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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

£25,000 RAISED TO SAVE INFORMATION CENTRE ABOUT ASYLUM AND REFUGEES FROM CLOSURE

Individual supporters and funders have donated £25,000 over six weeks to save the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) from definite closure.

More than £3,000 came via cheques and online donations given by concerned members of the public and small organisations.

ICAR, previously based at London City University, was to become a casualty of higher education sector cuts when the university announced its inability to house the centre in April 2010. Without this base, ICAR was certain to close by the end of June 2010.

More than 85 students wrote in protest at the threatened closure.

The centre, which provides an invaluable source of unbiased information about asylum and refugees, managed to find a new home at the eleventh hour courtesy of race equality thinktank the Runnymede Trust.

However, once Runnymede had stepped forward in May 2010, the two organisations then had just six weeks to raise £25,000 to cover the costs of the move, without which ICAR would have had to close permanently.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals who donated via a dedicated web page and contributions from ICAR's existing funders, the centre will now be able to function as normal, based at the Runnymede offices in central London.

Journalist Melanie McFadyean, who regularly writes for the Guardian, personally donated £100 to the campaign. She said: "We are ignorant about what is happening to asylum seekers in the UK and will be even more so if such an important outfit as ICAR were to be disbanded."

Dr Rayah Feldman of London South Bank University said:

"ICAR is highly respected among academics and others concerned with obtaining accurate information about immigration in the UK. I know of no other resource in the UK that examines such a broad range of issues on asylum in such a trustworthy way."

Dr Nissa Finney of the University of Manchester said:

"ICAR provides an invaluable source of impartial information. No other such organisation exists in Britain."

Runnymede director Rob Berkeley said:

“It is a privilege for us to have a hand in saving such a well-informed resource. ICAR is the first port of call for many policymakers and voluntary service providers, as well as community organisations supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

“We are delighted that the public has recognised the importance of the centre and given it a lifeline.”

ICAR director Neil Amas said:

“This move has not only saved ICAR from closure, but also promises to be an exciting new partnership bringing together two complementary areas of work.

“We believe that over the coming years asylum policy will remain in the spotlight and continue to impact on refugee, migrant and established UK populations.

“ICAR’s contribution to promoting well-informed debate in this crucial area will therefore be needed as much as ever.

“We feel greatly indebted to the public, without whose generosity we would not be able to continue to do this vital work.”

Under the new arrangement ICAR will continue to operate as an independent centre, while benefiting from and contributing to the running costs and management support of Runnymede.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. Rob Berkeley and Neil Amas are available for interview. For more information or to request an interview contact Nina Kelly on 020 7377 9222 or at nina@runnymedetrust.org

2. The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) is a research and information centre that aims to encourage understanding, public debate and policy making about asylum and refugees, grounded in accurate and academically sourced information. ICAR’s objectives are to:

- Collect and make available independent information on asylum in the UK
- Undertake research, publish and train on UK asylum and global refugee issues
- Generate new thinking on asylum and raise the level of public debate
- Provide consultancy expertise to government, practitioners, funders and community organisations.

3. Runnymede is the UK’s leading independent thinktank on race equality and race relations. Through high-quality research and thought leadership we:

- Identify barriers to race equality and good race relations
- Provide evidence to support action for social change
- Influence policy at all levels

For more information or to read our latest research reports visit www.runnymedetrust.org