



# International Detention Coalition

Human rights for detained refugees,  
asylum seekers and migrants

## A call to uphold the rights of undocumented migrants

Civil society urges governments to uphold rights and ensure family-based policies

### International Migrants' Day

**Melbourne, December 18, 2011. On the occasion of International Migrants' Day 2011, the International Detention Coalition (IDC) urges states around the world to uphold the rights of undocumented migrants. These individuals are often isolated and neglected in the community, and subject to policies such as criminalization, arrest, detention and deportation, that cause unnecessary suffering and family separation.**

The IDC call follows the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) in Geneva where civil society groups from around the world highlighted the devastating impact of criminalization and detention on irregular and undocumented migrants, including vulnerable groups such as children, women, families, the elderly and unwell.

IDC Director, Grant Mitchell, said, '*The daily life of a migrant in the community without documents is one of fear; fear of being arrested, detained and separated from their families and lives in the host country. States must work to ensure the rights of irregular migrants and the unity of the family are upheld. Regularization and alternatives to detention must be essential components of all migration policies.*'

The civil society statement to 160 governments in attendance at the GFMD made clear that lack of status does not strip a migrant of their rights, or a state of their basic obligations. Under international human rights law all migrants, irrespective of immigration status, have the same rights as others in the community. There must be a presumption against the use of immigration detention, with alternatives used in the first instance. Detention must only ever be used as a last resort for the shortest possible period, and must be reviewable.

Recent IDC research has found a range of effective, cheaper and more humane alternatives to immigration detention being used successfully around the world, including mechanisms such as individual screening, case management and community monitoring and reception models.

*'Vulnerable migrants are being unnecessarily detained and damaged around the world, despite the fact that there are effective and practical alternatives which work in the interest of government, the community and individual. Now is the time for governments to explore cheaper and more humane alternatives to detention'*, Mr Mitchell said.

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- Civil society GFMD statement; <http://www.gfmdcivilsociety.org/downloads/GFMD%202011%20CSD%20Statement%20FINAL%201%20Dec.pdf>
- IDC research into alternatives to immigration detention: <http://www.idcoalition.org/cap>

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**Notes to Editors:** The IDC is a coalition of over 250 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](http://www.idcoalition.org)