

An illustration showing several hands of different skin tones (white, brown, black, pink, blue, orange) reaching out and holding a stylized globe of the Earth. The globe is light blue and green, representing continents and oceans. The hands are positioned around the globe, symbolizing global unity and support.

PEOPLE

NOT NUMBERS

HOW ARE YOUNG PEOPLE

AFFECTED BY DEPORTATIONS

AND IMMIGRATION DETENTION?

A report by the Young Greens
of the Green Party of England and Wales

 **Young Greens**



INTRODUCTION

The ‘hostile environment’ scandal is far from over. Despite Sajid Javid’s attempts to save the reputation of the Home Office, the horrific anti-migrant policies that provoked Amber Rudd’s dismissal are still affecting the lives of thousands of young people across the UK. We as Young Greens stand in solidarity with all those affected by any aspect of the hostile environment, and pledge resolutely to continue campaigning until these policies are overturned. In this report, we will be exploring specifically how young people are disproportionately affected by deportations and detention, concluding with policy suggestions and suggested actions of solidarity. Please note this report contains harrowing accounts from Detained Voices.



DEPORTATIONS

Thousands of people are flown back into countries they have escaped from by the UK Home Office every year. This means people are often being forcibly return to war, poverty or other life threatening situations. Up until 2017, the Home Office used a ‘deport first, appeal later’ approach which was deemed unlawful¹ by the supreme court of justice. The Stansted 15 activists have recently found that two of the people due to be deported on the flight they prevented taking off were victims of trafficking, which should entitle them to duty of care of the British state². Many deportations are legally dubious, hence challenging these cases and this practice is paramount not only for the pursuit of justice, but for the safety of those subject to deportation.

Below is an account from a young person who has already been deported back to Nigeria where they fear they life is under threat:

I don't have any families in Nigeria any more. My family has been killed by insurgency terrorist group called Boko Haram in 2005. Our church was burned down including the congregation. All my families was dead. I'm very lucky when I'm in the campus when it happen. After I left my school campus I was on the road for 2–3 hours running to another state which is Lagos state. When I'm finally in Lagos state I was weeping, crying every day. **I am homeless, my life is at risk. Boko Haram insurgency promise to kill entire generation.**³

Anon, Detained Voices

¹<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40272323>

²FS50700037 Information Commissioner Complaint (ref 44550)

³<https://detainedvoices.com/2017/03/28/post-deportation-statement-this-is-my-story/>

The Home Office divides deportation statistics into ‘voluntary returns’ and ‘enforced returns’. However it is important to recognise that despite the term ‘voluntary’, those who have been identified by the Home Office for ‘voluntary’ return are not given the option of staying in the UK. As the Migration Observatory states “The term ‘voluntary’ describes the method of departure rather than the choice of whether or not to depart”⁴. This is exemplified on the Home Office website, where it states “You must leave the UK within 3 months of the date your application is approved”⁵. Therefore the use of the term ‘voluntary’ is evidently problematic. Furthermore there is a financial incentive for migrants to leave ‘voluntarily’ – namely that they are offered

£2,000 to leave⁶. Therefore separation of statistics seemingly warps deportation figures, belittling the figures surrounding ‘voluntary returns’ which are significantly higher.

Thus ‘enforced returns’ merely describe those who have resisted the decision the Home Office’s decision to remove them from the UK– yet have been subsequently deported nonetheless. Therefore it could be argued that the separation of these two removals are largely arbitrary– and may even be an attempt to reduce impressions of the magnitude of deportation as a practice. When we are reading Home Office data, this factor is important to keep in mind.

ENFORCED REMOVALS

Between 2014 and 2017 52,753 people have been deported via ‘enforced removals’. On average that’s 13,195 people annually in the last four years.

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Year	Percentage of under 30s	Number of deportees under the age of 30	Total
2014	49%	7,111	14,395
2015	45%	6,233	13,690
2016	43%	5,452	12,469
2017	41%	5,007	12,229

⁴<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deportations-removals-and-voluntary-departures-from-the-uk/>

⁵<https://www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily/apply>

⁶<https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2017/is-voluntary-return-the-new-way-forward-for-managing-irregular-migration/>

^{7/8/9}Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Returns tables –ty_03: Home Office

In the last four years, on average 45% of people who have been forcibly removed from the UK were under the age of thirty¹⁰. Although this percentage seems to be decreasing— this is clear evidence to us that ‘enforced removals’

disproportionately affect and target young people.

Below is an account from a person describing the physically violent process of being deported on a charter flight:

The worst part is the charter flight. They tie a belt on my body, there were two people to hold me and drag me inside the plane. I could not breathe very well. I’m still feeling the pain now. I explained my situation to them, they should remove the belt, but they did not want to hear what I’m saying, they said they are doing their job¹¹

Anon, Detained Voices

VOLUNTARY REMOVALS (EXCLUDING RETURNS FROM DETENTION)

Between 2014 and 2017 **101,026 people have been deported via ‘voluntary removals’— almost double the amount of enforced removals.** On average that’s **25,256** people annually in the last four recorded years¹². This means 12,061 more people are deported via ‘voluntary returns’ on average annually in comparison to ‘enforced removals’. This increase is significant, and reflects the importance of taking voluntary removals

into account when considering overall deportation statistics.

In the last four years, 46% of people who have been forcibly removed from the UK were under the age of thirty¹³. Although this percentage seems to be decreasing— this is clear evidence that voluntary removals **disproportionately affect and target young people.**

¹⁰Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Returns tables –ty_03: Home Office

¹¹<https://detainedvoices.com/2017/03/28/post-deportation-statement-this-is-my-story/>

^{12/13}Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Returns tables –ty_03: Home Office

Year	Percentage of under 30s	Number of deportees under the age of 30	Total
2014	49%	12,690	25,784
2015	49%	14,064	28,189
2016	45%	12,383	27,157
2017	41%	8,293	19,896

DEPORTATIONS FROM DETENTION CENTRES

Finally, our FOI data confirmed that the number of people deported under the age of 30 from detention estates (enforced and voluntary returns), was 4,331 in 2017¹⁵.

The experience of being deported straight from detention centres is known to be harrowing, and rushed with limited opportunities to resist, as the below account describes:

When chartered flights are in place, the Home Office does not tell the detainees who are bound for it before hand. They are just given 10 minutes to gather their stuff and are escorted to the reception where their property is already packed up and are boarded on the buses bound for the airport. I saw a detainee who was resisting the deportation being strapped in belts on the reception. Most of us were very depressed and some simply didn't want to leave, but all of us were resigned to the fact that we simply cannot do anything and resisting and protesting would simply result in us getting strapped in a confinement suit just like the one I saw on reception.¹⁶

Anon, Detained Voices

¹⁴Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Returns tables –ty_03: Home Office

¹⁵https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/497868/response/1210546/attach/3/49443%20Whitaker.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1

¹⁶<https://detainedvoices.com/2018/03/05/the-diary-of-a-wimpy-illegal/>

Total enforced and voluntary returns

Year	Voluntary	Enforced	Deported from detention under 30	Total	Total under 30
2014	25,784	14,395	N/A	40,179	19,801
2015	28,189	13,690	N/A	41,879	20,297
2016	27,157	12,469	N/A	39,626	17,835
2017	19,896	12,229	4,331	36,456	17,631

¹⁷ Note that figures between 2014–2016 do not include figures of those deported from detention– therefore are not full totals.

¹⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2018/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned>



DETENTION



The UK has one of the largest detention estates in the EU, and is the only country to detain people without charge indefinitely. Since 2009, **2,588 people under the age of eighteen** have been detained in immigration detention centres in the UK¹⁸. The expansion of detention centres is in fact not strictly part of ‘hostile environment’ policy, though of course detention often still has the effect of making living standards unbearable for migrants in the UK. Immigration detention centres have been in place in the UK since 1993¹⁹ under John Major’s government, and were rapidly expanded by Tony Blair’s Labour government post 1997²⁰.

“Inside the detention centre you don’t feel you have any rights. They keep telling us we need to go back to our country. Everyone needs to be aware of this because they detain people unlawfully.”²¹

Anon, Detained Voices

According to our FOI responses from the Home Office, “nobody under the age of eighteen was detained solely under Immigration Act Powers in the detention estate” which consists of 9 immigration detention centres across the UK. However

in the first three months of 2018 alone, seventeen people under the age of eighteen have been detained:

- » 5 of whom were under the age of 5
- » 7 were between 7–11
- » 5 were between 12–16²²

¹⁸Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Detention tables –dty_01 to pr_01: Home Office

¹⁹<https://www.detentiontimeline.uk/web/#timeline>

²⁰<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/wp27-evolution-immigration-detention-uk-2005.pdf>

²¹<https://detainedvoices.com/2017/11/18/inside-the-detention-centre-you-dont-feel-you-have-any-rights/>

²²Newwell Bex 2018 Immigration Statistics: Detention tables –dty_01 to pr_01: Home Office

According to our FOI response from the Home Office, as of 31 March 2018, the latest date for which figures are published, “there were 851 people under the age of thirty detained, solely under Immigration

Act powers, in the detention estate”²³. This often traumatic experience can have severe effects on young people, and on students. The account below demonstrates this:

First of all, I am a fulltime student which give me the right ot education in the UK and is a human right. I am a full time student of construction at a college – The college gave me full support yet the home office put me in detention. I have a partner here and I’m not a criminal. I find it pretty disgusting – it’s a kind of ethnic cleansing. I don’t see why I should be in detention. – I was one of the best students in my department.²⁴

Anon, Detained Voices

Unfortunately, no further data is available detailing how many people have been detained in total in 2018 per quarter, nor is there further available information as to how many people under the age thirty.

However the following information reveals the magnitude of the number of children who have been detained in over the course of the last decade.

²³https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/497868/response/1210546/attach/3/49443%20Whitaker.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1

²⁴<https://detainedvoices.com/2015/03/16/i-want-to-talk-about-work/>

Year	Under 5	5–11 years old	2–16 years old	17 years old	Total under 18	Total number of detainees
2009	498	369	211	41	1,119	28,001
2010	153	145	106	32	436	25,904
2011	43	24	40	20	127	27,089
2012	72	84	67	19	242	28,905
2013	70	85	50	23	228	30,418
2014	40	28	37	23	128	30,364
2015	38	35	56	34	163	32,447
2016	24	18	30	31	103	28,903
2017	10	10	11	11	42	27,331

In total, **2,588 people under the age of 18 were detained between 2009–2017.**

These figures are simply unacceptable for a Britain as a country who prides itself as being at the forefront of human rights. The ongoing effects of these traumatic experiences for any detainees, and

particularly children at psychologically developmental stages of their life is likely to stay with them for a lifetime. This inflicted trauma on the Home Office's behalf in turn creates unnecessary pressure on the NHS and extreme harm on communities and individuals.

CONCLUSION

The detention and deportation of any migrant and/or British resident is deeply traumatic, problematic and unjustifiable. During our research, we were concerned to find that young people under the age of thirty are particularly affected by these horrific policies, which are likely to psychologically harm them, stunt their professional and personal development and of course potentially lay them subject to abuse, or even death.

WHAT CAN YOU DO NEXT?

The intention of this report is not to shock us into inaction. Challenging the hostile environment is an uphill battle, yet it is one that has even in the last year proven to be achievable. Schools ABC, who challenged the Home Office's extraction of immigration data from school children **[successfully overturned this practice](#)**²⁶ earlier this year, as did Docs Not Cops who **[challenged a similar practice](#)**²⁷ within the NHS— so change is possible! If you would like tangible ways to help on a localised level, please look at our **[local campaign guide](#)** on detention and deportation— or check out the following actions

As allies, the Young Greens stand with every young person experiencing detention and deportation, be that first hand or through a family member, friend or loved one. The hostile environment in its myriad of manifestations is deeply violent, and harmful to our society. In short it teaches us to treat our fellow friends as aliens, threats or numbers as opposed to friends, loved ones or people. As Young Greens we pledge to continue resisting this policy of hate with compassion, solidarity and action wherever possible.

- » Visit a detention centre
- » Join a demo outside Yarl's Wood or **[organise a demo](#)** outside your nearest detention centre
- » If you hear of a deportation taking place, hold a peaceful demonstration inside the airport or call the airline asking to prevent the flight
- » **[Contact your MP](#)** challenging the practice of detention and deportation. An example of doing so is raising the Stansted 15 trial. (see a draft letter to an MP **[here](#)**).
- » Host a **[panel discussion](#)** on detention or deportations in your local area or university to raise awareness

²⁶<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/09/dfe-set-to-axe-pupil-data-sharing-deal-with-home-office>

²⁷<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/09/government-to-stop-forcing-nhs-to-share-patients-data-with-home-office>

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PEOPLE NOT NUMBERS CAMPAIGN

In our People Not Numbers campaign we are working to guard the rights of migrants and refugees. We are calling for:

1. Universities to pledge to protect EU student tuition fees post-Brexit
2. The removal of international students from net migration statistics
3. The end of detention centres and deportations

If you'd like to hear more about the first two pledges of our campaign, please see our [International Students resource](#), [our petition](#), or [our localised campaign pack](#) on our website younggreens.org.uk/campaigns/people-not-numbers.

Want to get involved? Email admin@younggreens.org.uk for more information.

POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Detention

As Young Greens, in accordance to Green Party policy we call for an end to detention— not just for an end to indefinite detention which is already being called for by many MPs including Conservatives. We would however challenge the notion of a ‘serious danger to public safety’, which arguably in it’s vague wording could be used for political as opposed to safeguarding purposes. Detention costs £86 per person every day of taxpayers money. This is an insult to the public, who are told daily that the state cannot afford basic public goods such as the NHS, housing or education. Detention is of course more importantly a gross assault on the dignity and welfare of detainees across the country.

Deportation

The Young Greens support Green Party policy regarding deportations. However we acknowledge this policy is currently under developed, for example this report reflects a clearer distinction is needed between enforced and voluntary returns.

GREEN PARTY POLICY

Detention

“No prospective immigrant will be held in detention for migration– related reasons, other than in the most exceptional circumstances, eg a prospective migrant who poses a serious danger to public safety.”²⁸

Deportation

“Victims should not be subject to summary deportation or expulsion on the grounds of illegal or irregular entry into or residence in the country. Nor should they be prosecuted for any lack of identity documents or other minor offences which are directly attributable to their position as a victim of trafficking.”²⁹

²⁸<https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/mg.html>

²⁹<https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/mg.html>



JARGON BUSTER

Hostile environment

The 'hostile environment' has been a part of UK Immigration Policy since 2014. This policy, as the name suggests is intended to make life for immigrants as hostile as possible with the intention of persuading migrants to leave. This policy is far reaching; and has encompassed collaborations between the Home Office with the NHS, the Department of Education,

Deportation

The government organised unjust removal of people from the UK. This includes enforced removals, and voluntary removals. See more info on deportations, enforced removals or voluntary removals please see pg1.

Immigration Detention Centre

A prison where many migrants and British residents are kept indefinitely. There are 9 immigration detention centres across the UK, many of which have been accused of human rights abuses, as well as [keeping deaths of detainees as a state secret](#).³⁰

Returns from detention

Those who have been deported straight from Immigration Detention Centres.

³⁰<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/immigration-detention-centres-uk-suicides-prison-deaths-home-office-a8533366.html>

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