



Mr Charles Flanagan, TD
Minister for Justice and Equality
Department of Justice and Equality,
94 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Via email charles.flanagan@oir.ie; info@justice.ie

Cc Simon Harris, TD

21/04/2020

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you regarding two very worrying articles, "Group of 70 asylum seekers transferred from Dublin despite case of Covid-19" and "Town's anxiety over hotel goes viral" which were published respectively in The Irish Times and the Irish Examiner today regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Cahirciveen Direct Provision centre, the Skellig Star.

Nasc have repeatedly been assured that the IPAS are in daily contact with HSE public health officials and that all transfers of international protection applicants that have been carried out since the introduction of restrictions on March 12th have been carried out in the interests of public health. However, these reports have severely dented our confidence in both the Department of Justice and Equality and the HSE, and their ability to ensure the safety of residents in direct provision centres.

Unfortunately, outbreaks of COVID-19 in direct provision centres are contributing to the stigmatisation of international protection applicants within their communities. This is particularly true of places like Cahirciveen, where centres are not long-established. Transparency is therefore of the utmost importance.

Serious questions have been raised and we would appreciate an urgent response from your office:

1. If, as reported by The Irish Times, guests in the Travelodge in Dublin were advised to self-isolate for two weeks following the discovery that a guest at Travelodge has tested positive for COVID-19, was this public health advice also extended to international protection applicants living in the hotel?
2. Did the HSE make the Department of Justice aware that a guest in the Travelodge had tested positive before they dispersed international protection applicants to



centres across the country? If not, when did the Department of Justice become aware that international protection applicants who had been accommodated in Travelodge had potentially had exposure to COVID-19?

3. Did the Department of Justice seek public health advice prior to their decision to disperse international protection applicants from the Travelodge hotel in Dublin?
4. What protective measures were put in place to ensure that social distancing and other safety measures could be observed both on the travel to the Skellig Star Hotel in Cahirciveen and immediately after arrival?
5. What measures were put in place to ensure that international protection applicants who were moved to Skellig Star Hotel from Travelodge and who potentially had exposure to COVID-19 did not share rooms or facilities with international protection applicants who had been moved from other locations?

We look forward to a response from your office.

Yours sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Fiona Finn

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Fiona Finn,
CEO, Nasc