

## Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees

Patrons: Colin Firth, Lord David Ramsbotham, GCB, CBE and John Scampton, CBE

Registered Charity No. 1156709

# In Touch

134 (May 2015)

### AVID:

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Do you have any items for next month's newsletter? If so contact [avidnews321@gmail.com](mailto:avidnews321@gmail.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> June

### News from AVID

#### NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE (AT LAST!)

Our website [www.aviddetention.org.uk](http://www.aviddetention.org.uk) is finally revamped and was launched last Friday. We are delighted with the new site, funded by a grant from Awards for All. It has enabled us to provide much more information on detention and visiting than our old site allowed. Please have a look and let us know what you think! We've set it up based on feedback from members and partners about what they wanted to see, so we hope it does the job.

You will find, for example:

- Interactive map of all detention centres and visitors groups
- Individual profiles of all visitors groups across the UK
- Latest information on detention and visiting from around the country
- Targeted information for detainees
- Updated news and events pages

- Special area for our members, with discussion forum to enable better communication between visitors groups
- Detention publications, all in one place!

All AVID member groups will receive a login in the next week or so, which will enable them to access a special members area with a wide range of information...watch this space!

### News from Members

**Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group launches new report:**  
*Cutting Justice – the impacts of the legal aid cuts for people detained in Brook House and Tinsley House IRCs*

[GDWG's new report](#) examines the impacts of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO). This Act brought about wide ranging restrictions in access to legal aid for immigration cases. GDWG's report finds that the Act has had a huge impact on those in detention in Brook and Tinsley. Over 75% of their sample of detainees would not qualify for access to free legal advice for either some or all of their immigration case, regardless of means or merits. Many detainees highlighted the negative impact of the cuts to legal aid on their psychological wellbeing. They describe feeling stressed and powerless. GDWG calls for immigration matters to be brought back into the scope of legal aid. [You can read the report here.](#)

#### Yarl's Wood Befrienders have moved!

Yarl's Wood Befrienders have moved offices. They remain in Bedford, but can be contacted at:

43 Bromham Road  
Bedford  
MK40 2AA

The telephone number is 01234 272090.

## **Scottish Detainee Visitors Event: Expensive, Ineffective, Unjust: Challenging Immigration Detention**

Scottish Detainee Visitors and Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network are holding a discussion event as part of [Refugee Festival Scotland 2015](#). Following the March 2015 report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the use of detention in the UK, in Scotland a broad civil society movement challenging detention is growing and the need for a time limit featured in the election campaign of many parties across the UK. This event, which considers the situation post-election, asks where the results of the election leave the campaign for change. Speakers include Jerome Phelps from Detention Action. [More information here](#).

Wednesday 17 June  
5.30pm – 7.00pm  
Yudowitz Lecture Theatre, Wolfson Medical School  
Building, University of Glasgow, University Avenue,  
Glasgow, G12 8QQ

## **SOAS Detainee Support group is 10 years old!**

To mark a decade of supporting people in detention, the SOAS Detainee Support are holding a big birthday fundraising event at the [Brixton Jamm](#) on Friday 5th June, 9pm onwards, with a great line up of live bands, DJs and spoken word artists. All welcome! More information on [facebook here](#). Tickets (£7.85) [available here](#). All proceeds go directly to SOAS Detainee Support to continue their work supporting people in detention.

AVID would also like to wish Bekah Sparrow, SOAS Detainee Support's co-coordinator over the last two years who has recently left, all the best for the future – and to welcome the group's new co-coordinator, Roses, and wish her good luck in her new role!

## **Zimbabwe Association: '12 Years' Exhibition**

As part of Refugee Week, the Zimbabwe Association's **'12 Years' exhibition, telling the** AVID Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees | In Touch 134  
[www.aviddetention.org.uk](http://www.aviddetention.org.uk)

**story of Zimbabwean asylum seekers'** details experiences of the UK asylum system and living in the UK from 2001 to 2013. The exhibition will be on display at the Black Cultural Archives, Brixton from 18<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> June.

[More information available here](#), or contact Sarah Harland:  
[sarah@zimbabweassociation.org.uk](mailto:sarah@zimbabweassociation.org.uk)

## **Sudanese Visitors Group new resource: support organisations for detainees being removed to in Italy**

Having seen a recent surge in the numbers of Sudanese nationals in UK detention centres being removed to Italy under the Dublin II Regulation, [Waging Peace](#) and its AVID member [Sudanese Visitors Group](#) have produced a great new resource on refugee and asylum support available in Italy.

The list of support organisations can be downloaded from the Waging Peace website in [English](#) and [Arabic](#)

*Special thanks to [Samphire](#) for their support in creating this document.*

For more information, contact Maddy Crowther (Research, Refugee & Campaigns Assistant and Visitor Group Coordinator):  
[maddy.crowther@wagingpeace.info](mailto:maddy.crowther@wagingpeace.info) / 0203 752 5815

## **Samphire: Ex Detainee Conference, 2<sup>nd</sup> July**

Samphire is holding their annual Ex Detainee Conference on Thursday 2nd July at the Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre in Central London. Full details are available on the [invitation here](#).

As always, the event promises to be an exciting one, with a mix of workshops and speakers, including those with experience of detention talking about their experiences. If you are interested, [get in touch with Samphire directly](#).

## Detention Update



### **Jury reaches conclusion in Morton Hall suicide: communication failings contributed to his death**

Rubel Ahmed died in Morton Hall detention centre on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014, just days after he had been told of the decision to remove him to Bangladesh. He was found hanging in his cell. He was 26 years old. On the 18<sup>th</sup> May, the jury found that 'inadequate' communication between multi-disciplinary teams was one of the factors that contributed to his death.

Despite a recommendation by HMIP to stop locking Morton Hall detainees in their rooms in the evening and overnight back in 2013, this practice continued. The centre manager accepted in her evidence that locking detainees in their rooms was a risk factor, and that there were lessons to be learned. The jury returned an open conclusion alongside its critical narrative. You can read the [press release from INQUEST here](#) and [coverage in the Lincolnshire Echo here](#).

## News, Publications, Reports

### **Alleged assault at Yarl's Wood: Guard Suspended as HMIP expresses 'considerable concern'**

An incident at Yarl's Wood detention centre has caused HMIP 'considerable concern'. A guard at the centre has been suspended following an assault on two women at the detention centre. This is the latest in a string of shocking incidents at the detention centre. HMIP, during their inspection of the facility this month, are reported in the Guardian as having confirmed that Inspectors had seen footage of an incident that caused 'considerable concern'. Two women were allegedly hit with a riot shield and one was taken to hospital for treatment. You can read more in

[the Guardian newspaper](#) here or on the [BBC news website here](#).

### **Man threatens to take his own life at Dover IRC in protest against his deportation**

A man climbed on to the roof of Dover detention centre and threatened to take his own life, in a protest against his deportation. It is reported in the Guardian that the man resisted attempts to talk him down for several hours. The man, said to be from Lithuania, apparently feared he would not receive medication for a pre-existing medical condition. Other detainees reportedly said he had been denied medical treatment in recent days, leaving him ill and in pain. [Read more on the Guardian website](#).

## UNHCR on Immigration Detention

Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, the UNHCR Representative to the United Kingdom, has written on immigration detention for the Independent Newspaper. He comments that the UK's historic tradition of providing sanctuary, and the fact that the recent election coincided with the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta, are part of a spirited tradition of civil liberties which are under threat by immigration detention. He describes the use of detention in the UK as 'disproportionate', with every second person seeking international protection ending up in detention. [Read more here](#).

## Law and Policy

### **Scottish Human Rights Commission calls for Dungavel Review**

The Scottish Human Rights Commission has called for a review into indefinite detention at Dungavel. SHRC made this call after a week of attempts to investigate reports of asylum seekers being held in poor conditions at the detention centre. The Scottish Trades Union Congress were denied entry to Dungavel. It last visited the centre eight years ago. The Scottish Human Rights Commission is part of the National Preventive Mechanism, which monitors places of detention to ensure compliance with the

Optional Protocol to the Convention on Torture, and plans to review indefinite detention as part of this mechanism. [Find out more here.](#)

## Statistics

### Home Office statistics on children in detention released: April 2015

The statistics for the detention of children in April have been released. Three children were detained including one at Yarl's Wood. You can find the statistics on the Home Office website [here](#).

### Quarterly statistics on detention: First Quarter 2015 (Jan- March)

*(figures analysed and rounded by AVID)*

The Home Office has released its statistics on immigration detention in the first quarter of 2015. Between January and March, 7569 people entered detention.

Other statistics of note include:

- Between January and March 2015, 7569 people entered detention and 7,516 left. Of those leaving in that quarter, 50% (3,760) were removed from the UK. 37.5% (2,819) were granted temporary admission or release, less than 1% (70) were given leave to enter/remain and 10.4% (785) were bailed, and just over 1% (82) left for 'other' reasons
- 45% of those leaving detention in the period were asylum detainees.
- 374 immigration detainees were held in prisons at the end of March.
- Of those leaving detention in the period, 78% (5,836) were detained for less than two months, 19% (1,428) for between two and six months and less than 1% (196) for between six and 12 months. 56 detainees were held for more than a year.

You can view the full statistics on the Home Office website [here](#).

## Jobs and Volunteering

### BID recruiting! New Research and Policy Manager post

Bail for Immigration Detainees is recruiting a new Policy and Research Manager post. They are looking for someone with a demonstrable record of policy and research work, ideally within asylum, immigration, or immigration detention, and a commitment to human rights, to manage their research and policy function. [Full details here](#). The closing date is 5pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## Events and Training

### Let's Talk About Immigration Detention: A British Addiction 15<sup>th</sup> June, Middlesbrough

The Detention Forum, with Detention Action, the North of England Refugee Service and Regional Refugee Forum North East are holding an event on immigration detention in the UK, the recent Parliamentary Inquiry on Detention, and how you can get involved in the fight for detention reform. The event is at Teeside University 15<sup>th</sup> June, 11am – 4pm. [More information and tickets here](#).

## AVID, May 2015