

AVID

Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees

Patrons: Colin Firth, Lord David Ramsbotham, GCB, CBE and John Scampion, CBE
Registered Charity No. 1063784

In Touch

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News from AVID

Testimony project

This summer we've been incredibly busy with our Visitors Testimony Project, a major piece of work to coincide with our 20th anniversary. Celebrating the role of the volunteer visitor, we've been gathering interviews (in the form of oral history) from volunteer visitors and former detainees around the country. We have also been interviewing those who were involved in establishing AVID all those years ago. A third strand of research is an online survey of volunteer visitors. The outputs of the project - a report and short film - will be available to all volunteer visitors and visitors groups following the launch at the end of November. We've had a great response from visitors. Thanks so much to all who have taken part so far.

Latest bulletin on use of detention

AVID has published its latest bulletin on the use of detention in the UK. This follows the re-roll of the Verne to an IRC on the 28th September. For the first time in the UK, the number of detention

spaces has risen to over 5,000 (including prison spaces). You can access the bulletin [here](#).

We are also fundraising for the 20th anniversary project. You can donate simply and easily by texting AVID20£10 to 70070 to make a £10 donation.

Do you have any items for next month's newsletter? If so please send to avidnews321@gmail.com by October 15th

News from Members

Job Opportunity with Friends Without Borders (formerly Haslar Visitors Group)

A fantastic opportunity has arisen, to join Portsmouth based charity Friends Without Borders (formerly Haslar Visitors Group) as a Deputy Coordinator. This is a chance to make a contribution to this small charity which supports detainees held at Haslar as well as asylum seekers in the community. Salary is £21,000 PA plus 6% pension. For more information including a full job description visit: www.friendswithoutborders.org.uk. Applicants should apply with CV and Covering letter by 14th October to Anne Dickinson, Coordinator, at coordinator@friendswithoutborders.org.uk

Article One: new report reveals risk of harm on return to Sudan

Article One (which includes AVID member the Sudanese Visitors Group) recently released a report **The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime**, which provides new evidence of the risk

Sudanese face on return. The report includes testimonies from eleven individuals who faced intimidation, detention and torture following their return to Sudan, as well as recommendations. You can access the report [here](#).

Verne Visitors Group

The Verne Visitors Group, which has been in development since our public meeting in Weymouth in February, is now actively supporting immigration detainees held at this new facility. Run by HM Prison Service and with spaces for up to 580 men, at capacity the Verne will be the second largest detention facility in the UK. A local coordination group has been set up with development support from AVID. We trained the first 11 visitors in Weymouth in July and a further 11 were trained in September.

The group made their first visits to detainees in August, and with over 200 men currently being held at the facility, is already receiving a steady stream of referrals and now visiting the centre on a weekly basis.

The **Verne Visitors Group** can be contacted on: verne4visitors@gmail.com / 0751 7284 059



Bristol Visitors to International Detainees

Following a long development period, Bristol Visitors to International Detainees (Bristol VOID) has been able to book its first few visits to immigration detainees in HMP Bristol, this month. This is the first visitors group at Bristol prison and follows initial training and support delivered by AVID. We wish the volunteers with the group all the best for their first visits, which

we are sure will make a huge difference to the men held.

Bristol VOID can be contacted on: bristolvoid@aviddetention.org.uk or by phone 07843 69 2408.

Larne House Visitors Group

We are pleased to also let you know of another group starting visits this month: Larne House Visitors Group in Belfast. Larne is a short term holding facility at the back of a working police station outside Belfast. Its location made the establishment of a visitors group difficult as visiting had been restricted, so Larne had remained the only residential detention facility in the UK without a visitors group since it opened in 2011. AVID delivered introductory visitors training in August to 17 volunteers, and the first visits commenced soon afterward. We wish the group good luck and thank them for their support of the men and women held in Larne.

Larne House Visitors Group: larne@blue-i.co.uk

Detention Update

Verne IRC

HMP Verne officially became an IRC on the 28th September, six months after its original date to re-roll. While the centre has held only immigration detainees since late March, the facility still operated as a prison, under prison rules. The re-roll to an IRC takes the total number of IRCs in the UK to 11. The men held at the Verne will now have access to mobile phones, the internet, and will be held under the provisions of the Detention Centre Rules. This means they will also have access to, for example, Rule 35.

Expansion at Campsfield

In addition to the expansions outlined in our detention bulletin detailed above, the Home Office has plans to expand Campsfield further by an additional 260 bed spaces. This would make Campsfield one of the largest detention centres, with almost 500 spaces. Local opposition to the expansion is mounting. This is a worrying development particularly in the context of the

massive expansions we have seen already in 2014. You may wish to visit the website for the [Campaign to Close Campsfield](#) for updates on local meetings.

Healthcare Commissioning in IRCs

The responsibility for the commissioning of healthcare within the detention 'estate' in the UK has now passed to the NHS. The first transfers of the new contractors took place at the beginning of September. G4S Integrated Services were awarded the contracts for delivery of healthcare at Yarl's Wood, Cedars, Brook and Tinsley. At Colnbrook and Harmondsworth the contract was awarded to Central and NW London NHS Trust. At Pennine House the contract has gone to Spectrum Community Health CIC.

Mitie take over at Harmondsworth and Colnbrook

The contract for management of Harmondsworth and Colnbrook passed to Mitie PLC at the beginning of September. This is the first time the two detention centres at Heathrow have been tendered as one. Previously the two centres were put out to tender separately. This move has created what is being known as 'Heathrow Plus'. Mitie already manage Campsfield House IRC in Oxfordshire. As reported by Corporate Watch, this makes Mitie the largest provider of immigration detention. We have had reports of various 'teething issues' including problems booking visits and issues with healthcare. You can read the article by Corporate Watch [here](#).

Tragic death of Rubel Ahmed in Morton Hall

We were saddened to hear of the death of Rubel Ahmed, a 26 year old man from Bangladesh who was held in Morton Hall, in September. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, and those detained with him who will struggle to come to terms with this tragedy.

News of his death provoked [protests](#) amongst other detainees. These continued until a 'Tornado' riot control squad intervened on the following afternoon.

Rubel's death follows the death of [Christine Case in Yarl's Wood](#) in April, and [Bruno Dos Santos at the Verne](#) in June. Failings of emergency healthcare responses in detention were highlighted by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman at our AGM in June.

Media reports of the death and subsequent protests have [highlighted the confusion](#) and panic experienced in the aftermath. A [statement made by Rubel's](#) family appeared on the website for the charity INQUEST, who are supporting them. The statement describes a significant delay in information reaching them, learning of his death from other detainees and being given the number of a press office to find information. The insensitivity in handling this particular case is shocking. You can read more [here](#).

New Report from Freedom from Torture: UK still deporting Sri Lankan Tamils who face torture on return

The Home Office is continuing to deport Tamil asylum seekers to Sri Lanka, according to a new report by Freedom from Torture. This is despite strong evidence that security forces in the country are systematically using torture against those returned who are suspected of rebel activity. The report, based on medical evaluations of victims, has been submitted to the UN's human rights committee in Geneva. You can read coverage in the [Guardian here](#).

Unlocked 'tour' of detention

As part of the Detention Forum, AVID and many visitors groups have been taking part in the #unlocked online 'tour' of detention. Each week between 14th September and the 20th December, guided by members of the DF, all detention centres will be 'visited' virtually through social media. Alongside twitter snippets describing life inside these centres, you can visit www.unlocked.org.uk throughout this time for blogs. You can take part yourself by tweeting using the hashtags below or simply adding #unlocked to your tweets about detention.

In addition, the Detention Forum has partnered with Open Democracy to produce a weekly series of articles relating to the centre being explored

that week. AVID's Director Ali McGinley wrote a piece on detention in short term holding facilities which [you can read here](#). The full list of articles is available [here](#).

years, and 1 person for 3-4 years, before being released into the community.

You can access the data tables in full [here](#).

UNLOCKED TOUR

Week	Centre
14-20 Sep	Prisons
21-27 Sep	STHFs
28 Sep- 4 Oct	Haslar
5 – 11 Oct	Campsfield
12-18 Oct	Brook
19-25 Oct	Morton Hall
26 Oct- 1 Nov	Harmondsworth
2 – 8 Nov	Dover
9-15 Nov	Cedars
16-28 Nov	Yarl's Wood
23- 29 Nov	Tinsley
30 Nov- 6 Dec	Colnbrook
7-13 Dec	Dungavel
14-20 Dec	Summary week

STATISTICS

Quarterly immigration statistics

The Home Office has produced its quarterly immigration statistics for April – June 2014, the second quarter. The key figures of note for detention are:

- 6,996 people entered detention between April and June 2014. 44% were asylum detainees. 84% men, 16% women.
- 19 children entered detention in the period including 8 aged under five. 9 were held in Cedars, 9 in the family unit at Tinsley and 1 in Yarl's Wood.
- 6,877 people left detention, of whom 56% (3,854) were removed from the UK. 44% (3,023) were therefore released: 35% on temporary admission/release, 7% bail, 1% granted leave to enter/remain and 1% other.
- Of the 3023 people who were released from detention, 97% were held for up to six months before release. 58 people were held for between 6 and 12 months before release. 16 people were detained for between a year and two years before their release. 5 people were held for 2-3

Self-harm in detention statistics (FOI)

With thanks to No Deportations

A freedom of information (FOI) request made by No Deportations requesting the number of incidences of self harm requiring medical treatment:

Self-Harm in Immigration Detention Q2 April/May/June 2014

	April	May	June	TOTAL
Brook	9	7	2	18
C/field	1	0	1	2
C/brook	0	0	0	0
Dover	5	2	2	9
Dungavel	1	0	0	1
H/worth	2	4	7	13
Haslar	0	0	0	0
Morton Hall	0	6	0	6
Tinsley	1	0	0	1
Yarls Wood	6	2	3	11
Larne	0	0	0	0
Pennine	0	0	0	0
Cedars	0	0	0	0

Individuals on ACDT (managed as having a risk of self harm) in same period:

	April	May	June	TOTAL
Brook	22	38	16	76
C/field	8	5	9	22
C/brook	26	24	28	78
Dover	4	9	11	24
Dungavel	11	9	6	26
H/worth	25	37	21	83
Haslar	3	3	7	13
Morton Hall	14	21	21	56
Tinsley	12	9	6	27
Yarl's Wood	49	26	23	98
Larne	0	0	1	1
Pennine	0	1	2	3

Cedars	1	0	1	2
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10 Longest Recorded Lengths Of Detention @ 30th June 2014

With thanks to No Deportations

As at the 30th June 2014 the longest lengths of detention were as follows:

- 1,609 days - 4.4 years
- 1,259 days - 3.4 years
- 1,245 days - 3.4 years
- 1,042 days - 2.8 years
- 1,026 days - 2.8 years
- 999 days - 2.7 years
- 993 days - 2.7 years
- 922 days - 2.5 years
- 891 days - 2.4 years
- 874 days - 2.3 years

News, Publications, Reports

BID report highlights lengthy delays in provision of bail accommodation (section 4)

Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) has produced a new report based on their research into delays in the Section 4 application process, the provision of bail accommodation. The report *'No Place To Go: delays in Home Office provision of Section 4(1) (c) bail accommodation'* finds that the average time taken by the Home office to process a bail accommodation application in cases where a bail address was provided was over 14 weeks. The Home Office took on average more than 6 weeks to acknowledge an application for a bail address. You can access the report [here](#).

BID report exposes the 'hidden injustices' of detention in prison

A second report this month from BID focuses on the complex injustices facing immigration detainees held in UK prisons. The research is based on evidence from BID's outreach, legal and policy teams and describes in detail the practical barriers faced by detainees in prison. These include:

- No automatic access to on site immigration advice as is provided in IRCs via the DDA
- Financial disincentives to legal aid providers who wish to work with detainees in prisons
- Immigration detainees routinely held under serving prisoner regimes
- Lack of internet and mobile phones

The report is clear that the use of prisons to hold immigration detainees is at critical point and can no longer be ignored. It concludes by calling for an end to the use of prisons to hold detainees, something with which AVID fully agrees. You can read the [report in full here](#).

Medical Justice report highlights systemic issues with the complaints process in detention

Medical Justice's latest report examines complaints that detainees made, almost half of which were escalated to the Ombudsman. The report reveals a 'questionable high rate of complaints being dismissed on the back of biased investigations'. Examples include:

- All complaints of assault were dismissed despite many having compelling medical evidence including photos and medical records.
- A stroke victim's complaint that many hospital appointments were inexplicably cancelled was not upheld despite the cancellations being documented in his medical records.
- A complaint of sexual abuse was not upheld even though a staff member was dismissed and a compensation payment made to the victim.

The report also highlights that many detainees, including key witnesses to the event, are removed before the complaint has been investigated.

Medical Justice said:

"Medical Justice believes that the harm caused by immigration removal centres is so widespread that the only solution is to close them down,

especially so if the complaints process continues to be wholly ineffectual. In the interim we offer a number of practical recommendations for change in this report". You can read the [report in full here](#).

UNHCR publish report on asylum trends

UNHCR has published a report on asylum trends across the world in the first half of 2014. It records an increase of 330,700 asylum applications in the period, an increase of 24% from 2013. The 38 countries in Europe received 264,000 applications in the period. You can read the report [here](#).

Short film on detention available online

A short film made by Catrin Nye for the BBC exposes the stories of immigration detainees held around the country. This film is now available online and you can watch it [here](#).

Guardian newspaper criticises 'cheap labour' inside detention centres

The Guardian newspaper has criticised the practice of paying detainees around £1 an hour for working inside detention centres. The article is based on research carried out by Corporate Watch. The article [is available here](#), and a response from Nick Hardwick, HMCIP, [is available here](#).

Home office contracts FOI

A Freedom of Information request, available on the gov.uk website, gives full details on the government's immigration enforcement contracts, broken down by supplier, contract's name, start and end date and maximum length of contract. The information [is available here](#).

New Book on Detention: 'Inside Immigration Detention' by Mary Bosworth

A new publication by Mary Bosworth *Inside Immigration Detention* was published last month. With unprecedented access to IRCs, Mary and AVID Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees | In Touch 131 www.aviddetention.org.uk

her team undertook the first national study of life in British IRCs. It is based on empirical data including staff and detainee interviews from Morton Hall, Yarl's Wood, Campsfield House, Colnbrook, Tinsley House and Brook House. A review [is available here](#). The book emphasises the role of identity and the most powerful elements are based on the testimony of those who are detained and work inside. Bosworth describes the 'confusion' of border control and a disconnect between the secure spaces of detention and the population held.

Prison and Probation Ombudsman publishes annual report

The Prison and Probation Ombudsman has published his annual report for 2013-14. It flags up a troubling 64% increase in self inflicted deaths in prison in the year. On immigration detention, the report highlights:

"the inadequacy of the response to medical emergencies has been a common theme in our investigations. Indeed, it is unacceptable that such a fundamental safety issue recurs and that Home Office Immigration Enforcement has failed to ensure its contractors consistently address the issue. The bulletin identified the need for the nature of the emergency to be correctly communicated, for healthcare and detention staff to be sufficiently trained and equipped to handle emergencies when they occur and for NHS ambulance guidelines to be followed by all staff when a detainee is taken ill"

John Vine resigns as Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

John Vine, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, has handed his resignation six months before his term ended. He will now leave at the end of 2014 rather than July 2015. In an article on the BBC website, the shadow immigration minister David Hanson said Vine's departure was a result of frustrations felt as Theresa May tried to silence his criticisms of her failing immigration system. You can read the [article here](#).

Scottish Refugee Council: new report on asylum accommodation in Scotland

The SRC has published a new report *The extent and impact of asylum accommodation problems in Scotland*, which highlights serious failings in provision of asylum accommodation in Scotland. You can access the report [here](#).

Parliamentary Monitoring

Detention Bed Spaces

[HC Deb, 1 September 2014, c141W](#)

Philip Davies MP (Shipley, Con) asked how many places there are at present for detainees and what assessment had been made of the 'effect of fraud in English language tests on the number of immigration detainee places needed'. **James Brokenshire** replied that as of the 18th August there were 3690 bed spaces, 2941 of which were occupied. In addition he referred to the Service Level Agreement with NOMS to provide bed spaces in prisons for detainees, and said there were 794 immigration detainees in prison. Regarding the ETS related activity; Brokenshire said that updates would be provided to the House as part of the regular publication of data on the department's work on borders and immigration.

Assisted Voluntary Return

[HC Deb, 1 September 2014, c127W](#)

Sarah Teather MP (Brent Central, Lib Dem) asked how many people who used the Assisted Voluntary Returns scheme (a) submitted their first asylum claim after being detained in an immigration removal and (b) had their asylum case decided within the Detained Fast Track in each of the last five years for which records are available. James Brokenshire's response is given in the following table:

	A (Claimed asylum after being detained, and then exited using AVR)	B (Used AVR process while on Detained Fast Track)
2009	3	37
2010	19	230
2011	39	534
2012	74	569
2013	39	1234
2014 (to end March)	5	350
TOTAL	179	2954

Women in detention

[HC Deb, 1 September 2014, c128W](#)

David Hanson (Shadow Home Affairs Minister, Delyn, Labour) asked what the outcomes of detention by length of detention for women asylum seekers detained by her Department were in each of the last three years. **James Brokenshire** replied with a table of extracts from the published quarterly statistics, which you can access in full [here](#).

Campsfield House

[HC Deb, 3 September 2014, c283W](#)

Andrew Smith MP (Labour, Oxford East) asked whether the government had informed Mitie PLC of the advice of the Oxfordshire Fire Service that sprinklers should be fitted there. **Karen Bradley MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, Staffordshire Moorlands, Con)** replied that "*the Chief Fire Officer of Oxfordshire wrote to GEO Group in 2007. Mitie were not made aware of this correspondence before the incident last year. Following the incident, sprinklers have now been fitted throughout the centre*".

Length of detention

[HC Deb, 12 September 2014, c753W](#)

Stephen Barclay MP (North East Cambridgeshire, Conservative) asked the average length of detention of men and women in the last five years. James Brokenshire referred him to the official statistics which you can [access in full here](#).

Asylum seekers deported to EU countries

[HC Deb, 12 September 2014, c750W](#)

David Davies MP (Monmouth, Con) asked how many asylum seekers had been deported to other European countries in each of the last five years.

James Brokenshire provided the following table which details asylum seekers forcibly removed to other European countries in each year from 2010-2013.

	Total asylum enforced removals
2010	1583
2011	1276
2012	1068
2013	1188

AVID, September 2014