

closecampsfield.wordpress.com/ *£/p contribution welcome*

The Campsfield Monitor

No Campsfield expansion!

Stop all immigration detention! [@closecampsfield](https://twitter.com/closecampsfield)

Campsfield expansion stopped: worth celebrating

This month marks the 22nd anniversary of the opening of Campsfield detention centre, an occasion that will be marked on 28th November by something like the 248th demonstration calling for closure of a place where over 30,000 people have been imprisoned. This might be simply depressing, were it not for a great victory this year, when a wide coalition saw off the government's plan to more than double the size of the immigration detention centre 6 miles north of Oxford.

A planning application for new building to increase the number of beds from 274 to 580 was submitted to Cherwell District Council in late 2014.

A local and national coalition was swiftly assembled. The local [Stop Campsfield Expansion group](#) was set up by the [Campaign to Close Campsfield](#) and [Oxford's Asylum Welcome](#) and a joint statement signed by 21 local organisations. At a national level, opposition was expressed through the Detention Forum and its members, who lodged objections to the plan, and launched a call for a halt to the increase in immigration detention.

At a public meeting organised by Close Campsfield in Kidlington, which neighbours Campsfield, all four local parliamentary candidates present, including the sitting [Conservative MP Nicola Blackwood](#), stated their opposition to the application on human rights grounds.

Street stalls, door to door leafleting of thousands of houses, and lobbies of councillors helped crystallise local opposition. Local and [student press coverage](#) was substantial.

Oxford University Amnesty International group was organising a letter calling for closure of Campsfield; this was amended to include opposition to the expansion, and the letter, signed by 69 heads of college and senior academics, was [launched](#) by Helena Kennedy QC in November.

By the time the application was coming up to be considered by Cherwell Planning Committee, all three local parish councils had come out against, and over 65 objections from individuals and local and national organisations had been lodged on the council's website.

Stop Campsfield Expansion obtained pro bono advice from law firms Day Lewis and Landmark Chambers. A decisive stage was reached at the planning committee meeting

November 2015

perilous crossing of the Mediterranean (see the Youtube video Why boat refugees don't fly¹). No wonder these people are desperate.

2. They have been pushed by conflict, not by 'pull factor' dreams of streets paved with gold. We do not have generous benefits for people who ask for asylum but are not allowed to work, although they would want to. For the refugees in Calais, the priority is safety and asylum; their hope is to lead decent and independent lives. Some believe that the UK will offer freedom and democracy.

3. Most of the people in Calais wanting to get to the UK want to come for language reasons – they come from former British colonies or have good English, or have family, friends or fellow nationals here. Some have had bad experience in other EU countries.

4. The people wanting to cross at Calais are a tiny portion of the world's refugees. Many are from regions where the UK has fought wars (Iraq, Afghanistan) and other war zones (Somalia, Eritrea). Many of those at Calais come from war-torn Syria, but they are a tiny part of the 9 million Syrians who have fled their homes, 6 million remaining within the country, 3 million going to neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.² Only around 4,000 Syrian refugees have reached the UK in recent years, and we have only voluntarily offered resettlement to 187

1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YO0IRsfrPQ4&feature=em-share_video_user

2 <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

Syrian refugees; Germany has welcomed some 30,000.³ In January to March this year, just 7,335 people made first time asylum claims in the UK, 4% of the EU total, just 114 claims per million people in the UK (17th out of 20 EU countries).⁴

5. *In this, the worst humanitarian refugee crisis since World War II, the UK's response to date has been shameful and unacceptable.*

6. If the government waived the restrictions on airline and ferry companies and let the people in Calais come to our actual border and present themselves for asylum, and if it provided a sufficient number of UKBA trained case workers and legal representatives to make certain the applicants had a fair hearing, we would reduce the number of people 'slipping' into the country, as well treating people with respect and allowing them to exercise the right to claim asylum.

6. This would lead to what is described as a win:win situation. The lorry drivers would breathe freely again; our goods would get to the continent; the Channel Tunnel would run freely again (once the employers settled with the French ferry workers in dispute); and the desperate people wanting to reunite with their families could be assured of a sound hearing from the UK; we could move on from this shameful episode in our history and try to be a real voice for humanity in the world.

7 Our current almost total disregard and homicidal complicity with the suffering of

3 <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/> 31.7.15

4 Source: Eurostat.

4 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

November 2015

refugees is similar, and no less culpable, to our attitude to slavery over a hundred years ago. Britain, the fourth wealthiest country in the world, could lead the way now with its example of compassion and mercy. Only then could we be genuinely proud.

XX

Compassion was ‘allowed’ a hundred years ago

Around 250,000 Belgians stayed in Britain throughout the 1914-18 war. They had fled from the German invaders, and been warmly received in Britain. Every city, town, and parish was asked to open their doors. Oxford welcomed 500-800, housed and fed them, found them work, and invited them to their homes. Most of the resources needed came from Oxford residents’ own pockets, gardens, and cupboards. There were events throughout the five years the Belgians stayed celebrating Belgian cooking, Belgian history, the close ties there had been between the two countries for generations (long before Belgium was formed, in 1830).



When families arrived they were given a

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

meal and a bed, helped to register at the police station, and then found work for the adults, and schools for the children. They lodged in houses lent by individuals or colleges (photo: Ruskin College), hostels, cottages in the countryside, and with Oxford families with spare rooms. The War Relief Committee advised that people needed work and to establish a normal life to recover from the traumas of their journeys and having to uproot from their homes. I wonder what effect a similar message from Whitehall would have today? Might it ‘allow’ practical kindness and compassion to happen?

XX

The negative policy to empty Calais: account of my visit to the detention centre in Vincennes, by Esther Benbassa, Senator EELV (Europe Écologie – Les Verts) of the Val de Marne, director of studies at the EPHE (Sorbonne)

We know that the Calais ‘jungle’ , born out of catastrophic management of the current migration crisis, has become a real problem, first of all for those nearby and then in terms of image, for the administration. On the eve of regional elections it seems to have become urgent, if not to extinguish the fire, at least to contain it. That is: to empty Calais, even in an absurd, abusive and precarious way.

Even if some migrants have effectively been directed to centres for shelter, others, since 21 October, have to a large extent been transferred by the Prefecture du Nord-Pas-de-Calais, into administrative detention centres (CRA). And this in

5 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

November 2015

defiance of the rights which France is supposed to follow.

What in effect is a detention centre? A place of deprivation of liberty where in theory, one shuts up foreigners who are in an irregular situation, while awaiting their deportation (even if only 20 to 30% of them are effectively returned to their home places).

Now the refugees of Calais or elsewhere are not, in the strict sense, strangers in an irregular situation. They are really refugees. Furthermore the notices of the obligation to leave French territory (OQTF) which have been given to them, and which make it possible to detain them, stipulate explicitly (and absurdly) that they cannot be deported if they come from Syria, Iraq or Eritrea. Some of these people who have been transferred have been separated from their family and those close to them, while their children, who are minors, are sometimes still in the 'jungle'.

The Paris- Vincennes detention centre, where I went on 10 November, as authorised by my parliamentary position, is one of the places where these refugees who can't be deported arrive from Calais. In addition, we should add the refugees who are arrested in the Paris stations, before they've had time to reach the Nord, separated from their wives, and this is done with complete impunity. Furthermore they are delivered to the detention centres, which do not stipulate that they can't be removed because of their country of origin.

Between 29 October and 3 November, in Paris -Vincennes, there were three arrivals, of about 100 people. The first convoy arrived in a bus carrying a sign *Bon*

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

Voyage. Bad taste? Clumsy? There is no doubt that history will remember this image, evocative of French management of the migration crisis. These refugees are submitted to a veritable turnover: they are released generally fairly quickly in groups of 30, to be replaced by others, the same number, arriving in the following convoy. A scandalous game of dominos, which adds cynically to the destabilisation of people who are humiliated, exhausted, despairing, subject to the worst conditions of life and a treatment that is less than human. They don't understand why some are released by the administrative Tribunal or the judge, and others are not. This arbitrariness makes their situation even more unbearable.

None of the detainees I met wished to remain in France. They did not want to hear about our country where they feel they have been treated like less than nothing. I remember the words of a Syrian: *You will see, I will become rich, but I will never come to spend a single penny in France even on holiday.*

They all complain about the treatment inflicted on them at the time of their arrest and the conditions of their stay. The drinking water fountains are out of use, they have to drink from the toilets. They tell me that nobody listens to them. Nobody wants to buy for them, at their own expense, telephone cards which would make it possible for them to communicate with their family. They have only one idea in their heads: to get to England, meet up there, with friends, parents, employment, and escape the claws of France.

Seven refugees held in the detention centre (CRA) of Paris-Vincennes started a hunger

6 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

November 2015

strike on 10th of November. The number continues to grow. Two Sudanese are constantly threatened with being confronted by their ambassador with a view to return to Sudan, a country where they risk the worst. The social services of the CRA (AFFSAM) have submitted a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights to delay this meeting. The organisations are mobilising as fast as they can to rein back, if not stop, this madness.

Other convoys are expected on the 15th, 21st and 26th of November. This policy goes against the CESEDA (code of entry and stay of foreigners with the right to asylum). It makes nonsense of the most basic human rights. It treats these refugees as if they were enemies or criminals (I was even warned against the possible theft of my mobile phone).

L’AFFSAM says it is profoundly shocked by this ‘management’ of the migration crisis, which is erratic, absurd, shameful, a ‘management’ which is increasing the cost without in any way dealing with the problems inherent in the Calais’ jungle’. These are just expedients with a view to emptying Calais at the time of an election, and in the hope -- probably pretty vain -- of winning several thousand votes.

How is it that France, for a long time held to be the Fatherland (*patrie*) of human rights, has sunk so low? How is it that an administration that pretends to be of the Left can have approved such actions? How can it delay indefinitely, as L’AFFSAM claims, who know from the inside, what is happening in the detention centres, putting in place durable, permanent solutions, which are humane and respectful of rights? As an elected (Senator) I thought it was my duty to go and see, and to bear

7 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

witness. Nothing can be said about tomorrow: one has seen nothing one doesn’t know. Silence is the first of our enemies, our past reminds us of that. Elected members, associations, the media, citizens, it is an imperative duty of each to interrogate those responsible for these illegal and grotesque measures . And to demand that they end. Without delay.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Torture is torture, whoever inflicts it

From the Manager of Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) on 17/08/2015:

“Please see below definition of torture which the Home Office use ... The full definition of torture in the convention [the UN convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment] is: *‘Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.’*”

BUT, guidance was sent to asylum caseworkers and IRC doctors in Home Office emails dated 7 August 2013 and 8 August 2013 respectively. This was following the judgment by Burnett J in the case of an

November 2015

lot of concern about the issue in my constituency, especially with Campsfield being so close. That concern is felt by people of all parties and none. It is encouraging and heartening how broadly concern is being expressed today across the House.

We owe a vote of thanks to those who served on the panel and produced this excellent report. I wholeheartedly endorse its recommendations. It is worth underlining that the panel members came from across the parties and included a former Cabinet Minister, a Law Lord and an independent inspector of prisons. I hope that from this report comes the momentum for real change. As the report says, piecemeal tinkering with the system is not enough. The Shaw review is very welcome. However, by specifically excluding the decision to detain within its terms of reference, the Government are seeking to avoid the most important question.

The truth is that immigration detention simply is not working. The report concludes, and I agree, that the detention system is “inefficient, expensive and unjust”, so real change, not least the introduction of a time limit, is essential. I hope that following this debate the Government will commit to forming a working group to implement this and other recommendations of the inquiry.

It is clear that immigration detention is used too frequently. The Home Office is detaining more people than ever, with 32,053 people entering detention in the year ending June 2015, an increase of 10% on last year. There is general agreement across the House that detention for

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

administrative purposes should be used only in rare circumstances when it is absolutely necessary, but that is not happening. Figures from 2013 show that the UK detained 30,418 people that year while Germany detained 4,309 people, Belgium detained 6,285 and Sweden detained 2,893. As has already been pointed out, Germany received four times as many asylum applications as the UK in that time. That shows that there are workable alternatives to detention.

A high percentage of those detained in this country are released, receive temporary admission or are granted bail—49% in the most recent relevant immigration statistics. That must raise the question why they were detained in the first place. Furthermore, as has already been said, immigration detention is expensive. In 2013-14 the annual cost of running the immigration detention estate was £164.4 million. There are cheaper community-based alternatives available, and there are certainly better uses for the money.

Most importantly, indefinite detention is unjust, which is why the Labour party committed to ending it in our manifesto. People are being detained for far too long. The most recent immigration statistics show that 187 people had been in detention for a year or longer and 29 had been in detention for two years or longer in the year ending June 2015. That is totally unacceptable. A time limit should be imposed. The 28-day limit suggested in the report, which would bring the UK into line with others in Europe, seems sensible. Of course, we need to ensure that that does not become an automatic period of detention, but the alternative of no time limit at all is simply not working and cannot continue.

9 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

November 2015

hundred signatures for our mailing lists! Joanna and Kathryn from the OMS and CCC led an Amnesty Soc meeting on Monday 26th October, in which we watched a Campsfield documentary and had a long Q & A session with many interested attendees. This was followed by a visit to Amnesty Soc from Liz and Bill on Monday 2nd November, in which footage recorded at the previous Campsfield demo (on October 31st) was shown to the group, and another, more detailed Q & A session was held. With refugee and migrant issues so pertinent at this time, student interest in these is high; we at Amnesty Soc will be doing our best to maintain that interest over the course of the academic year. Weekly meetings take place every Monday from Weeks 1 to 8 from 8.30pm to about 9.30pm in the Large Meeting Room in the Oxford Hub (above the Turl Street Kitchen).

Detained Voices

STORIES, EXPERIENCES AND DEMANDS BY PEOPLE HELD IN UK IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES:

<https://detainedvoices.wordpress.com/>

BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees)

'Bail for Immigration Detainees is an independent charity that exists to challenge immigration detention in the UK. We work with asylum seekers and migrants, in removal centres and prisons, to secure their release from detention.' (from the national website:

<http://www.biduk.org/>

UK Detention Forum

The Detention Forum is a loose network of over 30 NGOs who are working on immigration detention issues. We are working together to build a momentum to question the legitimacy of immigration detention which has become such a normal part of the British immigration system. We are now a membership-based network, a collective

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

of organisations who want to work together to challenge immigration detention. Members of the Campsfield campaign are active in the Forum and include the convenors of a working group on judicial oversight). The Forum was instrumental in the setting up of the current all-party Parliamentary Inquiry into the Use Of immigration Detention (detentioninquiry.com/) detentionforum@wordpress.com

Migreurop

In 2002, human rights organisations at the European Social Forum in Florence decided to act as a network to document and denounce growing immigration detention across Europe.

Ten years later, 43 NGOs from 16 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East have joined Migreurop, reflecting the reality of 'Fortress Europe': border control, detention, deportation and the externalisation of this policy to third countries to contain migrants away from the Europe Union. A map in Migreurop's *Atlas on Migration* (English edition, New Internationalist) shows the intensification of detention in a variety of detention sites: closed reception centres for asylum-seekers, police stations, immigration detention centres, pre-departure accommodation centres. The Campsfield campaign has a representative elected to the Administrative Council of Migreurop.

<http://www.migreurop.org/?lang=en>

Corporate Watch

Corporate Watch is a small independent not-for-profit research and publishing group which undertakes research on the social and environmental impact of large corporations, particularly multinationals. They have a strong thread on immigration detention:

<http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=21&query=detention>

Right To Remain

'Supports community campaigns for justice in the immigration and asylum systems. We support people fighting for their right to remain, and wider campaigns for migration rights.' Their in-person, blog, Twitter and Facebook activity gives

11 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !

November 2015

accessible and up to date information and help for campaigners and individuals fighting against deportation. Their excellent *Campaigning Toolkit: An aid to understanding the asylum and immigration systems, and campaigning for the right to stay* is online and in hard copy.

<http://righttoremain.org.uk/>

Asylum Welcome

Oxford body that supports refugees, asylum seekers, immigration detainees in. 01865 722082
office@asylum-welcome.org

Freedom From Torture

(formerly Medical Foundation). Cares for survivors of torture. Oxford supporters group: halcyon.leonard@ntlworld.com or 01865 452783. (www.torturecare.org.uk)

Medical Justice

Trains local doctors to give independent medical advice to detainees. Arranges for medico legal reports, campaigns for improved health care. mjoxford@yahoo.co.uk All referrals for medical reports: med@medicaljustice.org.uk

Open Door

Weekly drop-in 11-4 Thursdays for refugees and asylum seekers, hot meal, games, signposting advice, East Oxford Community Centre. Contact: opendoor@yahoo.co.uk

Oxford Migrant Solidarity

Supportive group showing solidarity with and visiting people in detention in Oxford. Communicating despite the fences. Contact: oms@riseup.net

Amnesty International Oxford City group

This group sent a motion on detention to the 2015 AI conference and is part of the working group on migrant rights. Contact: chair@oxford-amnesty.org.uk; secretary@oxford-amnesty.org.uk

Refugee Resource

Counselling and therapeutic activities, employment advice, mentoring and coaching. Old

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

Music Hall, 106-8 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE. Tel. 01865 403 280 / 0845 458 0055.

www.refugeeresource.org/
info@refugeeresource.org

Trade unions

Oxford Trades Council and local union branches support the campaign. To contact a TU branch, ask the secretary of Oxford & District Trades Union Council oxfordtuc@aim.com, or tel. 01865 558145.

Visit a detainee! Contact the Campaign or Oxford Migrant Solidarity or Asylum Welcome (see above)

Campaign to Close Campsfield

Closecampsfield.wordpress.com

closecampsfield@riseup.net

01865 558145 / 01993 703 994

Demonstrate: last Saturday of the month at noon.

Meetings: first Tuesday, 7.30, Oxford Town Hall

Email list: To join, send an email to closecampsfield-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Twitter: [@closecampsfield](https://twitter.com/closecampsfield)

Facebook: Close Campsfield Campaign



12 TWENTY-TWO YEARS TOO LONG ! CLOSE CAMPSFIELD AND ALL DETENTION CENTRES !