



Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Friday September 14, 2018 at 10:40 a.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into the Examination of the Treatment of Detainees at the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC), Aripo.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the public hearing:

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| • Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP | Chairman |
| • Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP | Vice- Chairman |
| • Mr. Saddam Hosein | Member |
| • Mr. Kazim Hosein | Member |
| • Mr. Dennis Moses | Member |
| • Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir | Member |

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of National Security –

- | | |
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| • Mr. Vel Lewis | Permanent Secretary (Ag.) |
| • Mrs. Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews | Chief Immigration Officer (Ag.) |
| • Mr. Dennison Aley | Immigration Officer IV, IDC |
| • Mr. Keith Renaud | Director, Office of Law Enforcement Policy |
| • Mr. Kent Downer | Senior Emergency Medical Technician |
| • Mr. Patrick Cunningham | Manager, Programme Management Unit |

Living Water Community -

- | | |
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| • Ms. Gina Maharaj | Legal Officer II |
| • Ms. Allyson Weekes | Protection Advocate for Detention |
| • Mr. Ganesh Rampersad | Legal Officer I |

Key Issues Discussed were:

1. There were 118 detainees at the IDC as at September 14, 2018 and seventy-five percent of these detainees entered the country illegally;
2. There are approximately 7,000 asylum-seekers in Trinidad and Tobago according to the last report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
3. There are approximately 19,000 Venezuelans that entered the country legally over the past year and seventeen percent have overstayed their time in the country;
4. There are currently 1,700 persons on Orders of Supervision;
5. The length of time a detainee stays on an Order of Supervision depends on the length of time to acquire the detainee's repatriation documentation and the nature of the breach of the Immigration Act, Chap. 18:01. Orders of Supervision may last up to two (2) years;
6. There are refugees and asylum-seekers who were released on Orders of Supervision since there is an absence of legislation in Trinidad and Tobago which recognizes the refugees and asylum-seekers in Trinidad and Tobago;
7. There are IDC detainees who may be asylum-seekers and are still in confinement due to criminal records or the Immigration Division was unaware of their status as an asylum-seeker;
8. There are nineteen (19) Special Inquiry Officers at the Immigration Division who are charged with the responsibility of the 1,700 persons on Orders of Supervision;
9. There are five (5) Special Inquiry Hearings held per day and at each Hearing a stenographer is required. The lack of stenographers in the public service to support the Special Inquiry Hearing for detainees has contributed towards delays in special inquiry process;
10. The cost of the security bond for the Order of Supervision varies according the cost of the airline tickets to repatriate the detainee to the country of origin;
11. The security bonds provided under the Order for Supervision can be refunded as long as the person produces the ticket bought and the persons under the Order of Supervision has left the country. The bond will not be refunded if the persons under the Order of Supervision has breached the Order;
12. Any individual or organisation can post a security bond on behalf of a detainee, once proof of detainee support can be provided and there were no problems with the detention history of the detainee (such as criminal offences);
13. The protest action in May 2018 at the IDC was due to the lack of information to detainees on their status and the length of detention;

14. The detainees at the IDC who are married and/or have children in Trinidad are given special consideration for release on an Order of Supervision once proof of fatherhood and the ability to support the detainee is provided;
15. The unwillingness of some detainees to sign visa documents or provide accurate personal identification information contributes to delays with the repatriation process;
16. The Living Water Community (LWC) indicated the lack of access to detainees at the IDC who have sought asylum or refugee status from the LWC via a third party; and
17. Due to security risks, the visits of LWC or UNHCR are facilitated at a separate location from the IDC.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wloyuntxXqs>

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jschumanrights@tparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2627.

Committees Unit
September 20, 2018