

CAMPSFIELD MONITOR

Issue 1

May 1994

IN THIS ISSUE: ■ How the Hunger Strike was broken ■ Hunger Strikers Re-detained ■ Detainees filmed without permission ■ Demonstrator Injured ■ Illegal Removal Directions

MEDICAL

Medical Foundation takes interest

The Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture has received an interim briefing into medical provision at Campsfield. Concerns at the system in operation include:

- the 1987 **European Prison Rules** recommend that all those detained should be examined on arrival by a medical officer with a view particularly to the discovery of physical or mental illness. This is especially relevant for those who might have suffered physical or mental abuse. At present there are no such initial assessments of detainees at Campsfield House;
- there are no hospital facilities on site and no resuscitation equipment (including IV lines etc.);
- one woman with rigors, cough and haemoptysis asked to see a doctor for a second time. She waited for 36 hrs over the weekend, requiring tepid sponging before seeing a doctor;
- there is no real attempt to deal with the considerable psychological problems detainees face. One woman who told the doctor she suffered from nightmares was simply answered that 'most of the people here do';
- the medical care during the strike appears to have been used as part of the regime of control by the authorities. Only by chance were serious consequences avoided.
- Guidelines on the ethics of the management of hunger strikers as set out in the **Declaration of Malta** were broken: strikers were not given an initial medical or psychiatric assessment (essential to determine the management of patients should they lapse into coma); in general detainees were not informed of the consequences of the strike by a doctor and no interpreters were available to permit clear communication; hunger strikers were not seen daily by a doctor, but were told they had to visit the doctors' surgery; and the denial of medical care was used to coerce people to eat.

The briefing finds that there is no external authority that has the power to inspect the Centre and the management set the rules and investigate any complaints themselves. Thus there is no guarantee that a fair, external review of practices or individual complaints will be made. Because detainees are in a vulnerable position and fear that making complaints might harm their case, safeguards should be introduced to protect their rights as recommended in the **UN Body of Principles for the Care of Detained Persons (1988)**.

The briefing concludes that the denial of medical care or the promise of seeing a doctor must not be used to control detainees and recommends that the abuse of medical ethics during the hunger strike was such that an inquiry should be held by medical or human rights organisations to publicise

these events and prevent a repetition.

If you have any information please send it to Campsfield Monitor, address below.

Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers

This declaration which sets guidelines for doctors responsible for the health of hunger strikers was adopted by the 43rd World Medical Assembly in Malta in November 1991. It includes the following:

- a doctor should carry out a thorough examination of the patient at the onset of the hunger strike (see above);
- doctors or other healthcare personnel may not apply undue pressure of any sort on the hunger striker to suspend the strike. Treatment or care of the hunger striker must not be conditional upon him/her suspending hunger strike;
- doctors should ascertain on a daily basis whether or not the patient wishes to continue their hunger strike and their wishes should they become unable to make an informed decision;
- once the doctor agrees to attend to a hunger striker, that person becomes the doctor's patient. This has all the implications and responsibilities inherent in the doctor/patient relationship, including consent and confidentiality.

Full text available from Campsfield Monitor

DIARY

Mass Hunger Strike

On March 11 there were 175 detainees at Campsfield House on hunger strike in protest at their detention, their inhuman treatment and deportations which have led to deaths.

They were part of a national wave of hunger strikes unprecedented in penal history. They included people from Asia, Africa and South America, who had transcended linguistic and political differences to take common action against their racist treatment.

The action gave rise to wide media and parliamentary coverage of the issue of detention under the Immigration Act and highlighted the (nearly) threefold increase in the rate of detention over the last 9 months from more than 300 to 940.

The Campsfield hunger strikers issued a statement on March 11 calling on the British government to "withdraw its signature to the **Geneva Convention (1951 United Nations)** and refuse to accept asylum seekers at all rather than put...men and women through trauma and uncertainty that we are experiencing in detention." By a curious coincidence, this is exactly what Messrs **Michael Heseltine** and **David Mellor** proposed in a leaked memo of a secret ministerial meeting in

September 1991 on the grounds that refugees create a 'pressure housing'.

On the 41st day the last remaining Campsfield hunger striker stopped. Methods used to break the strike were clearly part of a centralised Home Office strategy. They took no account of civil or human rights and contravened the Malta Declaration on Hunger Strikers.

Strike-Breaking Methods

On March 12 the hunger strikers took part in a rooftop protest and held a joint demonstration with the **Campaign to Close Campsfield**. The following day, the authorities began to isolate hunger strikers. Nine of those prominent in the rooftop protest were dispersed to prisons (see below Dispersal Strategy). Those isolated were guarded 24 hours a day by security guards and were not allowed to speak to one another or even call their solicitors without being monitored.

Some hunger strikers were threatened with immediate deportation unless they gave up their strike. Others were told they would be released if they started to eat again but this promise was broken.

On March 17, Group 4 staff began bringing hunger strikers luxurious breakfasts, lunches and suppers. All meals were placed in the corridors in what the detainees dubbed "Operation Wastage". (The food is now back to its pre-strike level!) The same day hunger strikers were visited by Immigration Officers in their rooms and read (but not shown) a document absolving the Immigration Service from any responsibility in the event of their deaths. Many believed it to be a terror tactic, particularly when it was repeated the following day.

By Friday March 18 hunger strikers were complaining having their doors opened at hourly intervals by Group 4 staff and finding their radiators switched off at night. *The Campaign to Close Campsfield has documented over 40 tactics used during this hunger strike. Full copy of report available from Campsfield Monitor*

Dispersal Strategy

On March 15th three hunger strikers were transferred to Blakenhurst prison near Redditch and one to Bullingdon Prison Oxfordshire. The next morning five more were moved to Winson Green prison in Birmingham. Visitors who asked to see them were told they were waiting to see the doctor. One solicitor was refused information about where his client had been transferred - he was eventually informed by a visitor who, with great difficulty persuaded the official visitors to insist the information should be made available.

At Blakenhurst the detainees were put in solitary confinement ('seg') because, as one staff member put it, "they had been naughty boys". One was considered a suicide risk, deprived of all his possessions, left on the floor, and given a blanket only when he started shivering. They stopped their hunger strike after two weeks, when it appeared that the government might allow them to do permanent damage to their health or even die rather than release them. Subsequently one was released on temporary admission after sponsors had provided accommodation, one was transferred to Haslar and one to Campsfield.

At Winson Green three continued their hunger strike and were transferred to the hospital wing; one was considered a suicide risk and received treatment similar to that at

Blakenhurst. They gave up their strike at roughly the same time and for similar reasons. Of these three, two were subsequently released on bail for a total of £34,000 in sureties.

The Home Office claimed that these detainees were "ringleaders" and "disruptive". Many of them appeared in photographs taken by the press of the rooftop demonstration of March 12.

DIARY - in brief

February: the sole survivor of five Romanian stowaways was imprisoned in Campsfield House, despite being severely traumatised by his four companions' suffocation. Detainees reported that he endlessly repeated "Four kaput" signalling a throat cut, and that he stirred hot tea with his finger and then wiped his hand in his hair. He went on hunger strike and threatened to cut out his tongue when his asylum appeal was rejected. He was deported under the third country rule under which asylum seekers have to make their case to the first European Union country that they enter.

2 April: at 2.30pm the detainee in room 40 lost control: he broke up the entire contents of his room, including the toilet, lightbulbs and bedding, and threw them out of the window. This was in view of visitors' centre (smoking) and visitors were moved to the non-smoking centre. The room was boarded up. At 3pm he was taken to prison. Afterwards, Group 4 videoed the room. The detainee had been at Campsfield House for 2 days.

2 April: that night three Zaireans were listening to cassettes together and were told by a Group 4 official to go to bed and to hand over their cassette player. When the official insisted, one detainee said he would rather break the machine, and the three did so in protest. The next day they were all transferred to Haslar for being "disruptive".

19 April: report that female detainees had only cold showers for some days up to and including Sunday 17th April.

24 April: an Algerian with spinal problems had been lying on his bed, unable to move for two weeks. He received no medical attention despite repeated requests. On the 24th April, all the Algerians detainees and some others threatened Group 4 with a hunger strike unless they took him to hospital. He was taken to hospital. The following day, 25th April, the Algerian and the Moroccan spokesmen for the threat were taken to Haslar.

HOME OFFICE

Illegal removal directions

Detainees are complaining that deportation orders and removal directions are being served only one day before the flight. Recent illegal attempts include:

- on March 29 a male detainee, K, was taken from Campsfield at midday. He was told he was being moved to Harmondsworth. When another detainee asked a Group 4 officer later that afternoon why K had been moved, he was told that K was going to be deported the next day. The friend telephoned K at Harmondsworth. K had not been informed and neither had his solicitor. That night K was moved to Beehive,

the detention centre at Gatwick Airport. He was due to leave on a flight at 11.15am and was waiting in North Terminal with Group 4 personnel for the flight. At 10am the Immigration Office admitted they had made a mistake.

K had had his asylum appeal refused. His solicitor had requested an immigration tribunal on 23rd March, and had received no reply. Meanwhile, removal proceedings had been instituted too early and without taking into account the tribunal request.

● a woman detainee was issued with a notice of removal when the Home Office had not yet responded to an MP's representations on her behalf. A visitor informed her solicitor who stopped the removal. The Immigration Service agreed that this was a "mistake". The mistake was only rectified because the detainee happened to know people outside.

PARLIAMENTARY

Reasons for detention: Immigration Minister **Charles Wardle** stated that of the 622 asylum seekers held in detention, 341 had been detained at the port of entry. This statistic undermines the Deputy Director of Enforcement at the Immigration and Nationality Department: "Detention is authorised only when there is no alternative. The aim is to reserve scarce detention spaces for those who have shown a real disregard for the immigration laws and whom we expect to remove within a realistic timescale". *Written answer Charles Wardle to Mr MacLennan 1.2.94; letter to Mr E. Macknamara, Clerk of the Council, Kidlington Parish Council from DJ McDonough Deputy Director (Enforcement) IND 24.1.94.*

Concern that detention is used simply when asylum seekers' cases are expected to fail is borne out by a letter from Home Secretary **Michael Howard** to **John Patten MP** 15.4.94: "If this policy (Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993) is to be implemented "firmly and fairly" the detention of a small number of people is inevitable if we are to effect their removal".

Revealing debate in Commons: on Friday 18th March **Jeremy Corbyn MP** (Islington North) had asked the Home Secretary how many Campsfield detainees were asylum seekers, how many were appealing against refusal and how many awaiting deportation and was told the information requested was "not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost." Mr Corbyn might note, however, that in the adjournment debate on asylum seekers on 31st March, the Home Office Minister let slip that "three quarters of them (hunger strikers) were people who had already been refused asylum, and many had also had appeals refused".

Protesters against Campsfield House featured in the same adjournment debate as "a motley coalition of the Oxford Trades Union Council, the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party and others of that ilk, including, last Saturday, the Hon. Member for Islington North". *Hansard, Adjournment Debate 31.3.94*

Overall length of detention: Immigration Minister **Charles Wardle** gives details on detainees at Campsfield House.

Less than one month	29
One to six months	139
More than six months	11

Largest nationalities represented were:

Ghana	28
Nigeria	28
India	27

Written Answer No.35 to Jeremy Corbyn 15th March 1994

Foreign Secretary 'knows little of Ghana and Zaire': Douglas Hurd MP, knows nothing about Zaire or Ghana, he told Campsfield Campaign members who visited him to voice their concern at the detention and deportation of asylum seekers. He assured them he would find out about those countries - perhaps he should ask the London-based mining company **Lonrho plc** who are receiving substantial financial assistance from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in seeking a majority shareholding in the national gold mines of Ghana, a move that is meeting with great popular resistance in Ghana.

GROUP FOUR

Contract up for renewal: Group 4's contract with Home Office for all immigration act detention work apart from Campsfield House is due for renewal in January 1995. The company is now tendering to continue its management of detention services at Harmondsworth, London Gatwick, Stanstead, Manchester Airport, London Heathrow and "in-country escort". Previous contracts have run for three years, suggesting that the Campsfield House contract will be up in late 1996. Group 4 has held the contract for detention work since January 1, 1989. Before that it was Securicor, but ever since Immigration Act detentions began in 1971 government contracts with private security firms have remained secret due to the 'need for commercial confidentiality'.

Demonstrator injured: at a demonstration held on March 26 by the **Campaign to Close Campsfield**, a demonstrator who had made her way peacefully on to the roof of Campsfield House was forcibly removed by Group 4 personnel resulting in her losing consciousness for several minutes. This happened despite being given assurances that she would not be harmed.

LEGAL

Detainees filmed against will: on April 1, immediately after the mass hunger strike in Campsfield, Group Four brought broadcast-quality cameras into the centre. Detainees were told this was for "future reference". At lunchtime on April 2, the cameras came into the canteen. Detainees stood up to take their food away from the cameras but were told they either ate in front of the cameras or not at all. The right to refuse to be filmed is universal. But it seems this is yet another right denied the detainees at Campsfield House.

Algerian asylum-seekers re-detained: two Algerians released on temporary admission after hunger striking until March 6 were re-detained by police on March 29. One of them had given an interview to ITN's Channel Four News and had spoken at a demonstration outside Campsfield House on March 26. This was given as the reason for his re-detention. The return of the two to Campsfield House on March 30 was one of the main factors in the breaking of the mass hunger strike.

DEPORTATIONS/ REMOVALS

Many deportations & removals are carried out with the assistance of private security firms. A typical deportation to Nigeria (July 1993) cost £7,700.

Amie Casuga was repatriated to the Philippines on Wednesday 7th April. As with most deportations, the instruction to pack her bags was issued by the Immigration Service only the day before her early morning removal from Campsfield to DA at Harmondsworth.

Amie had been living and working in Britain for about four years prior to her detention at the end of December last year. She had overstayed her six month working visa. She was apprehended when the Immigration Service called looking for her flatmate and decided to question her instead - presumably because she is a Filipina. After nearly four months of incarceration Amie decided to cancel her appeal against deportation. Her experience will not be forgotten easily and any application for another entry visa will receive derisory attention.

K, a Ghanaian, was moved from Campsfield to Harmondsworth on 13 April 1994. A campaign activist visited him before his deportation. 'We are ushered into the reception area where three other detainees are waiting with a number of Group 4 guards and at least one immigration officer. The first two are moved to the transit van waiting outside. Then the next were ordered, "Right you two, move!" K was roughly pushed from behind by a Group 4 official, "Come on, move". He stumbled and said, "Please don't push me". "If you don't get a move on I'll push you more". All speech towards the detainees is delivered in clipped tones, but K remained throughout the proceedings quietly polite to all of them.'

K wrote to a member of the Campaign to Close Campsfield: 'With me the problem started at Heathrow three hours before I left. One immigration emerged from one door and asked me where my ticket was. I told her that it was with them. She insisted that the ticket was given back to me, but I know that the ticket was with them, till now it is with them. The woman said that she is going to buy the ticket for me and then she will seek the refund from the airline, and they will get hold of me to refund their money. So we left London at 9.30pm. It was a direct flight and it took nine hours. All those hours in

the plane I was praying to God so that I could go out of the airport safely.....(details omitted for security reasons).

Now I am staying with a friend of mine. Though I am in my country I am still in detention. This time I am detaining myself because I am afraid to go out and meet with the police. I will never forget Oxford residents".

J is a Ghanaian whose father was a member of the opposition NPP who was arrested, together with J's brother, in 1992 after leading and addressing an NPP rally. His father has not been seen since his arrest. His brother has since escaped from Ghana, and is now working abroad. After his father was arrested J was told that there were plain-clothes militia men looking for him and he was advised by his uncle to leave the country.

He went to Cote d'Ivoire. On arrival, he met a Ghanaian man who sheltered him for three days before arranging for him to fly to Malaysia, on a Cote d'Ivoirean passport. On arrival in Malaysia he was put in prison for travelling on a false passport and he stayed there for over one year. He applied for asylum whilst in transit in London. His application was turned down on the grounds of lack of credibility and because the NPP is not a banned organisation and he therefore need not fear oppression in Ghana. J was deported at the end of April.

News in brief

Condom Drug Alert: On April 1 a police sniffer dog was taken into many detainees' rooms after 'discovery' of 15 condoms filled with 90% pure heroin in drains at Campsfield. Two women from Nigeria & Ghana were taken to hospital for checks but nothing was found and no charges were made. Detainees believe the whole matter was a conspiracy to link them with crime in the public's mind. Needless to say the story was picked up by all local media.

A marriage of inconvenience: on April 22 a Ghanaian detainee, Emmanuel Lamptey married Kathleen Tinson, a former cleaner at Campsfield. The Home Office has dismissed it as a 'marriage of convenience' despite the fact that the relationship meant that Kathleen could no longer work at Campsfield House.

NOTICEBOARD

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION SATURDAY JUNE 4th: Close Down Campsfield: 10.30 am feeder march leaves St Giles, Oxford; 1 pm assemble car park Exeter Hall, Kidlington; 2pm Rally at gates of Campsfield Detention Centre. Speakers include ex-detainees, reps from refugee & migrant groups, MP's & trade unionists.

CAMP OUT AT CAMPSFIELD following successful & enjoyable camp on

April 23-4, two more camps are planned: Fri 20 May, 6pm to Sun 22 May, 2pm and Fri 3 June, 6pm to Sun 5 June, 2pm. For more info call Emma on 0865 201687.

Campaign to Close Campsfield will hold its next meeting in the Town Hall on 17 May 7.30 pm; **Campsfield Forum** next meets at Oxfordshire Refugee Council 31 May, 6 pm; **Campsfield Visitors' Group** meets at the Council on 24 May.

Campaign Against Immigration Act Detention is especially interested in detainees' or visitors' info from Harmondsworth and Haslar. Please phone 071 254 9701.

Campsfield Monitor is produced by visitors and activists. It does not have a corporate view, the opinions expressed are those of its contributors. For security reasons contributors are not named, but you all know who you are.

Campsfield Monitor welcomes contributions from anyone with relevant info and especially detainees at Campsfield. Material should include sources & dates and will be treated in confidence. Please send to Campsfield Monitor, Box C, 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4 1RQ.