

The detainee's perspective

Joe, ex-detainee

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A very short introduction
to immigration detention and
Medical Justice work

Who gets detained?

- Asylum seekers
- Refused asylum seekers
- Overstayers and others subject to administrative removal from the UK
- Ex Foreign National Prisoners subject to deportation from UK

> 50% of detainees, and most of those seen by Medical Justice have claimed asylum at some point and have some sort of asylum case ongoing. This presentation therefore focuses on this group

May be detained in prisons at the end of their sentence (under immigration powers) or held in immigration removal centres

Who gets detained?

About 33,000 people/year

- most in IRCs
- some in prisons after a sentence

Detainees' circumstances include:

- Victims of torture, rape, trafficking, FGM
- Survived perilous journey to get to the UK
- May be ill / injured

Immigration detention

- is without charge or trial
- is not part of any criminal sentence
- is indefinite



What is Medical Justice?

Medical Justice is a charity working for the health rights of people held in immigration removal centres.

Medical volunteers visit detainees to assess

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Scars/other effects of torture

And may provide an independent medical report.

My background: GP, volunteer medical work with refugees, clinical lead at Medical Justice



Healthcare problems in detention: a high level of need and vulnerability

Detention centres have an in-house primary healthcare team, but **high level of need** due to:

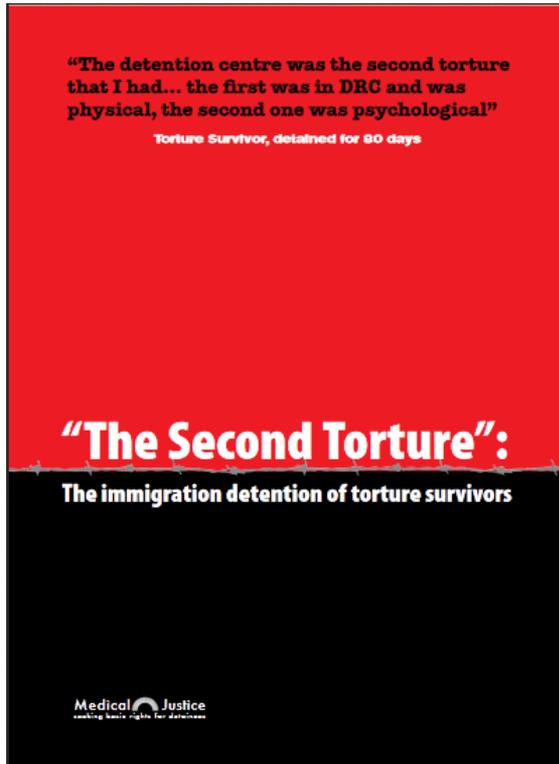
- Adversity overseas – poverty, war, abuse, torture, difficult journey
- Modern slavery – overseas or in UK
- Stress of asylum process
- May lack healthcare in UK if undocumented
- Mental illness – high rates



“It is apparent that the level of need is extraordinarily high when compared with the general population.”

Stephen Shaw, Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons A report to the Home Office, January 2016

Detainees say:



‘Never given a chance to explain my ordeal before being detained’.

‘The detention centre room and the noises were similar to the noises and sounds where I was tortured so it made me feel like I was in the same place.’

Source: The Second Torture, Medical Justice 2012

Detention and mental health

“There is a consistent finding ...that immigration detention has a negative impact upon detainees’ mental health. The impact on mental health increases the longer detention continues...

I am particularly concerned that segregation may on occasions become the default location for those with serious mental health problems.”

Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons - A report to the Home Office - Stephen Shaw, January 2016



Mental Health in Immigration Detention Action Group
Initial Report 2013

Detainees' perspectives
Discussion/Questions
Case studies