

Human cost of immigration detention revealed in new report

A new report released today by detainee rights charity Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) reveals the unacceptable human cost of indefinite immigration detention in the UK and calls on the government to halt its plans to increase detention capacity.

Based on testimonies from immigration detainees, BID's report '*Out of sight, out of mind*', shows the devastating physical and emotional damage caused by immigration detention in the UK. People interviewed in BID's report include

- Frances, who was detained twice with her children and was not given her HIV medication for several weeks while she was in detention.
- Luisa, who claimed asylum and was detained after she fled from the men who brought her to the UK to work as a prostitute.
- Dilip, who arrived in the UK aged 14. He was wrongly told by immigration officials he could not claim asylum as a child and was later detained as an adult for nearly two years.
- David, who had been in the UK for 39 years when he was arrested for driving offences, given a deportation order and taken into immigration detention. He suffered a stroke in detention but was not taken to hospital.

According to Amanda Shah, BID's Assistant Director-Policy,

The testimonies in this report are a damning indictment of the government's arbitrary use of immigration detention. Deliberately kept out of sight behind barbed wire, the voices of detainees are seldom heard by the British public and the trauma that occurs in detention centres is a hidden national scandal.

We spoke to people who talked of wanting to take their own lives after their experiences in detention, and to British citizens whose families were ripped apart when their partners were detained.

While the government likes to use the image of detention to demonstrate it is 'tough' on immigration, this report highlights the true cost of its detention policy - damaged lives and wasted taxpayers' money.

Contact Amanda Shah for copies of the report 07962460956 amanda@biduk.org

Notes for editors

1. '*Out of sight, out of mind: experiences of immigration detention in the UK*' is released to mark BID's tenth anniversary. BID is an independent charity working with asylum seekers and migrants in removal centres and prisons to secure their release from immigration detention. www.biduk.org
2. Nearly 30,000 people every year are held in immigration detention in the UK, in eleven detention centres known as 'Immigration Removal Centres' as well as prisons and police cells. The UK Border Agency's detention budget for 2009/10 is £107.1 million.
3. Held without time limit and without automatic access to the courts, immigration detainees include British citizens wrongly identified as foreign nationals; asylum seekers who have fled to the UK seeking sanctuary; children detained with their families; the wives and husbands of British citizens; and long-time British residents who have served custodial sentences for driving offences or petty theft.
4. In May 2008 the government announced it intends to increase its detention capacity by 60%.

-Ends-