DEAR MINISTER

We call on you to end the practice of indefinite immigration detention in the UK. We are the only country in the European Union to have no limit on how long people can be detained for immigration purposes. It is time for this to change.

Detention is used against people accused of no crime, including people seeking asylum from persecution in their home countries. Seeking asylum is not a crime, and it is not unlawful to cross borders where it is reasonably necessary to make one's asylum claim. Moreover, the immigration system is and should be treated as distinct from our criminal justice system.

Our country has a duty to review immigration and asylum cases quickly and fairly, and to treat people with respect in the meantime. As the All-Party Parliamentary Group highlighted, the excessive use of detention in the UK is unfair, unnecessary, and harms people. That harm is exacerbated because people are detained indefinitely (i.e. without time limit), with no idea of when they might be released.

Though many people are detained only for a few days, many more are detained for much longer – weeks, months, or even years. In 2016, 208 people leaving detention had been detained for more than 1 year. At the end of that year, one person remained detained after 1,333 days. This indefinite nature of immigration detention contrasts greatly with the situation of the great majority of convicted prisoners in our country, who received time limited sentences.

Yet detention continues not to lead to removal or departure from the UK in the majority of cases.

Other EU countries vary in the limit they set, and include 21 days (Ireland), 45 days (France) and 60 days (Spain and Portugal). We are not calling for a specific limit – that is for the Government to decide. However, it is time that the UK joined all other countries in the EU, and set a limit on how long people in immigration detention can be held.

STOP INDEFINITE DETENTION

NAME	SIGNATURE

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