Home Address

Date

Dear (name of MP)

**Expansion of the Detention Estate by the UK Government – Medomsley**

I am writing to you to voice my serious concern over the plans by the UK Government to use the above site again as a detention facility, this time for women. There are many reasons that I believe this is inappropriate and I would appreciate it if you will take some time to consider these points.

I then urge you to speak up against the use of this facility – one which has been mired in controversy and from which the Department of Justice and the Government are still reeling. The proposed use as a detention facility for women who are not offenders in any way is, in itself, criminal.

Over the past 6 months the UK Home Office has come under significant attack due to its inappropriate use of unfit barrack accommodation for people seeking asylum and which offers no protection to its occupants from the ravages of Covid. The Home Secretary’s response is to blame the occupants for something over which they have no control.

In this same time frame other detention facilities have been run down – particularly in Yarls wood. Again, this facility has been mired in controversy from its opening in 2001 with different prison assessments showing it to be of ‘National Concern’.

However other avenues have opened up. This includes a commitment of the Government to follow the course of Alternatives to Detention (AtD) and some inroads were being made. This needs to be effectively reviewed and extended. There are several reasons for this. I believe:

* Women should not be detained if they have not committed any crime. Making an application for asylum is not a crime and is supported by the 1951 Geneva Convention to which the UK is a proud signatory .AtD provides an effective alternative.
* The cost of the Detention Estate is significantly higher than Alternatives to Detention. So why is it in the financial interests of the UK Government to pursue Detention?
* Appropriately supported women have been able to secure their status in the UK – something otherwise not possible. Evidence exists that this can work.
* As a person of faith I believe in the integrity of the individual and the right to be treated with dignity and respect. The former use of this site is mired in controversy, as are many other detention facilities and not just for reasons of abuse. Other detention sites have been significantly criticised by Chief inspectors for a range of problems. I believe this proposal offers no support to individuals or protects their dignity or respect.

I respectfully ask that you consider these points and speak to the Home Secretary to stop this proposal. The use and development of such facilities only extends the culture of a Hostile Environment which is anathema to right thinking people.

Yours sincerely