



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

London, 25 March 2019

Dear Home Secretary,

We, the undersigned organisations, call upon the Home Office to end indefinite detention and consider the use of alternatives to the detention in the first place.

In light of the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) report released on 21 March 2019¹, we join together to encourage the Home Office to seize this opportunity to align its practices with international standards and to demonstrate commitment to a fair and humane system which upholds the human rights and dignity of those seeking sanctuary here. In particular, the HASC reports unequivocally calls on the Government to bring an end to indefinite immigration detention and to implement a maximum 28-day time limit with immediate effect.

There can be no doubt about the urgency of introducing a time limit on immigration detention. Already in 2015, a UNHCR report recommended the introduction of a maximum time limit of 28 days on the length of time anyone can be detained under immigration powers. This recommendation sought to address one of the shortcomings UNHCR had identified in the UK's immigration detention framework.² Moreover, 28 days would be a reasonable statutory time limit to enforce, given that the Home Office's own Enforcement Instructions and Guidance confirm that detention should only be maintained when removal is imminent.

Furthermore, there appears to be a growing realisation that the focus on detention and enforcement is expensive and often ineffective, often failing to achieve migration governance objectives.³ Therefore, we encourage the Home Office to seize an opportunity for the UK to play a leading role at a regional level in developing and implementing alternatives to detention. There is vast international evidence that an approach rooted in alternatives to detention can work. The International Detention Coalition's Community Assessment and Placement (CAP) model is based on more than 250 examples of alternatives to detention in over 60 countries around the world.⁴ To-date, little of the holistic approach proposed in the CAP has been implemented in Europe, with the exception of Sweden. The UK could lead the way in exploring alternatives in the region, applying the CAP model.

¹ https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/913/91310.htm#_idTextAnchor138

² <https://www.unhcr.org/54f5bc089.pdf>

³ <https://detentionaction.org.uk/publications/without-detention/>

⁴ <https://idcoalition.org/cap/>

We would like to close this letter with a quote from the report 'Seeking Asylum', in which a woman shares her experience within the British asylum process:

“When I applied for asylum, I was sick, I was stressed, I felt depressed... before my life was not good, but when I applied for asylum it got worse because they took me to detention but I was very ill at that time. [...] Maybe because they thought I was lying, they were treating me like a criminal [...] I [still] feel really sick and I panic and I stress because of that time in detention when I wasn't feeling well.”⁵

We hope to receive your response via the following correspondence address: Refugee Rights Europe, 71-75 Shelton Street, London, WC2H 9JQ or Info@RefugeeRights.org.uk.

Sincerely,

Art Refuge UK
Baobab Women's Project
CARAG
Coventry Migrant Women's Houses
Hopetowns Refugee Support
Meena Centre for Women and Children
Refugee Rights Europe
TRP Solicitors
Women With Hope

⁵ Algerian refugee woman who spent 6 months in detention during her asylum process, and who was later granted Leave to Remain in the UK. Interviewed by Baobab Women's Project. Full report available here: http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RRE_SeekingAsylum.pdf