

international detention coalition



www.idcoalition.org

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International Coalition on the Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants Launches Locally

More than 100 organizations worldwide form coalition to challenge immigration detention

Washington, DC, June 16, 2006—In the week leading up to June 20th—World Refugee Day—events around the world will launch the International Coalition on the Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants.

It was founded to raise awareness of governments' detention policies and practices and to promote greater protection and respect for the human rights of detainees. It advocates limiting the use of, seeking alternatives to, and using the least restrictive forms of, immigration detention.

The Refugee Council USA and Detention Watch Network are coordinating the launch in our nation's capital. "Given the core mission of the Refugee Council USA to advocate for the protection of refugees worldwide, we applaud the creation of an international network which will speak to the global crisis of incarcerating people who, like millions of refugees, are asserting their claims to be protected from persecution and intolerable abridgments of their fundamental human rights," stated Richard Parkins, chair of the Refugee Council USA.

"This international network will be a visible and important manifestation of the vigilance which we must all exhibit as we attempt to reverse the tendency of nations to punish persons for seeking safety from oppression," argues Parkins.

Fundamental human rights are not negotiable, and that includes the right not to be arbitrarily detained. Immigration detention should never breach fundamental human rights and protections. Such imprisonment should not be used to limit people's access to seek asylum or be of an unreasonable or unlimited duration.

In Australia, migrants may be detained indefinitely pending their deportation without judicial oversight. The United States, under the guise of immigration reform, proposes up to 20,000 additional beds for immigration detention. In Zambia, most refugees, some housed for over 30 years, are not entitled to leave their camps. Those who do leave are often imprisoned in grossly overcrowded and life-threatening conditions.

The Coalition has been collecting information on immigration detention practices in 36 countries and has found that the worst detention practices are being copied and adopted by governments whose officials justify their use by pointing out the immigration detention policies in richer, and more powerful countries.

www.refugeecouncilusa.org

"The Coalition provides an important opportunity for local organizations throughout the United States to share best practices and strategies with advocates from other countries and to highlight the impact that U.S. immigration detention and enforcement policies have on communities worldwide," said Andrea Black, coordinator of the Detention Watch Network.

About the Coalition

The Coalition consists of non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, academics, and individuals working globally to provide legal, social, medical and other services to detainees, carry out research and reporting, and conduct advocacy and policy work on behalf of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

The Coalition stretches throughout all regions of the world and currently consists of over 100 members in 36 countries, where individuals are detained purely on the basis of their immigration status.

The steering committee includes many leading international human rights organizations which share concerns about the treatment of immigration detainees such as Amnesty International, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, Jesuit Refugee Service, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and the World Council of Churches.

Launch events will be held around the world and in the following countries: the United States, Canada, Mexico, Kenya, South Africa, India, Australia, Lebanon, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Ireland, Switzerland.

The local launch will take place at a press conference on **Monday, June 19 at 9:30 a.m. at the National Press Club in Washington, DC**. Speakers will include: Fr. Kenneth Gavin., S.J., Vice Chair of the Refugee Council USA; Ralston Deffenbaugh, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; the Rev. Joan Maruskin, Church World Service; Pascal Ewane Akame, formerly detained torture survivor; Ben Sanders, U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; and Eleanor Acer, Human Rights First.

For more information, please visit www.idcoalition.org or contact:

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