

Refugee Ra Please find below our submission of evidence to the Inquiry:

1. Refugee Radio is a registered charity. We support refugees and asylum seekers with mental health issues, especially Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, to enable them to have a voice and to address anti-asylum stereotypes in the media. We broadcast a weekly radio programme consisting of interviews with refugees and asylum seekers, including those in detention. We publish books and magazine featuring stories by refugees and asylum seekers, including those who have been detained.
2. The current conditions within UK immigration detention centres are below the minimum standards stipulated in Home Office regulations and are far below standards in prisons. Asylum seekers who have been tortured are being detained against regulations and Rule 35 requests are being ignored or frustrated. We were contacted by a Cameroonian torture victim, Ivo Kuka, who was on Detained Fast Track in Harmondsworth and he described other similar cases. The regulation against the detention of torture victims must be upheld. At the moment it is meaningless.
3. The detention system not only fails to support disabled people and people with mental health issues, it creates them.
4. Detainees have little or no appropriate access to healthcare. We were contacted by a Cameroonian businessman, Karim Liadi, who was detained without cause when he arrived in the UK on a 10 day business trip. He broke his leg in detention due to a wet floor, but instead of mending his leg he was refused treatment and has now spent over a year in detention with no more treatment for a broken leg than one paracetamol per day. Injuries sustained in detention must be fixed in this country, irrespective of whether the recovery period would be longer than someone's visa. Furthermore, detainees need access to proper healthcare and not just mild painkillers.
5. Asylum seekers with mental health issues are being detained without access to their medication, forcing them to undergo dangerous and medically cautioned withdrawals. We were contacted by Eveline Tabah who was kept for weeks without her anti-depressant medication until we could convince her MP to campaign for her to be given access to them. This seems reckless at best given the high incidence of suicides in detention centres (1,367 attempts recorded by one campaign group, No Deportations). No detainee should be forced to withdraw from their medication. All detainees need better provision of mental health care in detention to prevent further depression and suicide.
6. We would recommend an improvement around the treatment of child slaves and people who have been trafficked. For example we were contacted by a former child slave, Chibong Lucas, who spent two years in detention after he escaped the people who had enslaved him. Unable to return him to his homeland, his Home Office caseworker advised him to present himself to the Nigerian embassy and pretend to be Nigerian. As a former child slave we do not feel that he should have been detained in this way at all and certainly not advised to lie in order to smooth his removal to a country he does not even come from, just to get him out of the system.
7. We are concerned by the use of detention as an apparently politically-motivated tool of punishment, particularly in the case of Lydia Besong who told us that she was arrested and detained after the performance of her play, How I Became An Asylum Seeker, which was critical of the system. At least one of the other performers was detained after the performance and both have stated they believed it was a punitive measure for being outspoken.
8. The impact of detention on an individual's family and social networks is devastating. There is no justification for continuing to block detainee's access to social networking websites such as Facebook. All this does is prevent them keeping in contact with their families and with each other. There can be no security or administrative reason for doing

so. Furthermore, people in detention should not be prohibited from accessing websites such as the UNHRC, Refugee Council or anti-deportation campaigns. At the moment all computers they have access to have these and more sites blocked.

9. We also would recommend that detainees should be allowed access to the media. At the moment the media do not appear to be allowed to access the detention centres. Also, detainees are not permitted camera-phones and cannot take their pictures or share them with anyone outside. There is no justification for this and it frustrates any attempt by detainees to get their cases picked up by the media.
10. Detention centres are poor examples of subcontracting services. The transportation to and from detention and even removal is often subject to cancellation with apparently no redress. This is not to mention the well-documented cases of violence and abuse both within detention (775 complaints against G4S alone in 2010 for physical and sexual assault) and during removal by private security workers (i.e. the deaths of Prince Ofosu and Jimmy Mubenga). The excessive use of detention and the incompetence of the private sector subcontractors has created an unnecessary financial burden on the public that does nothing to actually manage immigration or justice.
11. All of the individual cases referred to above have spoken to Refugee Radio at length. Their full interviews can be heard on our website, www.refugeeradio.org.uk along with numerous other asylum seekers and detainees.

Yours truly,

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