



# International Detention Coalition

Human rights for detained refugees,  
asylum seekers and migrants

## Media Release

December 18, 2009, International Migrants' Day

### **Alternatives needed to the detention of undocumented migrants**

On the occasion of International Migrants' Day 2009, the International Detention Coalition (IDC) urges states around the world to stop the detention and criminalization of undocumented migrants.

The IDC call comes in the wake of the first ever United Nations Human Rights Council meeting on immigration detention during its 12<sup>th</sup> session. The session drew attention to the growing trend towards detention and criminalization of undocumented migrants, and its negative impact on detainees' physical and mental wellbeing. The meeting also highlighted the need for community-based alternatives to detention to be further explored and expanded around the world.

These concerns were also noted in the Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention earlier this year<sup>1</sup>, which highlighted the growing trend of deprivation of liberty and criminalization of undocumented migrants. The report reminded States that detention should only be as a last resort, is permissible only for the shortest period of time and that alternatives to detention should be sought whenever possible

IDC Director Grant Mitchell said the International Detention Coalition is greatly concerned about the growing numbers of undocumented migrants being detained in conditions below basic international standards and suffering gross human rights violations.

*"We call on governments around the world to stop the use of detention as a migration management tool; to adhere to international human rights standards which prohibit arbitrary detention and require detention to be a last resort; and to pursue alternatives to detention."*

#### **There are alternatives to detention.**

*"There are growing international examples of community-based alternatives to detention which maintain the human rights and dignity of individuals, while also addressing government concerns regarding compliance with immigration decisions,"* Mr. Mitchell said.

A recent report by the International Detention Coalition highlighted the positive outcomes of an alternatives to detention program in Australia. Over three years, the program maintained a 94% appearance rate, with almost 70% of refused cases voluntarily departing. More than 1,000 people were involved in the program. Click [here](#) to download the report.

The IDC launched a global survey last month to highlight the use of alternatives to detention around the world, with a report to be released in 2010. The survey can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

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**Notes to Editors:** The IDC is a coalition of over 200 non-governmental groups and individuals working in over 50 countries providing legal, social and other services, carrying out research and reporting, and doing advocacy and policy work on behalf of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The IDC advocates for greater respect for the human rights of detainees, for example by limiting the use of, seeking alternatives to, and using the least restrictive forms of, immigration detention. The IDC Advisory Committee brings together a number of leading international NGOs who share concerns about the treatment of immigration detainees, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, Jesuit Refugee Service, Lawyers for Human Rights, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre, Oxfam Australia, Women's Refugee Commission, World Council of Churches, and a number of national NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> February 2009 Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to the Human Rights Council.