

## AVID

### Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees

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

Registered Charity No. 1156709

# In Touch

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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 20th of May

#### News from AVID

##### Haslar IRC closes

Haslar Detention centre, near Portsmouth, has now closed. Haslar had 197 bed spaces – it is not clear whether the Home Office will seek to replace these spaces or if this is a reduction in the bed space availability for immigration detention. Our member group, Friends without Borders, who visited at Haslar for over 20 years, continued to visit remaining detainees until the closure. We are grateful for all the work and commitment of the Haslar visitors over all this time, supporting thousands of detainees over these years.

The Friends without Borders annual report for 2014 is available online [here](#).

##### Update on the 'Shaw Review'

At the most recent NASF (National Asylum Stakeholder Forum) sub group on detention, NGO stakeholders were able to meet with

Stephen Shaw, who is heading the [Review into the welfare in detention of vulnerable people](#). At the meeting, Shaw gave an overview of his methodology, and outlined that he has already visited many detention centres, but that he will also be visiting prisons and short term holding facilities. While the published deadline for submissions to the review is 15<sup>th</sup> May, Shaw has extended the deadline to the end of May. If you are concerned about the welfare of vulnerable people in detention, and have examples or case studies to share in the AVID submission, please let us know. Similarly if you are considering making a submission please feel free to contact AVID for support or information. We would strongly encourage all member organisations to take part in this consultation – it is a chance to let decision makers know that we all see many vulnerable people suffering great distress in detention and to push for change.

##### If you haven't yet done so, tell your prospective MPs its #time4atimelimit!!

With less than a week to go, we hope that most of you have already contacted your prospective candidates using the [Detention Forum's fantastic online tool](#). Simply click the link and enter your postcode, and the rest is done for you. We've had lots of responses so far from prospective MPs across the UK, but there is still time to let them know that you think its #time4atimelimit.

The link is <http://unlocked.org.uk/timelimit/>

And do forward any responses you get to AVID, so we can follow up with promises made!

#### News from Members

##### Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group: Refugee Tales

For those who haven't yet done so, we'd encourage you to join GDWG in their week long event, [the Refugee Tales](#). The main event is a unique walk from Dover to Crawley via

Canterbury, a reflection on the long and dangerous journeys that many refugees make fleeing war and persecution. In addition to the walk, there are a series of talks, events and lectures planned. [You can find out more here.](#)

### **Samphire: Against the Tide event**

Fraser and Rosa from the Samphire project held an awareness raising event in Dover on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. Called '[Against the Tide: Sharing Positive Perspectives on Migration](#)' the event was very well attended, with local residents filling the town hall. During the event a short film about detention was screened and copies of the Parliamentary Inquiry report were given out. You can read a [summary on the Samphire website.](#)

### **GDWG highlight rise in self harm in Brook and Tinsley detention centres**

The FOI request figures on self harm (see last month's edition) contained shocking statistics on the rise of self harm in the Gatwick centres. In an article in the Crawley News, Nic Eadie (Director of GDWG) highlights that the detention of people for indefinite periods has a very detrimental impact on mental health, and says he is not surprised by the numbers. In the article, he said *"Their frustration is often added to by the frequent delays on their cases, lack of real information from the Home Office and feelings that they are being treated like criminals when they are merely being held for administrative convenience."* You can read the article in [Crawley News here.](#)

## **Detention Update**

### **Another tragic death at Yarl's Wood**

We were saddened to hear of another tragic death in immigration detention, this time in Yarl's Wood. The man, said to be from India, was being held there with his wife and child in the family unit, according to a report in the Guardian. It is reported that he is thought to have had a heart attack. Our thoughts are with his family at this awful time.

Media reports following the death suggest that fellow detainees carried out a peaceful protest to call for the release of the man's widow. We understand that she has now been released. This is the latest in a string of incidents at Yarl's Wood in recent times. You can read Guardian coverage [here.](#)

### **Yarl's Wood: alleged assault**

Yet another incident at Yarl's Wood this month. This time, shocking reports that a guard has been suspended following an alleged assault on two women, using a riot shield. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection team were investigating the centre and saw footage of the incident which they say has "caused considerable concern". The guard in question, according to the Guardian newspaper, is apparently the subject of previous complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior. It is alleged the guard hit two women with a riot shield and one of them was sent to hospital for treatment. Serco has said that the use of shields is being assessed in the aftermath of the incident. Local police have also been informed. You can read the Guardian article [here.](#)

### **Groups call for access to Dungavel**

Amidst hunger strikes and protest at Dungavel, the Home Office has apparently refused to allow representatives of religious and refugee organisations into the Scottish detention centre. The request to inspect the facility followed reports that as many as 60 detainees inside were refusing food. The Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) has passed a motion condemning the decision and calling for an end to detention in the asylum system. You can read coverage in the Guardian [here.](#)

## **News, Publications, Reports**

### **Home Office ordered to return deported mother and child**

The Home Office will face contempt of court proceedings unless they find a woman and her

five year old son, deported to Nigeria, and bring them back at the Home Office's expense. The case could have 'major implications' for the way in which children and their parents are deported.

It also raises doubts as to the 'deport first, appeal later' regime, as the ruling sets a potential precedent that the 'best interests' principles should be the primary consideration even if the parent's case has been quashed. You can read the full article in the Independent [here](#).

### **International Detention Coalition paper: Does detention deter?**

The IDC has published a new briefing paper entitled [Does Detention Deter?](#) It looks at the effectiveness of border control policies like immigration detention in deterring migrants. The brief concludes that detention is not only 'ineffective' as a deterrent; it also weakens other migration management outcomes, and suggests that governments would be better placed prioritising alternatives to detention.

### **Care Quality Commission consultation on inspecting healthcare in detention**

The Care Quality Commission is currently consulting on their plans to regulate 'health and social care in secure settings'. This includes proposals regarding the inspection of health care in detention centres. A joint inspection framework has been developed, with HMIP, and it is this proposed framework that is being considered.

The consultation is available online and the deadline is 24<sup>th</sup> May. You can find out [more here](#).

## **Law and Policy**

### **ILPA call for evidence: detained fast track**

ILPA is intervening in the 11 linked cases regarding the lawfulness of the DFT. Their evidence and submissions have to be in by **15 May** and they want to hear from people who have been/are detained in the Detained Fast Track (DFT) with or without representation about any of the issues they may have faced. If

you have any information that might help, contact [Anabel Butler](mailto:Anabel@ilpa.org.uk) ([anabel.butler@ilpa.org.uk](mailto:anabel.butler@ilpa.org.uk))

The kinds of areas that they are interested in are:

- People going through the DFT without representation - why? What are the issues they are facing?
- Screening process- has it been effective in identifying victims of torture/trafficking; for people who self-identify as either, is HO following up on this; are pre- screening reps to a similar effect being ignored
- Rule 34/35- what is HO's response to reports? Is it triggering reconsideration of suitability for detention? Are they being completely ignored?
- Any issues with access to lawyers !
- Any other issues you think are relevant!

### **Syrian asylum seekers convicted for not having passports 'can appeal'**

The BBC has reported that three asylum seekers from Syria who were jailed on arrival in the UK because they didn't have passports, can appeal. The Criminal Case Review Commission has said that they were wrongly advised to plead guilty, and can appeal. This brings the number of convictions involving asylum seekers and refugees to be referred to the appeal courts in the last three years to 34. Twenty-six people from other countries have already had similar convictions quashed, the CCRC said. These are the first Syrians to be referred. Read the BBC article [here](#).

## **Statistics**

### **Home Office statistics on the detention of children**

The Home Office has published its latest statistics, on the detention of children, for March

2015. In this month, 11 children were held including 2 in Yarl's Wood. View the statistics [here](#).

## Events

### **'Expensive, Ineffective and Unjust' What Next for Immigration Detention after the Parliamentary Inquiry?**

BID and the Human Rights Lawyers Association are holding an event on the 26<sup>th</sup> May, looking at what is next, following the Parliamentary Inquiry.

Tuesday 26th May 2015 6.30 – 8.30 pm  
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, 65 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1HS

Speakers include Bid, Medical Justice, and Paul Blomfield MP. More details [here](#).

## AVID, April 2015