

# Campsfield Monitor

Winter 2007 / 08

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## ***Discontent continues***

Detainees report increased tension in Campsfield. If it does 'kick off', it will be the third time in 2007. A lot of decent, vulnerable people will go through hell; the right-wing press and the Home Office pontificate about 'foreign criminals'.

One of these is TN, who has been living, working, paying tax in Oxford (where his mother lives) since 1999; he married in 2003; has children here; and applied repeatedly and unsuccessfully for a spouse's visa. He was advised to go back to his country of birth and apply again from there. This he did in 2005 and was again refused. Desperate to see his wife and children again, he bought a false passport to return to Britain, but was apprehended, and jailed in March this year. This makes him an 'FNP' (Foreign National Prisoner) and liable for deportation. He is now in Campsfield, his life, and that of his family, in ruins.

Another detainee told of other 'FNPs' whose criminality derives from driving offences (driving on a provisional licence while not accompanied by a qualified driver; driving with a non-UK driving licence) that normally would qualify for a few penalty points on the licence or a period of disqualification, not a prison sentence. Many of these men too are wrenched from job and family, their family left without a breadwinner.

## **Complaints and torments**

Detainees' complaints and torments are the same as at the time of the mass protest in March and mass-breakout in August:

\* Racism in the immigration court at Newport, Gwent, where detainees' bail

applications are now refused. Detainees with major responsibilities in this country are unlikely to abscond. Others have Human Rights appeals in process, so cannot be deported: their detention violates the Home Office's own rules. (See '*Scandal of Immigration Courts*').

\* Men have been forced into giving up and wish only to go back whence they came, however dire the prospects, but are still being held because the Home Office will not or cannot organise travel papers (while still opposing bail). One such man has been in Campsfield for 10 months, another for 6 months. This is much longer than the time being proposed for detention of terror suspects, which is (rightly) causing such concern.

\* Squalor, terrible food, and bullying, courtesy of GEO, which has packed more people into the centre and cut education provision (see '*Notes from inside*').

\* Poor healthcare and other provision.

\* Insistence on removing men to places that the whole world knows are unsafe: like Iraq, Congo and Afghanistan.

\* Use of isolation and removal to other immigrant prisons to punish men for small acts of resistance such as refusal of food. Men with families have been removed as far away as Dungavel, in Scotland, in reprisal.

\* Meanwhile, the Immigration Minister, ex-Andersens consultant Liam Byrne, continues to glory in defending the indefensible, targets for deportations that can only be met at unimaginable costs to those deported or threatened with deportation and at apparently unconsidered financial cost to the taxpayer.

– Campaign media release,

21.11.07

# 14 YEARS TOO LONG !

Campsfield 'House' Immigration Removal Centre, 1993–2007

## Scandal of immigration courts gets worse

Since 19 March Campsfield detainees have had their bail cases heard at Columbus Court, Asylum and Immigration Tribunal Hearing Centre, Newport. Previously cases were heard in Birmingham. And now they have *video hearings*.

**Newport is not a suitable venue people to get to from any part of the country by 10 a.m.** To be in time you would need to catch a train from London before 7 a.m. A journey from further afield could add hours to this. 'On the day' train fares are exorbitant. Confirmation of a hearing is usually too late to take advantage of cheap rates. Sometimes sureties cannot afford to take the extra time off work and pay travel costs. When a London venue has been requested, in exceptional circumstances, e.g. a disabled surety, a surety with very young children, it is rarely granted. BID has lost the services of some Free Representation Unit barristers as they cannot spare the extra time to travel to Newport and then wait.

### Immigration judges and judgements

- \* Proceedings at Newport are harsher and negative outcomes are more likely than elsewhere. Problems found at Newport and/or elsewhere:
- \* Inconsistencies in findings.
- \* Sureties not allowed to speak or even be in court in some cases.
- \* Detainees not allowed to speak
- \* Inconsistencies regarding sums offered by sureties.
  - \* Misleading advice, e.g.. judge said bail would have been given if surety offered a larger sum, but on re-listing and meeting that requirement bail was still refused.
- \* Evidence (e.g. Medical Justice report for a torture victim) to support bail disregarded.
- \* McKenzie friend attending in the absence of a barrister refused a hearing.
- \* Culture of disbelief with no requirement to show evidence for views expressed.
- \* Reasons for refusal bearing no relation to evidence provided in court.
- \* Lack of respect in addressing sureties and detainees.
- \* Sureties told to make daily phone contact.

### No official record of proceedings

The only written statement available is the (usually brief) 'Reasons for Refusal' written by the immigration judge. These often have no bearing on evidence presented by the detainee or his legal representative.

### Trial by video

Faced with complaints about the inefficiency of Group4/Securicor in getting detainees from Campsfield to their bail hearing on time or at all, the Home Office has since October required that detainees have their bail application heard by video link from the detention centre, and detainees are not taken to court. The only benefit appears to be the saving made in the transport budget for the escorts. The major problems include:

- \* Sureties, interpreters, lawyers, family still have to go to Newport, so endure the problems described above, except the start is now 9.30 not 10 (i.e. is worse).
- \* Not to have the interpreter by his side is a great disadvantage to the detainee.
- \* The detainee's confidential pre-hearing interview with their barrister is by video.
- \* The video-link has a 45 minute time limit. At cut-off, a detainee representing himself does not know what is happening or how the final decision is made.
- \* Detainees and others find it harder to express themselves via video. The Medical Foundation says this could lead to injustice.
- \* The outcome of a bail hearing rests to a great extent on the perceived credibility of the applicant. The trust-worthiness of an applicant can be assessed far more easily face-to-face than on a TV screen.
- \* Technical hitches to date include the screen going blank so that the detainee cannot see what is happening or who he is speaking to.

### Official definition of 'immigration judge':

*'They are lawyers (barristers, solicitors, or legal academics). They are not always originally immigration lawyers, but will have shown that they are able to learn this complex and challenging type of law.'*

## Detainees protest

The following photos were included in a briefing that the Barbed Wire Britain network handed over to the recent delegation from the European Parliament (see 'Detention policies under scrutiny')

### Campsfield, 14th March 2007



Detainees continue protest in yard after one of three accommodation blocks was badly damaged during a protest at the removal of an elderly Algerian man in the middle of the night by guards in riot gear. On 25th July the government-commissioned Whalley report predicted more disturbances. On 3rd August, 28 detainees escaped during another protest. Other mass protests at Campsfield have included those on 4 June 1994 and August 20 1998. Following the latter, 9 detainees were charged with riot; all were found not guilty at Oxford Crown Court after prosecution witnesses were discredited. *Campsfield is run by GEO (Global Expertise in Outsourcing, formerly Wackenhut).*

Photo: Daily Mail

### Yarl's Wood: 14 February 2002



Half of what was then Europe's biggest detention centre was destroyed by fire after a protest triggered by detainees protesting at guards sitting on a 56-year-old woman detainee.

In a subsequent trial at Harrow Crown Court

of 13 detainees on charges of arson and violent disorder all arson charges and all but two other charges were thrown out by the jury.

Constant protests, individual and collective, by detainees occur here and at other centres: complaints (see 'Notes from inside: Complaints bombshell'), appeals to the public and politicians, hunger strikes, and petitions.

*Yarl's Wood was in 2002 run by GSL; it is now run by Premier Custodial Group Ltd (Serco)*

Photo: John O'Reilly/Daily Mail

### Harmondsworth, 28 November, 2006



Shortly after 10pm a mass protest started in B Wing after a guard switched off the TV, preventing detainees from watching news of a highly critical Chief Inspector of Prison's report about Harmondsworth. The protest soon spread to all four wings. Much of the centre was destroyed and it had to be temporarily closed, as it was after a protest by detainees in 2004.

The trial of the 'Harmondsworth Four', charged with violent disorder, starts in January 2008 (see 'Harmondsworth 4 trial'). *Harmondsworth is run by Kalyx, a subsidiary of Sodexo; it was formerly called UK Detention Services, and before that Burns International.*

Pictures: Sky News; BBC



## **Campsfield's 'Independent' Monitoring Board**

Campsfield is monitored by its own 'independent monitoring board', appointed by the government. The Campsfield Campaign has long been concerned about the independence of IMBs and has scrutinised and responded to the Campsfield IMB's last two annual reports. In our experience the reports give a rosier picture of conditions inside than the detainees themselves give.

The report on 2006 which appeared this summer raised a number of issues which we would agree with – like the lack of internet access and the continued lack of access to the football field – both of which we hear are being addressed – which is good news.

But, our fears about the independence of the IMB were heightened by the reply we received in September from the its chair, Lieutenant-Colonel Freddie Cantrell.

We know from many of the detainees that there is no medical examination on arrival, no induction in an appropriate language, and no accessible information about detainees' rights. Yet the chair in his reply puts our concerns down as 'hearsay' and insists that all this is working well.

We count 14 incidents of self-harm in the centre during the year as a matter for concern, but the chair insists that much worse things might have happened had the care inside the centre not been good.

We were also concerned at the growing use of isolation ('segregation') in Campsfield, which the chair explained was for the detainees' own safety and protection, so in his view was not punishment.

The chair apparently justifies the increased use of handcuffs because of two escape attempts, one at a dentist and one at a doctor's, when the handcuffs were removed. This seems shaky justification for routine handcuffing for all outside visits.

We will continue to scrutinise the IMB and we shall make sure that our respondents are detainees, and independent visitors such as Medical Justice BID and Asylum Welcome.

## **US jury forces GEO to pay up \$100,001 to former detainee**

Global Expertise in Outsourcing (GEO)'s main business is immigration detention prisons, and mental health centres throughout the world (USA, UK, South Africa, Australia) – including running part of Guantánamo Bay base in Cuba. It was interesting to read the following report on one of the many immigration detention centres they run in the States.

'The jury said the operator, then known as Esmor Corp, and some former executive, should pay \$100,000 to Somali immigrant Hawa Jama for negligent hiring and training, and \$1 for violating the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

'At trial, Jama testified that she endured beatings, insults, rotting food and unsanitary conditions during her 11-month detention at the privately run jail in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1994-95.'

'The INS closed the center following a riot in June 1995, when about 100 immigrants broke windows, destroyed furniture and overpowered guards, claiming they were being held under inhumane conditions.

'The INS fired Esmor, then of Melville, NY, after finding that poorly trained guards abused the detainees physically and mentally, gave them spoiled food and deprived them of sleep.

'Jama, now in her late 30s, got married several years ago and now lives with her husband and three children in Columbus, Ohio. Jama had fled tribal warfare in Somalia that claimed her father and brother, and became a US citizen last year. She is still very haunted by what happened at Esmor, and has flashbacks.

Mr Venetis, a law professor at Rutgers School of Law, claimed 'corporate greed' created miserable conditions at the Esmor detention centre. Guards routinely beat and cursed detainees, with Jama being called 'an African monkey,' Venetis said.'

*Geoffrey Good, Associated Press, 13.11.07*

## Notes from inside: Complaints bombshell

The Border and Immigration Agency own complaints audit unit report (November) confirms what detainees have said all along about how their complaints are dealt with. This bombshell criticises the denial of rights to those dealt with by private firms on behalf of the Immigration Service. In 95% of cases, those investigating the complaints had been from the companies under investigation. Overall in the UK, It found just 8% of complainants were interviewed and 89% of investigations were ‘neither balanced nor thorough’; 83% of replies received were ‘indefensible’. a complaints procedure introduced in October 2006 for the immigration detention estate was given an ‘amber/red’ rating, indicating an above-average probability of fraud and impropriety. WATCH THIS SPACE.

‘Home Office fears immigration centres are hiding assaults’:  
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article2867084.ece>



*A detainee in Campsfield sent these photos from his mobile in August at the time of detainees' complaints about overcrowding and dirt.*



## Cutbacks and sackings

Over the past year, GEO has sacked education workers at Campsfield, nursing staff have departed, staff turnover has increased, the welfare officer has left, and in September the chaplain was suspended. The same month, the health care manager resigned, citing as the reason differences with the company employing him, Drummonds.

### Late news

It is reported (late November) that a new welfare officer (Janet Murphy) and a new head of the medical centre (Lisa Duff) have been appointed. A new sports field is being prepared. Internet access (including 10 computers) is being at last provided. The last two sound as though they might be improvements.

## Self-harming

In the year to April 2007, government figures show that nine detainees at Campsfield required medical treatment for harming themselves. Government minister Byrne said the government was ‘unable’ to determine which self-harming incidents were attempted suicide. It is in the interests of government, which defends detention, to minimise the number of incidents reported. We remember Ramazan Kamluca, who hanged himself in Campsfield on 27 June 2005, aged 18.

### VOICES FROM DETENTION II

*Testimonies from Immigration Detainees in the United Kingdom and Australia in Their Own Words*

ORDER FROM Barbed Wire Britain, c/o 60 Great Clarendon St, Oxford OX2 6AX  
Recommended donation per copy £3.

## **Places of detention of refugees and other migrants in the UK**

*(updated from factsheet in briefing to LIBE delegation, see 'UK Detention policies scrutinised')*

### **Immigration removal centres:**

*(Many people detained are not in fact legally liable to be removed/deported)*

**Campsfield** 215 men (to expand to 292?)

**Colnbrook** 313 (273 men + 40 men and women short-term)

**Dover** 316 men

**Dungavel** 188 men, women, children

**Harmondsworth** 259 men (to go to 459)

**Haslar** 160 men **Lindholme** 112 men

**Oakington** 352 men

**Tinsley** 146 men, women, children

**Yarl's Wood** 405 men, women, children (incl 232 family spaces)

(figures: Home Office website 18.11.07)

### ***Under construction***

**Brook** (Gatwick, to open 2008) 426 men, women

**Announced** February 2007 (no planning application yet): **Coltishall, Norfolk** c.500

### ***Short-term residential***

Colnbrook 40 Dover Harbour 20

Harwich 12 Manchester airport 16

**Non-residential short-term (reporting centres):** 25 other locations

### **Mobile detention centre**

There is a 'mobile detention centre' to hold up to 10 people for up to 12 hours, based at Poole in Dorset: <http://www.wired.gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/151997>

### **Prisons**

Some – one estimate is 200 at any one time – immigration detainees are held in prisons despite the July 2001 statement by Home Secretary that this 'scandal' would end.

### **Police cells**

Asylum seekers/overstayers/undocumented migrants are held here for up to seven days.

### **Double punishment detainees**

At Campsfield and Dover, a high proportion of detainees are foreign nationals who have completed a prison sentence and are being held supposedly prior to deportation.

### **[Two prisons designated to hold exclusively 'foreign criminals']**

On 24 October 2007, two prisons were allocated to only foreign nationals serving prison sentences: Bullwood Hall in Essex (capacity 184) and Canterbury in Kent (284)]

### **Private companies profiting from the increase in immigration detention**

GEO (Global Expertise in Outsourcing)

Kalyx (a Sodexo subsidiary)

GSL (Global Solutions Ltd)

Group 4/Securicor

Premier Custodial Group Ltd (Serco)

(Only the Dover, Haslar and Lindholme centres are run by the government.)

### **Financial cost of immigration detention**

a) £630 per detainee per week – parliamentary answer, January 2007 [?excludes 'overheads' – c.£500?].

b) average direct budget cost for 2007-08 for operating each establishment in the Immigration Removal Estate is £119 per bed space per day [£833 per week] – Liam Byrne, 19.11.07). You takes your pick. Or not.

### **'Accommodation centres' ditched**

In June 2005 a plan ('central to government policy') to build 4 750-place 'accommodation centres' for asylum seekers was dropped in the face of wide opposition. The last to go was the proposed centre at Bicester. Early in November it was revealed that the cost of *not* building this centre had risen to £28 million.

### ***DANGER ! DANGER !***

*The Government is still keeping open the option of building a closed detention centre in Bicester on the site of the failed accommodation centre.*

## Bail for Immigration Detainees

BID (Oxford) works with immigration detainees at Campsfield, Bullingdon Prison and elsewhere, e.g. Oakington, Lindholme.

Its prime function is to get people out of immigration detention. We:

- 1) Prepare and arrange bail hearings in court with a pro bono barrister.
- 2) Make a written application for Temporary Admission to the Chief Immigration Officer.
- 3) Help detainees run their own bail hearing and represent themselves in court. We run monthly workshops in Campsfield to explain how to do this and monthly advice sessions, seeing detainees on a one to one basis.

BID is a registered charity with a main office in London and local ones in Oxford and Portsmouth. It receives funding from individual donations, charitable trusts and support in kind from volunteers and pro bono advocates, but no government funding.

### **BID (Oxford)**

Tel: 0845 3304536

Fax: 0845 3304537

E-mail: [info@bidoxford.org](mailto:info@bidoxford.org)

276 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UR

## Student work

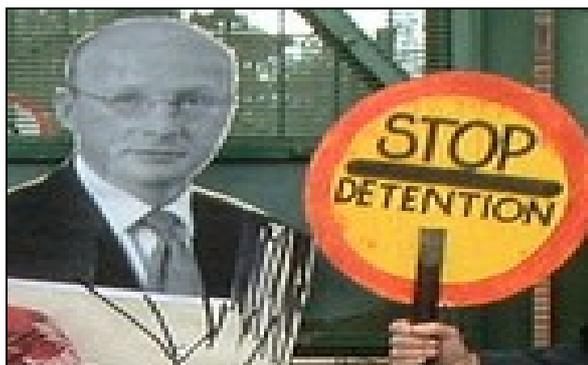
The new STAR group is fantastically active! Last night (Sunday) they help a music night jointly with Amnesty International at The Cellar in support of Asylum Welcome and the Still Human Still Here campaign.

They've had some trouble with Campsfield this term and haven't yet been allowed to go in on Saturdays to run their creative writing workshop. However, they've been doing lots of campaigning in other ways: letter writing, drafting a petition to lay down their beliefs and planning a big sleep out in the spring to call for an end to destitution as a political weapon. They are also working on drumming up university support for Asylum Welcome's food project for destitute Asylum seekers.

STAR are not the only group going for it. Medsin, Oxford Global Health Group and StopAIDS have been giving AIDS week an Asylum issues theme this year (first week of December) including includes a debate at the Oxford Union entitled 'This House Believes that the UK should provide HIV treatment to all its Asylum Seekers and migrants.'

**Contact:**

[dominic.weinberg@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dominic.weinberg@balliol.ox.ac.uk)



*Home Office minister Liam Byrne after his arrest by campaigners outside Campsfield in August*

## Success for Medical Justice

Set up in January, Medical Justice (Oxford) is a group of doctors and others who have worked closely with other organisations to protect the health of detainees in Campsfield. MJ input has proved vital in ensuring some detainees receive the health care they require, as well as being potentially useful in their bail hearings and asylum applications. High-quality training has been provided for the volunteer doctors, covering mental health problems in detention, physical evidence of torture, communicating with IRC healthcare staff and working with lawyers.

The next meeting will be at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday 8th December at St. Columba's Church, Alfred Street, Oxford OX1 4EH. Francis Khaiga and Apollo Okello, 2 ex-Campsfield detainees have agreed to attend.

### **Medical Justice (Oxford)**

*Enquiries to*

[jfluxman@googlemail.com](mailto:jfluxman@googlemail.com)

*Any medical referrals for the Oxfordshire area should be sent to*  
[ed@medicaljustice.org.uk](mailto:ed@medicaljustice.org.uk)

## Local Council calls for houses to be built on Campsfield site

Kidlington Parish Council has called for the redevelopment of Campsfield House and the adjoining police training facility for housing. Research across Cherwell District Council has shown that the local housing need in Kidlington is for 119 new homes a year, with the current supply at only 22. During the lifetime of the Local Development Framework to 2026 (the main planning document that shapes where development should go) that means a shortfall of 2,134 homes, with a suggested local allocation of 1,106 homes in the regional plan for the South East.

The Parish Council made its submission to Cherwell District Council in July, arguing that the site should be used for 300 new homes. Part of the Parish Council's thinking is linked to a wider consultation process asking residents about how they would like Kidlington to develop. A major priority is for a centre with better shops and an improved environment. To deliver these changes the Parish will need developer contributions, and it has backed plans to deliver over 1,300 homes locally.

The next stage is for the Parish Council to complete a sustainability assessment of Campsfield by January so that Cherwell District Council can draw up a list of its preferred options by September 2008. The Parish Council will be setting out that this is a previously developed site. It's next to other existing and proposed development, so it would not be an extension into the Green Belt but would contribute to improvements in local public transport.

On the one hand there is an existing decrepit immigration prison which should be closed, and on the other, there is the chance to offload the site and make a lot of money for the Home Office.

Let's hope that the Home Office number-crunchers also recognise a win-win situation when they see it.

## UK detention policies scrutinised by MPs and MEPs

Members of the Campaign to Close Campsfield helped prepare evidence for Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights' inquiry into treatment of asylum seekers: the report published in March accused the government of inhuman and degrading policies, called for detention to be limited and for an automatic bail hearing for families, and for asylum seekers to have the right to work. The Independent Asylum Commission has its final hearing at the end of November and will report in the New Year. Again, the Barbed Wire Britain Network to End Refugee and Migrant Detention gave (in August) lengthy evidence. BWB did so again in November to the visiting delegation of six members of the European Parliament's committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, who met NGOs including BWB, visited Yarl's Wood, Oakington and Harmondsworth centres, met a minister, and will also report next year.

### Visit a detainee !

Contact the Campaign, or Asylum Welcome (01865 722082, 276 Cowley Road).

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### Campaign to Close Campsfield

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**Demonstrate last Saturday 12 noon**  
**Meet 7.30 1st Tuesday, Oxford Town Hall**