

Celebrating Sanctuary?

This week we celebrate refugees
Of many nationalities,
Who've sought asylum in the UK.
Life's not easy for asylum seekers today.

Families who've done no wrong
Are forced each week to go along
And sign to confirm that they're still here
And haven't absconded. They constantly fear

They'll be removed and sent back home
To persecution,
Threats to life,
Violence, death, relentless strife.

Public perception is often skewed
And affects how asylum seekers are viewed,
The media's tedious intervention
Often leads to public dissention.

Theresa May
And the UKBA
Make it so hard for people displaced
To justly and fairly present their case.

In humane society
This impropriety
And long-established culture of disbelief
Presents long or unending grief

For people seeking sanctuary
And a place they can call home.
Asylum seekers should be embraced,
Not be isolated and alone.

There are widespread misconceptions
About why people seek asylum.
There are many reasons why people flee
In search of a safe place to be.

Sometimes agents are paid, decisions made,
People threatened and told if they stayed
Their lives would be in danger –
Who wouldn't accept the help of a stranger
In this situation of persecution
And people seeking retribution?

Activists defending human rights
May be imprisoned
For standing up for what they believe,
Or defending rights, it's hard to conceive

How humanity can treat itself -
People are persecuted for who they are -
Race, religion, nationality
In particular.

Honour-based violence
The threat of FGM.
Innocent women,
Abused by men.

In armed conflict, it's women who suffer –
Life for them could not be tougher –
They're at risk of rape and sexual violence,
Terrified into maintaining silence.

In countries where domestic violence is not 'crime',
Any woman given the time
Would flee to a place of sanctuary so
She could settle and have somewhere to go.

So someone seeks asylum in the UK
And is left at the mercy of the UKBA,
Shoved into shabby 'Initial Accommodation'
With the daily threat of deportation.

Pregnant women are readily dispersed,
At twenty-eight weeks or even worse –
About to give birth, women are moved
Miles away. The system should be improved.

If later refused,
Destitution ensues.
Women left with nothing – no roof over their head,
Vulnerable, lonely, a park bench for a bed.

Destitute women are forced
Onto the street -
Unable
To make ends meet.

There's sofa-surfing and 'staying with friends',
Though this friendship readily ends
When the implications of a newborn become clear,
'Friends' no longer want them here.

Unaccompanied children are many
And often arrive without any
Proof of who they are and so
They're 'age-disputed' and have to go

For dental checks to prove their age,
Imagine their trauma at this stage –
Young and fearful of situations,
Unaccompanied, with no relations.

Asylum is a human right
But there's unbelievable stuff going on in spite
Of the safeguards allegedly in place
To protect those who are displaced.

