

Bail for Immigration Detainees

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PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate use

Arbitrary and indefinite detention contributes to the frustration and tension of detained asylum-seekers

Last night's fire at Yarl's Wood Detention Centre near Bedford demonstrates the failings of the government's current detention policy. Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID), the award-winning charity that provides a free bail service to asylum seekers detained under Immigration Act powers, has criticised the portrayal of all detainees as failed asylum seekers awaiting removal or as those who have committed an immigration offence. It is BID's experience that many of those detained for lengthy periods have been detained on arrival.

In BID's experience, frustrations and tensions run high in detention facilities because detainees

- are not given reasons for their detention
- are subjected to prolonged detention with no maximum time limit
- have no automatic right to an independent review of their detention

Tim Baster, coordinator of BID, said:

"The Government insists that detention is "used sparingly" for those due to be removed from the UK, and who "have no right to be here". Our experience of attempting to secure bail for detainees has shown that this is misleading. Most of the detainees who have asked us for help are awaiting appeals and have often been detained from arrival. They remain in detention for long periods of time, often without a judge looking at the lawfulness of their detention. This amounts to arbitrary detention. The Government is in breach of the guidelines of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention."

In a recent case presented by BID a man was detained from arrival for six months without a court overseeing the detention. In another case a victim of torture was detained for 8 months without access to judicial oversight.

BID is concerned that the White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, published last week will exacerbate these problems. It is proposed to repeal the 1999 legislation that would have provided for automatic and speedy judicial oversight of the original decision to detain. The government also proposes to increase the number of asylum seekers detained, from around 1600 at present to over 4000.

ENDS

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