

International Detention Coalition

Human rights for detained refugees,
asylum seekers and migrants

South Africa's Reputation on the Line: International Report Launch Today

As immigration legislation is in the process of being overhauled in South Africa, international experts argue that enhancing collaboration can improve systems, save costs and ultimately end harmful immigration detention.

PRESS RELEASE

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JOHANNESBURG: An international report on Alternatives to Immigration Detention in Africa will be launched in Johannesburg today, 11am at Constitution Hill, marking Freedom Day.

The International Detention Coalition (IDC) report reveals that while South Africa has some positive practices, the White Paper on International Migration, currently sitting with Cabinet, threatens to significantly alter these practices and impact on South Africa's international reputation.

Grant Mitchell is the International Director for the IDC, a civil society network with 300 member groups in 77 countries. "The White Paper has content that is to be commended, but misses the cost savings and efficiency gains that are possible by using alternatives to immigration detention" says Mr. Mitchell, "many other countries have already seen these demonstrated benefits of alternatives to detention - there's still time for the government to capitalise on these opportunities."

The report launch will include a panel discussion with members of an international delegation currently visiting South Africa. They are meeting with government representatives, UN Agencies and civil society to promote their research findings which show that there are more affordable, effective and humane ways to govern migration. Panelist will also include South African Members of the IDC – Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants South Africa (CoRMSA).

Research conducted by the IDC has found that using immigration detention is expensive and does not deter migration. They have identified 250 alternatives to immigration detention that can be used strategically to manage migration.

South African law prohibits the immigration detention of children however, in practice, there are ongoing reports of children being detained in police stations and detention facilities in preparation for deportation.

Leeanne Torpey, who coordinates the Global Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children, will also be speaking on the panel at the report launch. "Detaining children because of their migration status is illegal and extremely harmful to child development – even short periods of time in police holding cells are of concern."

South Africa was one of 193 States who committed to work towards ending child detention in the New York Declaration, which was signed in September of last year. “It’s essential that as the White Paper is rolled out, this commitment is honoured” says Ms. Torpey.

Other members of the panel include Kayan Leung, attorney of the High Court with Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) Refugee and Migrant Rights Programme and Roshan Dadoo, the Director of the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants South Africa (CoRMSA).

The event is open to the public and refreshments will be provided.

Event: Report Launch Alternatives to Immigration Detention in Africa

Time: 11:00 – 13:00, Human Rights Conference Room, The Old Fort, 11 Kotze Street, Braamfontein

The below contacts are available for interview between 9 – 10.30am Friday April 28.

Grant Mitchell

A social anthropologist in international migration, Mr Mitchell is the Director of the International Detention Coalition (IDC), an international civil society network of members in 73 countries. Mr Mitchell has extensive experience in international asylum and immigration detention policy, including working with governments, UN bodies and civil society in Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East on the development and implementation of alternatives to immigration detention and case management models.

Junita Calder

Junita is a legal professional with a wealth of experience in international migration having worked as the Advocacy Coordinator for the Asia Pacific office of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and as the Bangkok Child Protection Project Start-Up Director for JRS Thailand. From Myanmar to New Zealand, her experience has so far included direct case management in youth work and post-disaster emergency situations, as well as policy development and project management in forced migration and development contexts.

Leeanne Torpey

A journalist by background, Ms. Torpey coordinates the Global Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children. She has over 10 years of experience working to create communications that make a difference, working for the Women and Children’s Crisis Centre, Information and Cultural Exchange as well as the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Read the report:

<http://idcoalition.org/publication/view/alternatives-to-immigration-detention-in-africa/>