**RAPAR MEMBERS HELP CREATE UK's FIRST MURAL DEPICTING HOPES AND FEARS OF DISABLED ASYLUM SEEKERS**

Members of Manchester-based Human Rights organisation RAPAR have been working with the UK Disabled People's Council on an arts project which is being unveiled in Bristol tomorrow (Friday, March 23rd).

The project has produced the country's only public art work created by the UK's “hidden community” of disabled asylum seekers. The mural is being installed in the “Bear Pit”, the multi-road roundabout in the centre of Bristol, and is composed of drawings and ideas from disabled refugees who have worked with artist Andrew Bolton.

Manjeet Kaur lives in Whalley Range, Manchester, and is one of the RAPAR members who has worked on the mural with Andrew. She is attending the official opening tomorrow along with RAPAR members Mary Adenugba and Sandy Broadhurst.

Manjeet, who uses a wheelchair, is seeking asylum in the UK after her husband, a journalist and human rights activist, disappeared following his publication of articles and books critical of the Indian government's policies in Kashmir. Manjeet, who was born and grew up in Afghanistan, was forced to leave India two months after her husband's disappearance when she herself was attacked and threatened.

She said: “Working on the mural and meeting other disabled asylum seekers from different parts of the UK has been a great experience for me. I feel much less isolated knowing that I am part of a wider community.

“Andrew, the artist, and Rebecca from the UK Disabled People's Council worked with us and helped us to articulate and illustrate all our anxieties, hopes and fears. I think that, for all of us, expressing these thoughts through the mural has been very educational and therapeutic.”

One asylum seeker who has mental health problems and has no money and no fixed abode drew a picture of a sun hidden by a cloud, explaining: “For me, there is no sun.”

Another refugee drew a picture of herself jumping out of a tower block when she sees a police car: “If the police come to my house, I will kill myself. I won't stop to ask what they want. I would rather die than be deported.”

A 19 year old deaf woman who took part in the project has been in the country for five years. She is destitute, has never been to school here and has no contact with other deaf people.

The art work forms part of a national research project run by the UK Disabled People's Council with funding from the Big Lottery.

Co-ordinator Rebecca Yeo explains: “I have worked with disabled people in many countries and living in a wide range of different circumstances. Nowhere have I come across greater hardship and injustice than that experienced by disabled asylum seekers in this country. But, equally, nowhere have I come across greater compassion for others.”

* The work will be officially opened at 11 am on 23rd March. For more information contact Kath Grant at RAPAR on 07812471047 or Corrie Pegg at UKDPC 0208 522 7433
* or see [www.disabilitymurals.org.uk](http://www.disabilitymurals.org.uk/) and [www.rapar.org.uk](http://www.rapar.org.uk)

