

End Detention Now!

NUS Women's Campaign has created this briefing on as part of an End Detention campaign. This briefing aims to provide you with information on what detention is, and how you can get involved in anti-detention and detainee support on your campus.

Policy

This piece of work is coming from NUS Women's Campaign and policy passed at NUS Women's Conference. Motion 505: End Detention Centers outlines the NUS Women's Campaign position on the issue. You can read the motion [here](#). There is also policy from many other campaigns and zones in NUS which can be found [here](#).

What is detention?

In the UK people there are current nine detention centers where a person can be held in immigration detention. You can be held due of your status for legally residing in the UK is either under review, your applications are being processed, or you are found to be living 'illegally'. Some in detention may have been refused asylum and waiting to be deported.

Many in detention are asylum seekers; they may be seeking refugee status, escaping from civil war, violence, sexism or homophobic laws, and racial or religious persecution. Many detainees are survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, FGM – often they have a longstanding history and connection with the UK and have been living and working here for years.

Some detainees are kept in indefinite detention. This could be because they cannot

be sent back to their country of origin, for example if they do not have a valid passport. Some also risk violence or even death if they return. To send them back would be against their right to safety and asylum, but with tight immigration laws the government is reluctant to give them status to freely remain in the UK.

In the UK, around 30,000 people are held under the Immigration Act every year. They are generally held for anything from 48 hours to 2 months, however many are held for longer. Just under 3000 people are currently under detention, with around 100 children being held. The top five nationalities are Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Albanian, and Iranian.

Why are we calling to end detention?

The campaign to end detention has been growing in the past few years, but has a long history of criticizing the detention centers as a part of a British industrial prison complex of sorts, as well as based on racist and xenophobic immigration policy.

Due to their practical use for indefinite detention or as a stop-gap for deportation, many believe that detention is a violation of human rights, of freedom and to asylum. A detention center is similar to a prison, with little

freedom of movement, however most detainees have not broken a law.

In addition to possible reasons for why someone is being detained or seeking asylum, many detainees experience other human rights violations during detention. There are countless accounts of experience of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppression. There are also accounts of mental, sexual and physical abuse, and insufficient care for disabilities, physical health and wellbeing. Detention centers have been investigated and there is overwhelming evidence that those held are done so in appalling conditions. However, ultimately due to their immigration status, a far lower regard is held for their wellbeing. They are in limbo, without clear release, timeframe or procedure.

NUS like many other organizations cannot condone this treatment of people who simply wish above all to safely live in the UK. Therefore, we support and stand in solidarity with those who want to end detention.

But how can you get involved?

Join a Campaign Group

The first way to get involved is to join a campaign group. There are many groups working on a national and local level that campaign and support the rights of detainees, many of which are calling for reform or abolition of detention centers and immigration policies.

We have rounded up some of the key initiatives and groups that you can get involved with...

- **STAR** is a student-led national charity with groups at universities across the UK. Those involved provide practical support for refugees. You can get involved in 4 ways: volunteering, campaigning, education and fundraising.

www.star-network.org.uk |
[@STARnational](#) | [theSTARNetwork](#)

- **Refugee Support Network** helps young refugees, asylum seekers and survivors of trafficking to build more hopeful futures through education. You can access support, donate or become a mentor.
www.refugeesupportnetwork.org |
[@Refugee_Support](#)
- **Detention Action** is a group that campaigns to end indefinite detention in the UK and introduce alternatives. Their campaigns include [#Time4aTimeLimit](#) and [#BuildTrustNotWalls](#). They specifically support people held in [Harmondsworth](#) and [Colnbrook](#) Immigration Removal Centers.
www.detentionaction.org.uk |
[@DetentionAction](#)
- **Refugee Tales** is an outreach project of the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group inspired by the experiences of the men held and the work of the group in 20 years of visiting.
www.refugeetales.org
- **AVID Detention** is a charity that supports volunteer visitors to detainees, with 16 member groups that visit detention centers and prisons across the UK. They also campaign to raise awareness of immigration detention and advocate for positive change.
www.aviddetention.org.uk
- **LGMigrants** (Lesbian and Gays Support Migrants) is a queer activist group inspired by LSGM that engages in activism, direct action, and lobbying, using social media and education to challenge xenophobic, racist and homophobic detention and immigration policies. They have fringe regional groups and raise money through merchandise.
[LGMigrants](#) | [@lgsmigrants](#)

- **UnisNotBorders** is a collection of British, EU and non-EU migrant students, lecturers and university workers opposed to UKVI and Prevent surveillance and the hostel environment on campuses. [@UnisNotBorders](#) | [UnisResistBorderControls](#)
- **DocsNotCops** is a group of nurses, doctors, healthcare activists, students, teachers, workers who have a range of immigration and citizen statuses. They work in solidarity with Together Against Prevent to challenge islamophobia and xenophobia. [@DocsNotCops](#) | [www.docsnotcops.co.uk](#)
- **SOAS Detainee Support** was set up in 2006 as a student-led organization of volunteers to visit and support detainees at Harmondsworth, Colnbrook and Yarl's Wood detention centers. [www.soasdetaineesupport.wordpress.com](#)
- **The Migration Observatory** at the University of Oxford provides impartial, independent and authoritative evidence-based analysis of data in migration in the UK. This is used to inform media, public and policy debates, and research on international immigration issues. They have a good resource [here](#) as well as many others.

Further ways you can get involved...

1. See if there is a local refugee or migrant solidarity group. If not, start one up as a society through your student union or even as a community group. You can email students@star-network.org.uk if you would like more information about starting your own STAR group.
2. Pass policy at your union. You can use NUS Women's Campaign policy as a motion model.
3. Attend demonstrations at detention centers. There are many held all over the country, often in the form of "noise ins" that are a show of solidarity and support for the detainees inside.
4. Research your nearest detention center, and work with local groups to organize demonstrations, visits, or communication with detainees. [You can find a map of detention centers here.](#)
5. Host fundraisers and take donations to give to charities who support refugees and detainees.
6. Host letter and craft making sessions to send to detainees. They are often isolated and lonely and many organizations encourage communication as a form of support.
7. Research the history of immigration, especially changes in policy, in the UK. This helps to understand the constant changing and political nature that often ignores the human element.