

Bulletin 27 June 2008

SDV News and events

Support SDV through Easysearch

Please remember to use easysearch when searching the internet. By doing so you can raise money for SDV. Go to the link below and choose Scottish Detainee Visitors as the cause you would like to support, and get searching. It's easy to use and seems as effective as Google. AND it is literally money for nothing! You can also navigate to easysearchj from the SDV website where you will find all sorts of other ways to raise funds and details of events.

<http://www.easysearch.org.uk/>

SDV Music Night – Saturday 12 July: Line-up confirmed

Make sure you put this date in your diary for our next gig. Scott McDonald and David Lawson (blues/folk) will make up the bill. There will be a (very reasonably priced!) licensed bar, make sure you let your friends and family know.

You can download posters and fliers for the event from the SDV website

www.sdv.org.uk

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Iran is safe for 'discreet' gays, says Jacqui Smith

Gay and lesbian asylum-seekers can be safely deported to Iran as long as they live their lives "discreetly", the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, has claimed.

In a letter to a Liberal Democrat peer, Ms Smith said there was no "real risk" of gay men and lesbians being discovered by the Iranian authorities or "adverse action" being taken against those who were "discreet" about their behaviour.

Her comments were condemned by human rights campaigners. Ben Summerskill, chief executive of Stonewall, described the notion of gays escaping persecution by being discreet as nonsense. He said: "You only have to listen to people who were terrorised by the Metropolitan Police in the 1950s and 1960s to know that telling gay people to live discreetly is quixotic."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iran-is-safe-for-discreet-gays-says-jacqui-smith-852336.html>

Detention of Zimbabweans in UK 'no longer justified'

A group of six Zimbabweans who have been detained for up to 23 months in a British prison pending their deportation have appealed to Gordon Brown to release them until it is safe for them to be sent home.

The group, who are being held at Haslar prison, Gosport, say that they are facing what appears to be "indefinite detention" since the escalation of violence in Zimbabwe led to the Home Office decision to halt all deportations to Zimbabwe.

The group, who wish to remain anonymous, have been detained for between four and 23 months at a cost of £1,400 a week each. They say that they acknowledge the Home Office's power to detain them but say it is "somewhat being misused" in the light of what is happening now in Zimbabwe. They add that they would abide by the most rigorous controls, such as electronic tagging, if they were given temporary release.

One of the six detainees at the Haslar detention centre has been held for nearly two years pending his deportation to Zimbabwe. He previously served a nine-month prison sentence for using false documents to get into Britain. Another man was arrested for illegally working as an assistant in a residential care home.

Full story at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/jun/24/immigrationpolicy.zimbabwe>

News from AVID

The latest edition of In Touch is attached at the end of this bulletin

Other news and events

A job you might be interested in: Amnesty International; Scotland Campaigner (Edinburgh)

17.5 hours p/w, £23,937 pro rata
Closing date: 12pm, 4 July 2008

A confident communicator, influencer and proven campaigner, your commitment and ability to work flexibly will see that you make a major contribution in Scotland to the success of Amnesty International UK's campaigning. Your creativity will also be called upon as you contribute innovative approaches to local campaign strategies and it is essential that you have a strong awareness of the current Scottish political, social and media context.

Contact email amnesty@delancey.co.uk

More information at: www.amnesty.org.uk/jobs

AVID contact details:

Address: PO Box 1496, Oxford OX4 9DY

Emails: coordinator@aviddetention.org.uk

**Tel: AVID Chair (Sally Tarshish) 01865 250690
Vice Chair (Liz Cox) 01483 417649**

Dungavel

Alex Salmond SNP is said to be in talks with UK Immigration Minister Liam Byrne to have Dungavel shut down following the description of conditions by a detainee, Corellie Bonhomme. He is said to have expressed 'strong disapproval' about the Dungavel facility and dawn raids on asylum seekers in Scotland. (Scotsman 4th June 08)

UK Borders Act 2007

Section 16 came into force on 31 January. This empowers the UK Borders Agency to impose residence and reporting restrictions on anyone granted leave to enter or remain for a limited period.

Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008

The Act received the Royal Assent on 8 May. It includes provision for a new special immigration status which is designed to deny leave to enter or remain to those whose human rights prevent their removal despite having committed crimes in the UK. The new status may prevent people from working, deny them welfare benefits (other than the equivalent of NASS Section 4 support) and subject them to reporting and control restrictions. Spouses, partners and dependant children could also be affected. These provisions are not yet in force.

Healthcare

Following on from details in the last *In Touch*, concerning the rights to healthcare of refused asylum seekers, who remain in this country, the recent High Court judgement means that hospitals and GPs do not have discretion to refuse treatment so long as the individual is intending to remain in the UK for the present, has been here for several months and has not been served with removal directions or, possibly, registered with IOM for assisted return. Production of an IS96 or grant of bail may be required.

The Government intend to appeal but meanwhile, this is the law and Dept of Health has sent out a letter to NHS Chief Executives accordingly.

Submission to European Committee for the Prevention of Torture

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture is due to visit the UK in 2009. It is within their remit to ensure that immigration detainees are not subjected to inhumane or degrading treatment. On behalf of the Asylum Rights Campaign (Detention Sub-group) Laura del Nevo from Haslar Visitors Group is collating a submission to the committee using a similar format to the report Helen Ireland submitted to LIBE committee in 2007. Laura welcomes contributions from any organisation working with immigration detainees in the UK and can be contacted for more information on 023 9283 9222 or by email deputy@haslarvisitors.org.uk. (source Laura – Haslar)

**Detention User Group Medical Seminar
24th September 2008**

Frank Arnold from Medical Justice is producing a list of concerns which will be sent to UKBA as suggestions for the proposed workshop. The concerns are listed below. If you have any comments or additional suggestions, please let AVID know and we will pass them on.

1) Timely provision of medication:

- a) Treatments which patients are on at time of detention and responsibility of UK BA to obtain same or inform detention centre clinicians.
- b) Malaria prophylaxis
- c) Childhood immunisations

2) Reporting of evidence of special illness including torture

- a) Operations Enforcement Manual
- b) Rule 35
- c) DSO 3/2008 and associated API

3) Psychiatric care:

- a) Diagnosis of mental illness, including PTSD, depression and schizophrenia; use of screening tools.
- b) Arrangements for specialist care
- c) Hospitalisation (voluntary and involuntary)
- d) Procedures to prevent inappropriate detention of people with mental health problems.

4) Timely use of medical notes

- a) Obtaining of previous notes
- b) Provision of discharge summaries

5) Governance arrangements for detention healthcare:

- a) DUG medical subgroup
 - b) Clinical governance group
 - c) Healthcare steering group
 - d) Medical complaints procedures and healthcare commission registration
 - e) Need for effective audits
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Asylum Support Partnership Multilingual Website

The Refugee Council hosts multilingual information pages relating to Asylum Policy and Support in 19 languages.

<http://www.languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Migrant Helpline News

The new Chief Executive (from end of July) is Mike Emberson who previously worked for the Salvation Army. Migrant Helpline are currently working with the 'Alternative to Detention' project in Millbank, Ashford where there will be 16 families in residence by the end of June. Migrant Helpline is involved in working to ensure that the client receives as much contact and help as possible prior to moving to Millbank.

Changes to Immigration law

The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association published updated information sheets on changes to immigration law. Go to the 'info service' section of their website for the latest additions.

<http://www.ilpa.org.uk>

AVID needs a new treasurer

AVID is looking for a new Trustee/Treasurer. Our current treasurer, Tony Stoughton-Harris has served AVID faithfully for a number of years but would now like to pass the job on. Anyone out there with an interest in AVID's work as well as a skill that is urgently needed, please contact AVID's chair, Sally Tarshish inscapegarden@btinternet.com

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