

UK inquiry: use of detention must change

London, 3 March 2015 – A landmark report, published today, by a British cross-party parliamentary group concludes that immigration detention in the UK is ‘expensive, ineffective and unjust.’ The Jesuit Refugee Service in Europe supports the findings of the report and calls for its key recommendations to be followed. Alternatives to detention must be used whilst a maximum time limit on detention of 28-days would greatly reduce human suffering.

“We very much welcome this report,” says JRS Europe director Fr Jean-Marie Carrière. “We try to help vulnerable forced migrants held in prison-like conditions in many European countries and it is very encouraging to read such a high-level report that recommends alternatives to detention.”

In most cases it is unnecessary to lock asylum seekers up at such great cost in both economic and human terms. Where detention is deemed necessary it is right that a time limit is put in place and 28 days would represent a huge improvement on the current situation of unlimited detention. The UK is the only country in the EU which detains people without limit – in some cases for several years.

JRS strongly urges the British government to implement the report’s recommendations as soon as possible, thereby giving asylum seekers more dignity and justice.

JRS UK director Louise Zanré says: “The report recognises that there is a need to change the underlying culture behind the use of detention in the UK. The recommendations around time limit and review will redress the injustice of the current system’s horrific effects on a detained person’s life and well-being.”

The cross-party group examined 182 written evidence submissions from civil society including one from JRS UK. This submission highlighted indefinite nature of detention in the UK as one of its worst aspects. The anxiety this causes is acute, particularly as detainees do not know if they will eventually be released into the UK or deported. The submission cited JRS research across 23 European countries which found that detention deteriorates the physical and mental health of nearly everyone who experiences it.

Links:

www.detentioninquiry.com

[JRS policy position on alternatives to detention](#)

[‘Becoming Vulnerable in Detention’ report](#)

For further information:

Oscar Spooner

Communications Officer

Jesuit Refugee Service Europe

Tel: +32 2 250 3225

oscar.spooner@jrs.net

www.jrseurope.org

<http://www.twitter.com/JRSEurope>

Note to editors

JRS programmes are found in 50 countries, providing assistance to: refugees in camps and cities, individuals displaced within their own countries, asylum seekers in cities, and to those held in detention centres. The main areas of work are in the field of education, emergency assistance, healthcare, livelihood activities and social services.