in the UK). He was the former co-director of the Refugee Children's Rights Project at the Coram Children's Legal Centre, Children's Legal and Policy Adviser to The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, a solicitor at Islington Law Centre and at Wilford Monro Solicitors.

He has litigated, written, spoken and delivered training extensively on the rights of children, in particular, refugee, asylum seeking and migrant children, both nationally and internationally.

Amongst other roles he has been an executive committee member of the Immigration Law Practitioners Association, chair of the Advisory Board on Asylum and Trafficking to the Children's Commissioner for England and an Associate Member and Deputy Rapporteur of the International Association of Refugee Law Judges.

He is now providing voluntary assistance to refugees and to Greek legal professionals and NGO's in relation to the present refugee situation there and also working on an international legal project to develop standards and practices in relation to the rights of dead and the bereaved migrants.