

FACTSHEET: IMMIGRATION DETENTION

RIGHT TO REMAIN

July 2025

What is immigration detention?

Immigration detention is when the government removes people from their communities and strips away their freedom by holding them in prison-like facilities called immigration removal centres (IRC) or Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHFs). People are detained because of their immigration status - **not** because they have caused harm or pose a threat to public safety.

Why do people get detained?

The Home Office claims that immigration detention is an “administrative tool to facilitate removal” meaning they should only hold people temporarily before removing or deporting them. However detention is used by the government in ways that feel and function like criminalisation and punishment - **the experience is often indistinguishable from prison**. Many people are released back into the community showing that their removal was never likely or imminent. The UK is the only country in Europe with **no legal time limit for immigration detention** which means that people can be detained for days, weeks, or even years, not knowing when, or if, they will be released.

Who is being detained?

Anyone subject to immigration control is at risk of being detained including:

- **People seeking asylum** when they first arrive in the country to seek safety.
- **Long-term residents** including people who've lived in the UK for years often with British families.
- **Survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence** despite Home Office policies that are meant to protect them.
- **People with refused asylum claims** and no active application or appeal. This is increasingly due to poor legal advice, misinformation and systemic failings within the asylum and immigration process.
- **People with expired visas** such as students, workers, or spouses. Immigration rules frequently change, the processes are confusing and complex, applications are increasingly and extortionately expensive, often leaving people without status through no fault of their own.
- **People arrested in immigration raids** at work, at home, on public transport, places of worship, or during stop-and-search operations.
- **People transferred directly from prison** who are punished twice: firstly by the criminal legal system then again by the immigration system.

Why do we oppose immigration detention?

Detention traumatises people and communities. People are held in prison-like conditions: locked cells, uniformed guards, CCTV, high perimeter razor wire fences, strict routines and restricted movements. There's no trial, no sentence, and no release date. Self-harm is widespread. People have taken their lives. When people are released, they return to their families and communities harmed, destabilised, and often with no support.

Detention targets people already made vulnerable by systemic injustice. It is used against racialised, working-class, and migrant people who are the least resourced to fight back. People are criminalised for paperwork, punished for Home Office failings, and denied rights others can rely on by default.

Detention tears lives apart. People are taken without warning - from their homes, workplaces, on public transport, in place of worship. Children lose parents. Partners are separated. Communities lose neighbours, carers, and friends. The grief and disruption is felt by many.

Detention is expensive. The government scapegoats migrants as a financial burden but even by their own logic, detention makes no economic sense costing £100-£120 per person per day and most people are eventually released back into the community. The UK spends hundreds of millions each year locking people up while private companies profit from human suffering.

Detention enables abuse and denies basic care. Detention centres are less regulated than prisons. Oversight is weak. People are detained on the Home Office's word alone, with no automatic court review. Legal advice is hard to access and often inadequate. Healthcare is inconsistent, delayed, or outright denied even for people in crisis. Reports of sexual violence, assault, and neglect are widespread and accountability is rare.

Detention is about control, not care. There is no public safety case for detention. Immigration detention is part of a wider system that punishes people for crossing borders, surviving injustice, or simply existing without the right paperwork.

What can I do now?

- Share the Right to Remain Toolkit page on [Immigration Detention and Reporting](#) - particularly the Action Section on what to do if you are detained
- Join a [signing support group](#) for people who are reporting.
- Join your local [Anti-Raids group](#)

THESE WALLS MUST FALL

MIGRATION IS LIFE

NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

