

Submission to the Detention Inquiry

Allan Cockburn

New Romney Kent

TN288RD

I wish to make the following submission to the Parliamentary Detention Inquiry.

Background:

I am a 67 year old British male with spoken knowledge of Turkish, Persian (Farsi) and French, the Turkish and Persian knowledge gained working in those countries in the 1970's. I approached the Dover Detainees Visitor Group (now called Samphire) with the aim of making use of my knowledge of the culture and language of detainees to provide social contact and a helpful listening ear.

I attended an initial briefing and then accompanied another 'visitor' on my first visit. I then visited the Dover centre roughly once a week for the next year (2012-2013).

I did not wish to act as a conduit passing messages connected with appeals processes for detainees although that turned out to be an expected part of the role.

I was able to use my French and Farsi knowledge to talk with two or three of those I visited (a French speaker of African descent and a couple of Afghans with Dari knowledge) .I noted that the Centre was not in fact called a Detention centre but a 'Removal centre' However I ceased my visits when I realised that all of the (eight ?) detainees I had visited over the year had in fact been released from the centre for one reason or another. I felt that there was a clash between my personal view that the detainees should be removed and the point of view of the organisation on whose behalf I was visiting. I did feel that my visits had been of social value to the detainees. My conclusions were.

- 1) Detainees seem to be held for a long time mainly as a result of making numerous appeals.
- 2)The detainees I met appeared to have no justification to be hosted in Britain. They were looking for a new life on economic grounds.
- 3)The detainees seemed to have made contributions in Britain in some instances, for example working as hospital orderly or builder's labourer. They were all pleasant to speak to if somewhat guarded at times in their responses.
- 4)There seemed to be endless grounds for staying in Britain. One detainee was released on medical grounds, another because he appeared/claimed to have been under age when initially interviewed (so the interview was deemed invalid). Another was released I gathered because his girlfriend's mother was prepared to give him a home.
- 5)My overall conclusion is that the undoubted mental and social stress endured by detainees is due to the inefficiency and failure of the authorities to expedite removal.