

21 years of resistance to immigration detention at Campsfield

25.11.93 First immigration detainees brought from Harmondsworth detention centre. 12 demonstrators meet minibuses at Campsfield main gates and demand freedom for detainees.

Almost at once there were protests by those held inside Campsfield, and for 21 years there have been individual and collective protests by detainees including signed statements to the authorities, and mass hunger strikes.

Monthly demonstrations (last Saturday at noon) and monthly public meetings in Oxford's Town Hall (first Tuesday, 7.30pm) now both number over 250.

16,17.12.93 Town centre demo; Public meeting against Campsfield in Oxford Town Hall.

23.12.93 169 visitors from Jamaica (an entire plane-load, including an immigration officer) are detained on arrival. 40 are detained in Campsfield over Christmas.

10.01.94 Campaign to Close Campsfield launched with support from Oxford Trades Union Council, other union branches and church bodies.

29.01.94 First monthly demonstration. They continue thereafter at noon on last Saturday of every month.

10.02.94 11 hunger strikers (mostly Algerian) in Campsfield moved to secure hospital in Yorkshire which is then picketed. Algerian Community Association join and organise demonstrations. All 11 granted temporary admission and released from detention.

11.03.94 175 detainees go on hunger strike. Sparks off wave of hunger strikes across Britain that includes about 400 detainees in total.

12.03.94 First rooftop protest in Campsfield with demonstration outside by Campaign.

13.03.94 Nine detainees from roof-protest moved to prisons. Hunger strikers threatened with deportation. 40 incidents are recorded which break the World Medical Assembly Declaration of Malta (1991) on treatment of hunger strikers. Last hunger striker stops after 41 days.

26.03.94 Demonstrators climb fence, reach roof and stay for 12 hours. Ali Tamarat, former detainee and hunger striker, speaks at demonstration and on TV. Two days later he is re-detained.

24.05.94 Detainee seen being deported handcuffed and mouth taped up. Already ill before her transfer, the doctor at Holloway prison refused her and she had to be taken to Whittington hospital.

25.05.94 Detainees extract promise from Immigration Service staff in Campsfield that there would be no more unannounced deportations.

4.06.94 600 people demonstrate outside Campsfield; human rights camp set up.

5.06.94 Mass revolt in Campsfield by detainees following deportation of Ali Tamarat without warning. 11 detainees escape. Many protest on rooftop. Riot police are sent in. 22 detainees moved to prison after protest. At least five detainees injured

9.07.94 Camp for human rights evicted from outside main gates of Campsfield (erected 04.06.94).

August letter from 86 Oxford academics to the Prime Minister: '*[These people] who are innocent of any crime, should not be detained. We certainly do not find it acceptable that they should be detained without trial, without time limit and with little chance of bail, and thus treated worse than common law criminals.*'

27.09.94 Hunger strike begins, is joined by all Ghanaians in Campsfield till 3.10.94.

25.11.94 Detainee is bound and gagged and deported to Ghana breaking the official ban on gags after the death of Joy Gardner in July 1993.

4.12.94 Petition of over 5,000 signatures calling for Campsfield to close handed in at 10 Downing Street by marchers from Oxford to London via Harmondsworth detention centre.

7.02.95 By hunger strike, Muslim and Christian detainees win request for halal food and change of meal times to allow Muslim detainees to observe Ramadan. 5.03.95 Ivorian Relief Action Group hold demonstrations outside Campsfield with Campaign and new group, Students Against Campsfield. Two detainees, Anne-Marie Sonan and Sita Kamara, are released after hunger strike.

20.04.95 Judge Tumin, chief inspector of prisons, report on Campsfield states average stay is 10 weeks and 10% of detainees are there

more than six months. 26.05.95 Judge Tumin told that his contract will not be renewed by the Home Office.

30.05.95 Two detainees are deported despite having been on hunger strike for over 30 days and being too weak to walk. One hospitalised in India for several weeks.

5.02.96 Students Against Campsfield appear on TV national news with banner in Heathrow stating 'Britain starves refugees' on day benefits removed for in-country asylum applicants

25.05.96 Six detainees attempt to escape Campsfield but are caught and transferred to a prison.

13.07.96 The Campaign and Kurdish refugees perform a street play in Oxford to highlight detention in Campsfield (performed several times over next few months).

15.09.96 Trees outside Campsfield are cut down to prevent supporters and detainees from communicating.

21.05.97 Detainee moved to Winson Green prison because he complained of Group 4 staff watching pornographic videos in room adjoining prayer room during Ramadan.

22.05.97 12 detainees protest on roof for 36 hours against transferrals to prisons.

30.05.97 11 unaccompanied children detained in Campsfield until visitors and lawyers complained.

20.08.97 Detainees protest in Campsfield as they see a detainee being strangled as he is removed. Group 4 evacuate and riot police are brought in. 10 West Africans and two Caribbeans and one Lebanese are blamed for 'riot' and detained on remand. Charges against four are dropped, leaving nine. Of nine, three are minors. Two attempt suicide while in detention. Another two are granted refugee status and are given bail.

16.04.98 Sir David Ramsbotham, chief inspector of prisons, publishes report on Campsfield: 'it is abundantly clear' that 'there is little or no consistency, or logic, in current arrangements for deciding upon detention'.

17.06.98 All of the Campsfield Nine are acquitted when prosecution admits that their witnesses, Group 4 and Immigration staff, are 'unreliable' that security guards destroyed telephones and hit detainees. Four of the Nine are detained in Rochester prison.

22.06.98 70 detainees start mass hunger strike in Campsfield for one week demanding visit by

immigration minister. Spokesperson for detainees victimized and moved to prison.

17.08.98 All Campsfield Nine are released from detention following concerted lobbying and another suicide attempt. Eight of the nine decide to sue the Home Office and Group 4 for malicious prosecution.

21.09.99 Two detainees injure themselves, one very seriously, trying to escape.

14.11.99 Twenty detainees protest on roof for having been detained for over one year.

27.11.99 300 people attend anniversary 'Six years too long' demonstration.

15.09.00 'Barbed Wire Europe' Conference Against Immigration Detention, in Ruskin College, Oxford organised by Campaign; 125 attend from 25 countries.

2001

Barbed Wire Britain anti detention network set up on initiative of Campaign.

March Manchester conference on rights of migrants organised by BWB, Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers and National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns

Summer Three-week 'No Borders' camp at Campsfield in the summer of 2001 (in solidarity with other European No Borders Network camps)

July The Wombles plan a mass camp, advertising their intention to break down the fence, but are stopped by a huge police operation.

End 2001 Detainees react angrily to refusal of immigration officials to meet about grievances. A fire is started.

2002

7 February: 'I can also confirm that I intend to close Campsfield House. This outdated centre is no longer appropriate in the 21st century. These places will be transferred to the new high standard [sic] removal centres.' – David Blunkett, Home Secretary. Decision later reversed following fire at Yarl's Wood

Spring Government announces 4 open 750-bed 'accommodation centres' for migrants will be opened, one at Piddington, Bicester, Oxon. Campaign helps set up Bicester Refugee Support to oppose the plan on humanitarian grounds. Plan dropped after Public Inquiry at which BRS and Asylum Welcome give evidence, and at total cost of over £20 million. Summer National demonstration for migrant rights in London organised by BWB, NCADC,

CDAS (see March 2001)

September 2001 Mass hunger strike

2003

Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, concludes Campsfield is not 'a place of safety'.

14 June 120 Detainees on hunger strike.

14 December 66 Campsfield detainees go on hunger strike.

November Unite general secretary Bill Morris addresses 10th anniversary demo; protests at oppressive policing.

2004

31 January 1st European Day of Action for Migrant Rights/Against Detention: demos at Campsfield, Waterloo station, Liverpool Hull, Bridgewater; *Daily Mail* picketed.

August Kidlington Parish Council votes down expansion of Campsfield.

2005

2 April 2nd European Day of Action; demos in UK cities.

27 June †RIP Ramazan Kimluca (18), Kurdish asylum seeker, hangs himself in Campsfield.

July Campsfield detainee sews lips together, swallows needle.

August Stream of complaints of assaults during removals.

2006

27 May Public meeting in Oxford Town Hall on detention as torture.

July, December Group hunger strikes.

2007

14 March Mass protest as detainees resist a deportation, nine hurt

25 July Whalley report predicts more disturbances (See *Report into Disturbances at Harmondsworth and Campsfield IRCs*, Robert Whalley, CB for House of Commons July 2007.)

7 August 26 escape Campsfield after fire, 9 remain free.

20 November GEO sack Campsfield chaplain Father Seraphim for speaking on radio. After several years, he receives an out of court settlement in recognition that he was wrongfully treated

17 December Major disturbance in protest at violent removal of Davis Osagi; fires, Blue Block closed, detainees moved to other centres, prisons

2008

14 June Detainees protest again, small fires set, 10 fire engines, 50 police officers, prison officers in riot gear and a police helicopter

attend

18 June 7 detainees escape, 3 remain free

Also 2008, Oxford & District TUC statement 'Slave Labour at Campsfield':

<http://www.closecampsfield.org.uk/oldindex.html>

9 August 13 Iraqi Kurds begin hunger strike. Spokesman Fazzel Abdul said: 'Without any reason we are being held here and they are trying to deport us to the most dangerous country in the world.'

11 August 50 other detainees join in protest. 'We are protested because we are human beings we are not criminal. We are locked in the cell like prisoners we want freedom and justice there are many of us who have family and we have been separated to live with our family.'

2009

1 January A man from Congo Brazzaville in Campsfield slit his throat after being on hunger strike for 9 days. Some unrest in Campsfield following this.

May An Oxford resident for 13 years, health worker, and member of Unison Oxon Health Branch, seized and put in Campsfield.

According to the Annual Report of Campsfield's Independent Monitoring Board (IMB): Average duration of stay 44 days (excludes previous stays and stays in other centres), number of detainees paid for work doubled from 20 to 40 averaging around 5 hours daily.

November 100 people on 16th anniversary demo

2010

March Campsfield detainee attempts suicide, moved to JR hospital, to Campsfield, to Colnbrook, all in 48 hours.

April Demo outside Serco offices in Culham Science Park south of Oxford. 100 'Evict Serco – the race prison empire in your midst' leaflets distributed.

Cameroonian detainee held in 4 centres deported despite having a judicial review outstanding and despite complaint been registered with the police about being beaten up by members of the 7-strong 'escort' on previous failed deportation.

A very ill detainee dies in Oakington despite begging for drugs and treatment.

May Pilot refuses to fly with Cameroonian detainee when he sees treatment meted out by guards; detainee moved to hospital, to Haslar,

and deported despite having judicial review outstanding.

June Detainees being given counselling as they leave unsuccessful video-link bail hearings, because experience too distressing.

August 147 detainees go on hunger strike over abuse, long detention and mental health problems. Detainees talk to media and issue statements and in phone and email contact with campaigners. Several demos/vigils in support at Campsfield and in town.

September Iraqi Kurds, Ahmed Hussein Saeed and Mohammed Abdullah, escaped, both picked up, one in London with a suspected broken leg and deep cuts sustained in the escape. Mr Saeed had been returned in April after Baghdad authorities refused to accept people on a mass deportation flight.

October 3 G4S guards arrested following death of Jimmy Mubenga. *12th*: Justice for Jimmy Mubenga demonstration, London. G4S later loses deportations contract.

2011

28 January Campaign calls for detainees to be paid minimum wage; *Guardian* reports women detainees at Yarl's Wood paid 50p an hour to work. 'It is a cruel irony that immigration detainees are being paid a pittance while asylum seekers in the community are not allowed to work.' (Campaign press statement)

March Launch of Bail Observation Project's *Immigration Bail Hearings: A Travesty of Justice? Observations from the Public Galley* at meetings in Oxford Town Hall and Parliament.

6 June 37 Kurds and Iraqis go on hunger strike to protest at mass deportation. Campaign mounts two demonstrations, and issues statements in support

30 July Abiola Ayabola complaint about judge at immigration bail hearing (see website)

†*2 August* RIP Ianos Dragutan, 31, from Moldova hanged himself in a shower at Campsfield. Vigil at Carfax.

14 Justice for Jimmy Mubenga vigil outside Director of Public Prosecutions office: still no charges against G4S a year later.

2012

Groups from STAR and Freshers-Fair sign-ups join to form Oxford Migrant Support.

Oxford NoBorders distribute leaflets outside Barnardo's shop in Cowley Road to protest at their involvement in 'Cedars' detention centre for children.

May Start of hunger strike by Sudanese, mostly Darfuris, in Campsfield. Most get released, but 2 continue long hunger strike.

25 November 100 at anniversary rally with Breach of the Peace samba band, speakers former detainee Toomaj Karimi, Shiar from CorporateWatch, John McDonnell MP

December Twenty uni students visiting 18 detainees via Oxford Migrant Solidarity

2013

20 February Afghan child released after over 2 months in Campsfield

March Rule 35 reports being taken up by Campaign

April, May Oxford and London launches of 2nd Bail Observation Project report *Still a Travesty*

August UK BA white 'enforcement' vans in Oxford, raid on KFC, in September on Indian restaurants in Witney

25 August At monthly demo, 10 detainees contact the Oxford Migrant Support mobile phone number shown each month on the banner

9-10 October Over 100 sign up at CCC/OMS stall at Oxford Uni freshers fair

18 October Fire at Campsfield

26 October Monthly demo with 50 people including coach from Warwick

29-30 November, 1 December 200 at demo to mark 20 years of Campsfield, 80 attend *Asylum Monologues* and workshops

2014

March Government plans to expand Campsfield exposed

1 April Farid Pardiaz convicted at Oxford Crown Court of arson, gets 32 months prison

7-10 May 50 detainees on hunger strike: 'Close al UK detention centres'; protests at Harmondsworth, Colnbrook, Brook

9 July Mitie shareholders (campaign supporters) challenge board at AGM

20 October Nicola Blackwood MP and all parliamentary candidates oppose expansion at public meeting, Kidlington, attended by over 50

23 October Home Office planning application to double size of Campsfield

October/November letters from 21 Oxon organizations and from 70 Oxford Uni academics call for closure of Campsfield, withdrawal of planning application

29 November '21 years, No More Detention' demo at Campsfield

