



Asylum and Refugee Network - QARN

Immigration Removals and Deportation

'Evils which have struck their roots deep in the fabric of human society are often accepted ... as part of the providential ordering of life. They lurk unsuspected in the system of things ...' William Charles Braithwaite, 1919, Quaker Faith and Practice 23.05

Terminology: 'Deportations' in the legal sense are removals from the UK that have been ordered through the criminal courts during sentencing for an offence. 'Removals' (or 'enforced returns') occur without a link to any criminal offence; these take people out of the country when the Home Office or Courts rule that they no longer have a case in immigration law to remain in the UK. The terms are often confused and used inter-changeably. We refer to 'removals' throughout this leaflet.

Why are Quakers concerned?

As Quakers we believe in that of God in everyone. Our concern for those affected by contact with the asylum system stems from our testimonies to equality and justice.

People are being forcibly removed from the UK through the immigration system without having had access to legal advice and an opportunity to put their case for remaining in a place of safety. They are sent to situations where they fear persecution or death. In 2018 an Afghan man, who was forcibly removed, was shot dead on his return. The Independent newspaper reported that 11 people wrongly removed from the UK as part of the 'Windrush' scandal had died after return.

The decision to remove these people is taken against a background of media and Government scaremongering about immigration, cuts to legal aid and other services, and a climate of disbelief which does not allow them the benefit of doubt. They are told they can continue their appeal from outside the UK, which is usually unrealistic given their circumstances.

Increasingly, people are forcibly removed by private companies on secret night time charter flights, away from the public eye. Physical force, handcuffs and waist restraint belts are often used. These are mass removals to a country the Home Office deems safe



Solidarity with the Stansted Defendants – picture courtesy of Right to Remain

Our removal system does not allow equal opportunity for all to live in safety. There is racism inherent in this system, which targets particular groups of people. Access to justice is impaired by the decision-making process. This is seriously flawed; in 2018 more than two thirds of removal directions were eventually called off within a week of removal.

The Stansted 15 protesters stood against mass removals by taking nonviolent direct action to stop a charter flight leaving with frightened passengers. Of the sixty vulnerable people on board eleven were found to have grounds to remain. At least two had been victims of trafficking. The protesters were charged with terrorism related offences. In summing up the trial, the judge instructed the jury that seeking to prevent human rights abuse could not be used as a defence in the case. Amnesty International commented that this was a 'crushing blow for human rights in the UK'.

What needs to change?

Quakers have been calling for changes to the asylum system, from the care of people seeking asylum to the judicial process that allows injustices to continue. We support 'End Deportations' in the specific campaign for an end to the use of charter flights to remove people, and an end to mass removals.

We are very concerned about the situation that the Stansted 15 found themselves in as a result of using peaceful protest to prevent a chartered plane taking off and to draw attention to the practice of removals. The decision to charge the protesters with terrorist-related offences was clearly designed to stifle protest. Peaceful protest is an essential and basic right so that attention can be drawn to injustices in our system. The State must uphold this right.

What can we do?

- **Inform ourselves:** <http://enddeportations.com/> is a good place to start.
- <https://corporatewatch.org/> Corporate Watch monitors private companies profiting from the asylum and immigration system
- **Watch** Sue Clayton's 20 minute film 'Stansted15 on Trial' <https://righttoremain.org.uk/the-home-office-is-out-of-control/>
- **Arrange a meeting** and show the film to enlighten others. **Freed Voices** is a group of experts-by-experience committed to speaking out about the realities of immigration detention in the UK. You can contact them to invite members of the group to speak at an event.
- **Speak with your MP** about ending removals by charter flight and mass removals; and speak up for the right to peaceful protest.

The **Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN)** website, mailing list and Facebook page sends out regular updates about what's happening in this fast-changing area. We hold meetings, organise conferences and support one another in our work.

Ask your Meeting to consider becoming a **Meeting of Sanctuary**. Sanctuary Everywhere encourages Quakers to act in solidarity with refugees and migrants. Meetings are supported from Friends House with briefings, training, retreats, conference calls and an online discussion forum. The Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto expresses the commitment of Britain Yearly Meeting to this work.

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Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network May 2019