

HRC 36th session

Item 6 – UPR Outcome of the United Kingdom

Edmund Rice international Statement

Mr President,

In the United Kingdom an increasing number of people access local food banks on a regular basis. 40% of low income households report being faced with the ‘heat or eat’ dilemma, while 20% of parents regularly say that they go without food to ensure that their children have enough to eat. The United Kingdom government is clearly failing to meet its human rights obligations to support the right to food of its citizens.

Housing is a basic human right as well as a social need. Currently the UK Government is failing to address effectively and strategically, homelessness in Northern Ireland which has remained at historically high levels since 2005/06, and is characterised by high rents and an inadequate housing supply, and compounded by issues around addiction and mental health.

Longer stays in hostels, due to the rising unaffordability of housing, increase the chance of negative health outcomes, institutionalisation and lessens the chances of successful community reintegration. Funding for services in 2017/2018 has been cut by 5% which, has resulted in reduced support and will lead to the closure of vital services. A surge in homelessness in Northern Ireland is expected as a result of changes to the Welfare Reform Act. A similar reform in England has seen around a 38% increase in homelessness.

In general the UK Government has no strategy or system for refugee support and integration. Traumatized and vulnerable people, often barely able to speak English, are left to cope unaided with the bureaucratic complexities of the benefits and housing systems, whilst rejected asylum-seekers are denied all statutory support following eviction from asylum accommodation and consigned to a limbo of street destitution which drives many into illegal or exploitative survival strategies. They are subjected to a form of extreme human marginalisation contrary to the letter and spirit of UN human rights conventions

Thank You

