In light of the recent investigations into deaths, unlawful segregation, and evidence of unjust practices in immigration centres, CFFP calls for scrutiny of the current reliance on immigration detention in the UK. We believe detention is a traumatic and unjust practice that has no place in the asylum process. It is both unjust and inefficient to lock up those who have come to the UK seeking protection and refuge. Those applying for asylum in the UK should be treated with dignity and should be given the opportunity to live in their community while their claims are considered. Prompt action is necessary to afford detainees the protection they need and to give refugees the platforms to speak for themselves and their individual circumstances.

Every year thousands of would-be immigrants to the UK are taken to Immigration Removal Centres (detention centres). Women detained in UK detention centres report of being humiliated and intimidated by male staff whom routinely invade their privacy; of unlawful segregation; and of slave labour. Many of those detained are being held despite evidence that they are survivors of rape, trafficking, or other gender-based violence. The traumatic experience of being held in a detention centre can compound the previous trauma of sexual assault, trafficking, and torture. Detention centres are in violation of basic human rights, and there is a long-term need for engagement with, and improvement of, the conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and internationally. Moreover, the detention regime reinforces institutional racism and is deeply rooted in a colonial history.

Key Points

- The UK is the only country in the EU to detain migrants indefinitely.
- Investigations and reports show that the Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) cause or compound long-term psychological distress, are used arbitrarily, and are expensive and inefficient.
- A large number of pregnant women are held at Yarl’s Wood detention centre with little or no recorded evidence.

Numbers and Figures

- In 2014 the Home Office reported that roughly 1200 detainees were segregated, approximately 4% of detainees.
- In 2013, 2,038 women were detained after seeking asylum in the UK; 43% of them were held for more than a month.
- The UK has one of the largest networks of immigration detention facilities in Europe, expanding to over 3,500 detention centres after 2011.
ACTION PLAN

1. Engage with policymakers by writing to your MP (http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp/) about women in detention. Ask your MP what they are doing to ensure that vulnerable women are no longer locked up in immigration detention.

2. Engage directly with the Home Secretary (https://www.amberrudd.co.uk/contact) or Immigration minister (https://www.parliament.uk/biographies/commons/brandon-lewis/4009) and tell them to review the current policy.


4. Support organisations that push for policy alternatives to an asylum process which relies on detention, and which empower women who seek refuge to tell their own stories, such as Women for Refugee Women (http://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/) or Detention Action (https://detentionaction.org.uk/)

5. Push back on proposals to reintroduce fast-track systems, which have allowed thousands of people to be deported without ever having a lawful hearing of their case.

SOURCES


