

Minister Brian Lenihan, T.D.,
Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform,
94, St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2

Friday 14th March 2008

Dear Minister Lenihan,

I am writing to you on behalf of Comhlámh, in relation to Pamela, Naomi and Jemima Izevbekhai and to express our concern about how this case is evolving.

The High Court has not given Mrs Izevbekhai leave to appeal to the Supreme Court which brings to an end, in this country at least, her attempts to be granted asylum for her two daughters and herself. Mrs Izevbekhai has now applied for subsidiary protection and we are asking that you use the powers granted to you under statutory instrument [S.F.1]5.6.8 [S.F.2.](2006), to extend the protection of the Irish state to these two young girls and their mother.

We understand that subsidiary protection is granted where the state decides that a person(s) does not meet the criteria for asylum but where it is clear that if a person was to be returned to their home country, there would be a grave risk of being persecuted, tortured and /or subjected to serious harm.

We believe the particulars of this case cause grave concern. This family and Naomi and Jemima in particular, would be persecuted and subjected to the seriously harmful practice of Female Genital Mutilation if they are returned to Nigeria. Your support in recognising this as a valid reason for granting subsidiary protection would be in line with Ireland's pioneering role in creating and supporting the Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence. Despite the presence of two protective parents who have done all in their power within Nigeria to prevent the genital mutilation of their daughters, Mr Izevbekhai's parents and extended family have made a number of attempts to forcibly remove the girls from their parents with the intention of subjecting them to this cruel and inhuman practice.

In 2002, Comhlámh published a booklet to raise awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and its effects on women and young girls, which I am enclosing with this letter for your information. As an organisation, Comhlámh is committed to empowering people to demand equity and we therefore support Mrs Izevbekhai as she seeks legal protection to ensure an act of violence is not committed against her children.

Following on the high court case on Thursday 13th March, Mrs Izevbekhai was ordered to present herself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau. She has received a letter that orders her to move from Sligo to the Belseskin Reception Centre

in Finglas next Tuesday 18th March where she, Naomi and Jemima must be available at all times for deportation.

We request that you inform the Garda National Immigration bureau that an application for subsidiary protection has been made by Mrs Izevbekhai and that they should not move to deport her until you have had time to examine the particular details of this case.

We trust that when you study the corroborating evidence supplied by Pamela via her legal team and our booklet, you will understand the grave child protection concerns and the level of risk posed to the girls' physical, mental and sexual well being should they be forcibly returned to Nigeria.

We appeal to you as Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to consider the best interest of the children involved in this case and grant subsidiary protection to Naomi, Jemima and Pamela Izevbekhai.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Doggett
Development Education Manager
Comhlámh