



City of Sanctuary

Special NEWSLETTER – Sanctuary in Parliament

2nd September, 2014

SANCTUARY IN PARLIAMENT- CELEBRATING THE FREEDOM TO SPEAK

A summary with impressions and quotes: Sarah Eldridge and Tiffy Allen

Some wept silently in their seats. Others looked around in awe - that they could walk unchallenged, speak unpunished in this, the Mother of Parliaments. Here were people who had been forced to leave their countries because they dared to speak out against their own leaders. And now, politicians from a foreign country were stopping by to listen to them.

The event was sponsored by Sarah Teather MP, with the aim of introducing City of Sanctuary to MPs and allowing the voice of refugees to be heard in Parliament.

And that voice was heard, loud and clear. City of Sanctuary representatives from almost 20 cities attended. Many refugees spoke out from the front, while others had conversations with some of the 35 MPs who called in. They spoke of being persecuted, detained and stripped of their dignity – *after* they fled to the UK.

In poetry, drama, and plain English they told how it felt to be at the sharp end of the asylum system - detained like criminals, banned from working, forced to live on charity, afraid that at any moment they could be detained and removed from the UK.

By the end, strong new friendships had been forged, MPs had stayed longer than they meant and been visibly touched, and City of Sanctuary had grown in strength, confidence and unity, heartened that we have more supporters and friends than we ever thought possible, and determined to build on the energy, confidence and momentum created by this day.

“The experience of being in parliament will remain with me – I couldn’t do this in my own country.” **Refugee CoS Member - Bristol**

"I want a City of Sanctuary group in my constituency!" - **MP for Cheltenham**

“We need to speak up, blow our trumpets even louder until all labels are removed and people are cared for as people above everything else.... I think we need to take ownership of our voice and keep speaking up”. **Refugee from Derby**

"I will certainly go away and think about what you have told me today" – **MP for High Peak**

“I am excited about the next step forward, I have found hope.” **Refugee, Leeds**

“Our letter writing to MPs at the CoS conversation club worked really well and I was delighted to see 7 MPs from the North West there”. **Coordinator, Manchester**

“It was wonderful of my MP to come along to meet me, and he was incredibly supportive, offering any help he could give I feel incredibly proud to be part of such a fantastic community of people” **City of Sanctuary supporter, Exeter**



City of Sanctuary

“Cardiff CoS had a group discussion with MP Jeremy Corbyn for Islington about the delay in decision making about an asylum case.” **Refugee, Cardiff**

"City of Sanctuary is the best thing Britain has produced in years" – **Maurice Wren, CEO, Refugee Council**

“My abiding memories now are the 2 very moving presentations of the loss of country and culture – first shown in the African drama where the memories of life at home turned into music and dance and secondly the poem written and spoken so poignantly by the lady from Iraq...” **City of Sanctuary supporter, Birmingham**

“Don’t worry, no matter how long it rains or snows,
The sun must shine again
Then you will be able to thank almighty God,
And all the good people
Who helped you through”
Refugee Poet, Swansea



City of Sanctuary volunteers welcomed MPs to the event



Cardiff CoS had a group discussion with MP Jeremy Corbyn



Bristol CoS reps with their MP

<http://cityofsanctuary.org/>