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For immediate release

Government must end the use of indefinite and arbitrary immigration detention

Immigration detention policy is in urgent need of reform, specialist charity *Bail for Immigration*

Detainees (BID), said today. The organisation has called for urgent action by the government to respond to the findings of the report of HM Inspectorate of Prisons, published today.

BID welcomes the findings of the Inspectorate, in particular that children should not be detained for more than seven days, but urged ministers to react swiftly to tackle the underlying issues.

Sarah Cutler of BID commented;

"The Inspectorate identifies an array of issues which clearly demonstrate that detention in this country is a cause for shame and deep concern. Asylum seekers are deprived of their liberty for indefinite periods, yet they have committed no crime. Many of the problems identified by the inspection would be tackled if detention was used only for short periods, only where absolutely necessary.

Many thousands of people every year endure the conditions described in the reports, on the basis that an Immigration Officer thinks that they may abscond, yet the Home Office admit that they have done no research into levels of absconding 1 . Several independent reports have identified the arbitrary way in which detention decisions are made, and suggested alternatives 2 . Yet the government continue to operate this inhumane, disproportionate, immoral and expensive policy."

BID also expressed concern about a shift towards widespread use of administrative detention. The Home Office does not collate or publish statistics to show how many detainees are removable, but in BID's experience, significant numbers of detainees are not 'failed asylum seekers' but are waiting for decisions in their case to remain in the UK.

"Over the past year, the government has pursued policies which will expand the use of administrative detention, and have legislated to remove a vital mechanism for independent review of detention. Those people who are held before a final decision on their case are restricted from pursuing that case by the very fact of being detained."

BID recommend an immediate end to the detention of children, the mentally and physically ill and those who have been tortured. In order for detention not to be arbitrary, BID calls for provision for all those detained to have prompt and automatic access to a court to consider lawfulness and necessity of detention.

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