

Syrian man thanks Ireland for its welcome

Dear Editor,

Dear Mr President, An Taoiseach, Government Representatives, Department of Justice and Immigration Officials, Social Welfare Officials, An Garda, Asylum Seeker Agencies and Support Networks, the Management and Staff of the Eglinton.

On behalf of myself and my wife Asma I would like to sincerely thank you for all of your compassion and kindness and for all the help and support that we have received since coming to Ireland. We came to Ireland to seek shelter and assistance after a long life of turbulence and danger and in Ireland we found more than that - we found a home, friends and a true sense of longing, safety, stability and hope.

We are very grateful to everyone who has helped us in any way, from your kind smiles to your endless patience, for you giving us our dignity and for always respecting us. In direct provision we found a community and are forever grateful to have been given accommodation in the Eglinton Hotel, Salthill, Galway - our first home in Ireland and which will be forever in our hearts.

In the Eglinton we were allowed to flourish; the management and staff treated us very well and we were allowed to pursue classes and projects that have provided us with invaluable links to the local community.

We have met many wonderful people such as the inspirational and amazing Mr Brendan Smith; our best friend and mentor, Mr Padraig Fahy; the fabulous and incredible lady that is Ms Marian Merrick and we have had the privilege in having exceptional English teachers especially Maura, the wonderful staff in Croi na Gallimhne and all of our other supporters who have become our honorary family here in Ireland. We thank Ireland and its people for giving us back our hope and our dreams, for giving us opportunities to smile and to live. Ireland has given us more than a thousand welcomes and we always truly appreciate our lives here.

Go raibh míle maith agat
-Saeed and Asma Alkhatib
from Syria