

Irish Refugee Council and Unicef Ireland Easter Camp
c/o IRC 2nd Fl Ballast House
Aston Quay, Dublin 2

28 March 2013

OPEN LETTER

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you from the Ombudsman for Children's Office where we are concluding a 6 day Easter Human Rights Camp hosted by the Irish Refugee Council and Unicef Ireland. We have completed four separate projects on human rights as they apply to children and young people seeking asylum. We are from all different walks of life and all have an interest in making Ireland a better place for children. Some of us are Irish studying for our Leaving Certificate. Some of us are living in foster care and studying for our Leaving Certificate. Some of us are in Direct Provision also studying for the same exam. Some of us are studying for our Junior Certificate and some of us are in our first or second year of University or Post-Leaving Certificate Course.

We are boys, girls, Irish, Somali, Second Generation Irish, Afghan – but at this camp, we have come together to work towards making a change that would affect all children in Ireland who come into contact with the asylum system. Some of us here have fled countries ourselves, alone. Some of us have left with our families and have sought asylum through no decision, or fault, of our own. Some of us are Irish and have only just learned about issues relating to asylum and human rights, in general. We, the young people of this Easter Camp, are concerned.

Some of us have written songs and recorded them. Some of us made a video. Some of us made a piece of art. We will show these to the people of Ireland through social media and through a travelling exhibition. The issues we hope to highlight surround access to third level education, problems with discrimination and bullying in education at second-level and inequality. Additionally, we have highlighted our strengths and what gets us through - our faith, our hopes, our dreams and our ambitions. We have experienced, however, that when our hopes and ambitions are stifled or taken from us, we are faced with darkness that can creep in and affect our **mental health**.

