



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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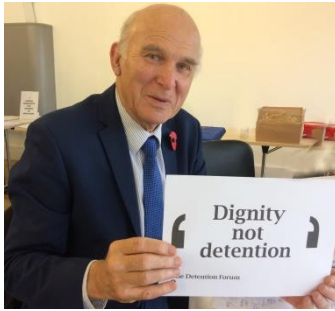
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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

NOVEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

DETENTION

Detention Forum are relaunching with vigour the campaign on ending indefinite detention; there are new MPs to get on side, and the glimmer of hope of getting an amendment into the Immigration Bill next year.



They have done a social media guide [here](#), which has all you need for Facebook, Twitter, and articles for other media. Do have a look and see what you can do. Some of us did the “selfie campaign” at the NE Regional Conference last week, and 52 selfies got posted from brand new members to **Vince Cable**. Not only does it promote the campaign and get more people understanding it, but it gets the message out there that Lib Dems care and are active. Over 1,000 people have seen the [tweet with Vince in it](#) (you can view even if no twitter account).

Also you can see Vince Cable [being interviewed](#) by Freed Voices on ending indefinite detention, and it is a superb write up for Lib Dems and our stand on this issue.

Ed Davey [has said](#) the Government must back calls from the Equality and Human Rights Commission for an urgent investigation into detention centres.

Janet King who represents LD4SOS on Detention Forum has done a report on the last meeting, and it is at the end of this newsletter for you to see.

Roger Roberts has been [tackling the Minister](#) on the detention of Mohammed in a Prison and then Campsfield Detention Centre. As he says, when welcoming the release at last, “*Why was he there in the first place? What offence had he caused?*”

Women for Refugee Women have [produced a report](#) “We are still here” and women in Yarl's Wood speak out on the appalling situation where Survivors of sexual violence are still being locked up despite government promises. They say “*Last year, the Home Office responded to concerns and put in place some changes. They put a time limit on the detention of pregnant women. They also put in place the Adults at Risk policy which states for the first time that survivors of sexual and gender-based violence should not normally be detained. We were hopeful that this policy might lead to a reduction in the detention of vulnerable women. But the Home Office hasn't been open about how the policy is working in practice, so we decided to conduct our own research. Our findings are really disappointing. We talked to 26 women who have sought asylum and been detained since the policy came into force. The vast majority say that they are survivors of sexual or other gender-based violence, such as forced prostitution, FGM, or forced marriage. It seems from our interviews with these women that the Home Office has not put in place any kind of mechanism which will actively screen people before they are detained and find out if they are vulnerable. And if women disclose their prior experiences of violence once they are in detention they are often kept locked up.*”

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Layla Moran has been [standing up for](#) families torn apart by cruel Government rules as part of a campaign led by the Refugee Council.

NHS HEALTH REGULATIONS

Ed Davey has had his “answer” to his PQs on NHS Health Charging Regs, [here](#) and [here](#). There is an amazingly similar and useless answer to a PQ from Roger Roberts too!

RIGHT TO WORK

Lord Roger Roberts has [been asking yet again](#) about extending the list of jobs asylum seekers could do. The Church Times has a [good article](#) on refugees and skill gaps in the UK and of course if the groundwork is done whilst still seeking asylum, skills can be put to use much quicker.

SPONSORSHIP

Citizens UK’s Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees has been launched and there is more information on [their website](#). So far more than 25 organisations and community groups have pledged to welcome 42 families through the community sponsorship scheme.

PARLIAMENT DEBATES ON UNACCOMPANIED CHILD REFUGEES IN CALAIS

The debate that had been co-sponsored by Tim Farron had not just a great speech from Tim, but speakers from every political party speaking in favour of getting more of the children here to safety, as soon as possible, especially those who have every legal right to be here. You can hear Tim [speak here](#). *“This Government has repeatedly failed child refugees. They closed the Dubs scheme after accepting just 460 and they refuse, point blank, to even consider doing the right thing and giving these vulnerable children refuge here.”*

There was a similar debate in the Lords, and our Peers there did the issue proud. Roger Roberts [spoke very movingly](#) as he [introduced the debate](#) he had initiated. He described how a pastor was left clutching a cross after his makeshift church, which should have been a place of hope and prayer, had been demolished by officials. *“Let’s do something honourable and memorable”*, he said. Sally Hamwee [is here](#). *“Why are there no safe and legal routes managed and regulated”* she said, after telling how what was needed most was blankets not tents – because the blankets can be salvaged when police move them on in the night. Shas Sheehan [spoke](#) of children sleeping rough in fields and woods, and of the brutal methods used by the French Police and how difficult everything was for the young people. She had tried to encourage some to apply for asylum in France, but there were so many unsurmountable hurdles and they had been made so unwelcome there. And Tony Greaves [here](#), supporting Roger, talking of the Citizens of the World choir and how his council, Pendle, would take more Syrian Refugees if the Government would let them.

We are ashamed of our Government’s attitude and lack of action. Our parliamentarians will do all that they can to keep up the pressure, and for our part the least we can do is to [sign the petition](#) **“We need the government to stop dragging its heels, and help the children it promised to help before it’s too late”**, and asking for at least 480 children to be brought here by the end of the year.

DESTITUTION

A new report, Refugees without Refuge, on difficulties of those granted leave to remain, [has been published](#) by the Refugee Council. It tells of the huge difficulties faced by those who have just been granted leave to remain, but are without money and homes after the 28 days they have before support is cut off and they have to leave accommodation.

HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE (HASC), the GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The [Government has finally responded](#) to the HASC report of July 2017. This could be excusable if good progress were being made, but it isn’t.

The Government is **taking too long on making decisions on asylum cases**, and has been criticised by HASC for not having records for this to be monitored. Apparently they are going to speed up – but had better make the right decisions too!

There is huge concern over the number of **Eritrean Asylum seekers getting wrong decisions** in the first place, but the Government says it is taking everyone case by case, and going by “Country Guidance” – but this does not explain all the bad decisions won on appeal. On **Iranian Christians being refused**, but winning on appeal, the Home Office appears to be saying that there was a problem with their “credibility”, and with some things only coming to light at appeal. They haven’t said that people who do not understand the issue are asking the wrong questions.

On questions around capacity to take the **promised 20,000 Syrian refugees**, Government says the local authorities can only take what they can cope with – and is not mentioning that council budgets are being cut to the core, and what is being offered to enable councils to take more Syrians is not enough. Also see [Lord Tony Greaves speech](#) on this.

The select committee also criticised the difficulty of **children here not being able to be reunited with family**, but Government is saying it will do no more.

SANCTUARY IN PARLIAMENT

This event is being held on November 28th, and is organised by City of Sanctuary. In a true Liberal way it is empowering asylum seekers. Let us know if you are likely to be there with any of your local seekers of sanctuary.

WHAT IS A BORDER ?

[This article](#) from the Church of Scotland talks about what a border is. “The border was not a barrier but a place of exchange. A meeting place where diversity is an everyday reality of life.

“Today the border has become a barrier, a wall whose sole purpose is to keep people out”.

As always please do come back to us if you want any further information. Also if you are use social media please do make contributions, and share & retweet items on our sites.