



Annual Members Meeting
18th February 2016

Motion name: Support the campaign against immigration detention and the #SurroundYarlsWood protest

Background:

1. The immigration system and immigration detention are racist institutions which criminalise and punish people differentially based on the fact that by random chance someone happens to be born outside of the EU/UK and wishes to live and work in the UK. Our sisters, brothers, mothers, friends, fellow students, neighbours and co-workers are being locked up indefinitely for no crime other than to seek freedom, safety or to escape poverty and build a future for themselves and their families.
2. Immigration detention centres work and operate in very similar ways to prisons. Many of them are former prisons, they are run by private security companies, and the wardens and staff are trained in much the same way as in prisons – this is not to mention that the lived experience is the same. Instead of a building a future our communities are kept in limbo targeted by immigration raids and ever-tightening immigration rules, instead of finding safety too many refugees find immigration prison. The constant threat of deportation is an unacceptable state to live under.
3. 22 people have died whilst in immigration detention since 1989.
4. There have been at least 1,837 attempted suicides across the UK detention estate as revealed by data acquired via the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
5. Student Unions should support the liberation and emancipation of all people and recognise this as an essential part in the struggle for education that is emancipatory and without barriers.
6. Many of the women held in immigration detention (including in Yarl's Wood) are pregnant. Most of the women in detention are survivors of sexual violence, rape and/or torture.
7. A Channel 4 investigation (amongst other investigations) revealed the prevalence of sexual abuse and harrasment by male guards in immigration detention including male guards constantly watching women as they dress, undress or go to the toilet, male guards sexually abusing detainees and guards racially abusing detainees.
8. The demonstrations at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, led by hundreds of women detainees inside and ex-detainees outside have grown from 50 to over 1000 since May 2015.
9. According to government statistics the number of people entering immigration detention since 2011 has risen from ~26,000 to ~31,000

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10. The UK uses detention in asylum procedures more than any other country in the EU.

11. The UK is one of the few countries in the world (and the only country in the EU) which does not have a time limit on detaining people and has a growing detention estate.

Purpose:

1. Bristol SU should support those campaigning against immigration detention.
2. Yarl's Wood detention centre for women should be shutdown.
3. Students should recognise the importance of campaigning against immigration detention and how this relates to a struggle for free and emancipatory education without barriers.
4. Demonstrations have been powerful, dynamic assertions of a growing migrant rights movement in the UK that is crucial for the progress of all society.
5. We should treat those seeking asylum in the UK and the rest of Europe with care and compassion rather than fear and suspicion.

Action:

1. Bristol SU will support campaigns and actions by students who protest on campus against immigration detention centres (e.g. protesting the presence of companies on campus who run, build and/or profit from immigration detention) e.g. by reimbursing them for any literature handed out on campus campaigning against immigration detention.
2. Bristol SU will support campaigns against immigration detention by: promoting anti-detention events (e.g. demonstrations), organising transport to demonstrations that campaign against immigration detention, financially supporting any union affiliated groups organising and promoting anti-detention events.
3. Bristol SU will endorse the "Surround #YarlsWood Demonstration" on the 21st March 2015 and pledge (£200/£250/£350/£400) to subsidise £5 and free tickets for our students/workers and asylum seekers on our local Movement for Justice coach to the next demonstration on 12th March 2016
4. Bristol SU will itself disseminate information about immigration detention via email, posters, and social media.

Proposed by: Amy Finch and Olivia Little