

"We are all of mixed race and we are all of mixed cultures; isn't it time that we started saying long and loud that this is the norm, this is humanity—and we're proud of being who and what we are?"

Marie Macey
Transracial
Adoption

Archbishop of Canterbury Visits Dover Detainee Visitor Group



DDVG staff, committee members and the Archbishop of Canterbury

On Saturday 11th September 2010, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams paid a visit to the Dover Detainee Visitor Group (DDVG). A patron of the charity since 2006, Dr Rowan Williams visited the charity's office in Dover to find out about its work helping migrant Detainees. Whilst at the DDVG office, Dr Rowan Williams met with DDVG staff, the Chairperson and Trustees, followed by lunch with current visitor volunteers. This visit was an opportunity for Dr Rowan Williams to gain first-hand experience from volunteers about the work of the DDVG and their impact on the lives of detainees. The visit has also raised the profile of the DDVG in the local community.

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'Detained Lives' Roadshow coming to Canterbury

The 'Detained Lives' Roadshow has been on tour around the UK this year, campaigning previously in Oxford, Brighton and Glasgow, with the next venue scheduled for Canterbury on Wednesday 17th November 2010, 6-8pm at the University of Kent. (For further details see inserted flyer).

These Road Shows feature ex-detainees speaking about their personal experiences in detention and alternative measures that could be used. More specifically, the roadshow in Canterbury will be a joint effort by DDVG, London Detainee Support Group, Kent Refugee Help and The Kent Law Clinic Asylum and Immigration Team. The event will consist of a short video on immigration detention in the UK, a presentation with findings on indefinite detention and talks by various interested parties.

Detention Explained



Dover Immigration Removal Centre

“My friend, I feel that I am locked up in a room and the keys are lost.

I’m disconnected from life.”

Ahmed Abu Bakar Hassan, a political activist from Darfur in UK immigration detention for 25 months.

What?

The Immigration Act 1971 gave the power to detain immigrants, allowing the detention of asylum seekers in detention centres. The name was changed under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 from ‘detention centres’ to ‘removal centres.’ Immigration removal centres hold foreign nationals awaiting deportation following failed asylum applications or awaiting decisions on their asylum claims.

Who and Why?

Those awaiting decisions on their asylum claims or those who are being forcibly removed following an unsuccessful asylum application. People who have overstayed their limited leave to remain, or who have breached conditions attached to their leave to remain, and who are waiting for a decision about whether they are to be removed from the UK. Those discovered living or working in the UK without permission. Foreign national prisoners may be transferred to a removal centre after completing their sentence and prior to removal.

For how long?

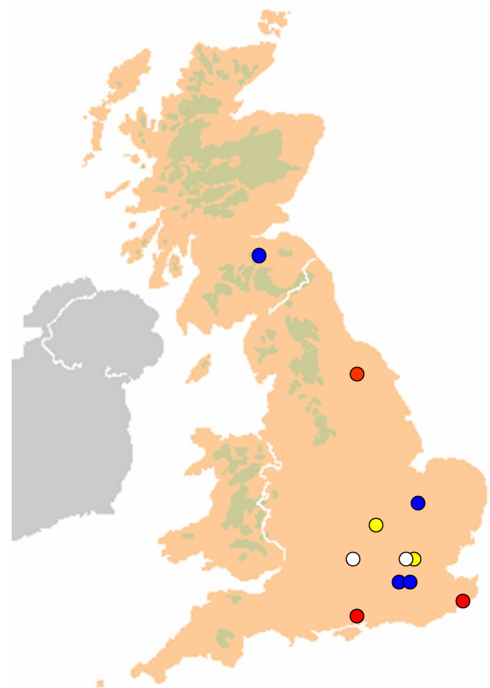
According to Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ‘detention would be used only as a last resort...and for the shortest appropriate period of time’. However, there is no statutory limit to the length of time someone can be detained; it is **indefinite**.

Between April and June of 2009, there were a total of 2,745 detainees across the detention estate in the UK. Of these, 255 had been detained for between 6 months and a year, while 225 had been in detention for over a year. (Home Office, *Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary, United Kingdom, April-June 2009*).

Where in the UK?

There are currently 11 immigration removal centres (IRCs) in the UK:

- Dover, Lindholme and Haslar
- Brook House, Dungavel, Oakington and Tinsley House
- Colnbrook and Yarlswood
- Campsfield House and Harmondsworth



Immigration Removal Centres in the UK

What's in the news?

Is there a real commitment to end child detention in the UK?

“The two months I was in Yarl’s Wood was a life time hell for me.” (14 year old)



According to Home Office statistics, 3000 children claim asylum in the UK every year. Furthermore, 94% of children who seek asylum alone in the UK are refused. What happens to these forgotten children? Whilst children are waiting to be assessed, particularly if there are age disputes, they can be put into detention centres with adults. According to *The Children’s Society*, children are sometimes ‘so traumatized by detention that they become mute.’ *The Children’s Society* and *Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID)* have come together in support of the ‘Outcry!’ campaign in an attempt to ban child detention in the UK. The campaign argues that child detention is unnecessary and a waste of tax payer’s money, with no evidence to suggest that families abscond from the authorities if they are not detained.

After the General Election on 15th May 2010, the new coalition government announced that it would carry out a review into putting an end to the detention of in the UK for immigration purposes. On 19th May 2010, the Home Office declared that children of failed asylum seekers would no longer be detained overnight at Dungavel immigration removal centre. Damian Green, Immigration Minister, said then, *“We are committed to ending the detention of all children for immigration purposes. I hope that we can have plans agreed within the next few months.”*

However, a comprehensive report called ‘State Sponsored Cruelty’, published by the charity *Medical Justice* on 9th September 2010 highlights the harm caused to children in detention, bringing the issue to the forefront once more. In addition, according to an article for *The Guardian* newspaper, on 8th September 2010, Damian Green announced his intention to ‘minimise’ the detention of children in immigration removal centres. One could view this as the coalition government abandoning its pledge in May to completely abolish child detention. On the other hand, Damian Green has insisted that *“Significant progress has been made in working towards the commitment to end child detention for immigration purposes and we are currently piloting some proposed changes to our approach developed with partners. We have already announced that the family unit at Yarl’s Wood immigration removal centre will close.”*

Whether or not the Coalition Government fulfils its electoral promise of ending child detention remains yet to be seen.

Millions paid in compensation to detainees

At the end of September 2010, it was reported that millions of pounds have been paid out to migrants in compensation for unlawful detention in immigration removal centres in the UK. Those eligible for compensation include those who are subject to unlawful detention or who have been illegally deported back to a country where their life is in danger of torture and persecution. According to *The Guardian*, government figures show that the compensation payments called ‘special payments’ have amounted to £12m for 2009/10, an increase of £3m in comparison with the previous year. However, the government has not specified how much of this has constituted compensation, as the amount includes other payments.

One of the many compensation pay outs went to a gay asylum seeker from Uganda in August of this year. He received £100,000 after an admission by the Home Office that they had broken the law by deporting him back to Uganda, therefore endangering his life. These payments are a continuation of compensation payouts which were seen in February of this year after Phil Woolas, the then Immigration Minister, admitted that millions of pounds were being paid out to ex-detainees. However, this is not a new phenomenon. In February 2009, a Congolese family whose children were forcibly detained for two months in a UK immigration removal centre were awarded £150,000.

Quick Quiz

1. What is an asylum seeker?
 - (a) An illegal immigrant
 - (b) Someone who has had a successful asylum application.
 - (c) Someone who has fled their homeland for fear of persecution and exercises their right to apply for sanctuary in another country.
 2. Where do you think the UK ranks in the world in terms of hosting refugees and asylum seekers?
 - (a) 10th
 - (b) 32nd
 - (c) 23rd
 3. From which country do most asylum seekers who come to the UK originate?
 - (a) Iraq
 - (b) Somalia
 - (c) Nigeria
- (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3

Annual General Meeting



Left to right: Lazarus Banda (Committee Member), Robin Saunders (Secretary), Ann Whitbourn (Treasurer), Vebi Kosumi (Director) and Samantha Lake (Minute-Taker)

On 30th September 2010, the DDVG held its Annual General Meeting at the St Mary's Parish Centre, Dover. With the attendance of other partner organisations, volunteers and ex-detainees, the AGM discussed the achievements of the DDVG over the past year and elected the new committee for the forthcoming year. After talks from two engaging speakers from *Detention Forum* and *Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID)* and a lively question and answer session, attendees enjoyed some refreshments.

Detainee Corner



Albanian Coalmining Village (Albania)
Created by a detainee

Dates for your Diary

03/11/10 6.30pm—Talk by Ex-Detainee
for our Volunteers (Friends Meeting House,
Canterbury, close to Marlow Theatre)

17/11/10 6.15pm — 'Detained Lives'
Roadshow (Keynes Lecture Theatre 1,
University of Kent, Canterbury)

06/12/10— Training: Medical Foundation
2-5:30PM (DDVG offices)

15/12/10-Lunch with detainees (limited to 15 spaces)
11:30AM-1PM (DIRC dining room)

Date yet to be confirmed—Christmas Party

27/01/11 6-9pm —Legal Training with Mike Brown
from Refugee Action (DDVG Office)

28/09/11 11-1pm —Annual General Meeting

*If you would like to attend any of the events please
e-mail to info@ddvg.org.uk or phone the office*

Quick Link

“Out of sight, out of mind: experiences of immigration
detention in the UK”

www.biduk.org/library/publications.htm

Read individual testimonies based on
interviews with ex-detainees conducted by Bail for
Immigration Detainees (BID)
concerning their experiences inside UK
detention centres.