



International Detention Coalition

Human rights for detained refugees,
asylum seekers and migrants

Media Release
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A call to uphold the human rights of detainees

Gross human rights violations are an increasingly everyday occurrence for men, women and children in places of immigration detention around the world, the International Detention Coalition (IDC), said today, International Human Rights Day.

IDC Director Grant Mitchell said refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are increasingly detained for prolonged periods in conditions below basic international standards with no access to asylum procedures or judicial review of their detention.

“Governments around the world must uphold the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants held in immigration detention globally and work to develop community-based alternatives.”

The IDC call follows recent statements by the UN led Global Migration Group and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

To address unjustified detention, UNHCR advocates strongly for the use of effective alternatives to detention. A global survey of alternatives to detention in use in a number of States, conducted by the International Detention Coalition, concluded that the use of such alternatives, especially for vulnerable people and children, has shown positive results. High levels of voluntary departures and low levels of absconding are achieved while the rights, dignity and well-being of asylum-seekers and migrants are upheld¹.

There has been some encouraging discussion of alternatives to immigration detention at an international level and some countries have established models that demonstrate alternatives can work well and cost less than detention. But detention continues to be widely used without proper consideration of less draconian options.

“We call on governments around the world to stop the use of detention as a migration management tool and to adhere to international human rights standards which require detention to be a last resort and for alternatives to detention to be pursued”.

International human rights standards require governments to actively pursue alternatives to immigration detention in the first instance and prohibit arbitrary, indefinite and non-reviewable detention.

The IDC is currently completing international research into the use of alternatives to immigration detention, to be launched in Geneva early 2011.

For more details contact IDC Director Grant Mitchell via telephone: +61 403194665 or e-mail: gmitchell@idcoalition.org

Notes to Editors: The IDC is a coalition of over 200 non-governmental groups and individuals working in over 50 countries. Coalition members provide legal, social and other services; undertake research and reporting as well as advocacy and policy work on behalf of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The IDC advocates for greater respect for the human rights of detainees; this includes limiting the use of, seeking alternatives to, and using the least restrictive forms of, immigration detention. For more information visit: www.idcoalition.org

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/type.UNHCRNOTES...4caaeabe2.0.html>