

# Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention: written evidence submitted by Ms A. and Ms B.

Dictated to Mary Child, Committee Member for Scottish Detainee Visitors

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Ms A.

**Sex:** Female

**Date of Statement:** 19/09/14

**Detention Record:** Ms A. was in prison for 9 months, she was then moved to Dungavel. She has applied for asylum in detention.

**Total length of time held under immigration powers (at date of statement):** 2 months

**Detention Centre:** Dungavel

Ms B.

**Sex:** Female

**Date of Statement:** 19/09/14

**Detention Record:** Ms B. had a visa for her stay in the UK but she was picked up straight from the airport and detained.

**Total length of time held under immigration powers (at date of statement):** 4 months

**Detention Centre:** Dungavel

The following is all Ms A. and Ms B.'s own words bar what is in brackets [...].

## 1 CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN IN DETENTION

1.1 The women in Dungavel have two rooms, one dormitory for eight people and one for six, only 2 toilets for each dormitory. There's not enough privacy. In the dormitories women come and go, everybody's different and we don't know each other. One lady snores too loudly, there's another lady who talks too much especially in the mornings. It doesn't help when you can't sleep well anyway. After 10 at night we are checked every hour. Often the officers have no consideration, they talk and laugh loudly when they do their rounds, that wakes you up too.

1.2 We are mixed together with a lot of men, some of them are criminals we don't feel at all safe and the officers here don't carry guns. All those guys, it's so embarrassing. [Ms A. usually stays upstairs to keep away from the men, but Ms B. feels she needs to come downstairs and go out for some fresh air. One day when Ms A. was wearing new clothes she went outside. All the men were looking at her, she wondered what was wrong.]

## 2 EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN DETENTION

2.1 It's very frustrating here. You wake up and there's nothing to do, you can go to the gym or do arts and crafts, but Ms B. doesn't sew, that's all.

2.2 The food is a big problem too. It's the same every day, chips or rice, there's no choice. When we do our own cooking and there's food left it's put in the bin even though we ask for take away packs.

2.3 We are treated like criminals, but we are not criminals. There are so many rules.

### 3 ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

3.1 We can access the computers but they shut us out of a lot of things. They block so many websites even shopping sites like Boots, Debenhams, New Look and John Lewis. And Facebook, Ms B. really misses Facebook, it would be something to do.

3.2 If we want to print personal papers we can't do it ourselves. The library staff print things for us and it's not private. The staff can ask questions and read our documents. They don't print everything, sometimes they decide we can't have something printed.

### 4 HEALTHCARE

4.1 The health care is all right but they can't help with the frustration. When we go back to our rooms we are still thinking about our cases, they can't change that. We try to support each other but as soon as we stop doing things the frustrating thoughts come back and go round and round in our heads. Every day nothing changes, we do work to keep busy. We are always thinking about the future, it's terrible waiting for someone else to make decisions.

### 5 CENTRE STAFF

5.1 Most of the officers at Dungavel are OK, some are very nice. A few of the female officers can be a problem though, they are less than professional and don't treat the women with respect.

### 6 IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS

6.1 Immigration officials don't read our files. They never explain anything. They are not interested in really looking at our cases, they just seem to copy and paste items between files. They don't respect people, they don't listen to you or give you a chance to explain anything. We are stuck in here and we don't understand why.

### 7 BAIL

7.1 [Both women have solicitors who have helped them to apply for bail. However, neither of the women understand why they have been refused bail. At Ms B.'s hearing the judge seemed to ignore the fact that her sponsor to the UK was at the hearing. Ms A. has applied for a section 4 bail address but still not has not been granted one after 2 months. At the bail hearings the judge only took 5 minutes to refuse each application.]

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 We are not criminals, stop treating us like criminals. We would like to be treated with respect and have our stories listened to.

8.2 They shouldn't keep innocent people locked up. Being here weighs you down psychologically, mentally it's not helpful.

8.3 They shouldn't detain people for more than a month, longer than that and it drives people crazy thinking about too much every day.