



# DOSSIER ON DUNGAVEL REMOVAL CENTRE

## YEAR THREE



**FRIDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2004**

# DOSSIER ON DUNGAVEL REMOVAL CENTRE ON ITS THIRD ANNIVERSARY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION



When Dungavel first opened in September 2001, the Home Office said it would be for those about to be deported, likely to abscond, and it was better than putting them into prison. They said Dungavel would also speed up the process of deporting illegal immigrants. Dungavel is not a prison – it was claimed – but a ‘centre’, despite everyone including babies being finger

printed and photographed, despite the razor wire, steel fences, guards, ID numbers, the metal detectors and the same security as a category c prison. Housed away from society, some of the first inmates were 51 refugees held in Scottish prisons under UK immigration laws.

On Dungavel’s third year of opening, Positive Action in Housing wishes to highlight how different the reality is from the Home Office spin.

In the last month we have gathered a damning dossier of evidence to suggest that Dungavel Removal Centre cannot cope with the suicide culture it has created, particularly amongst long term detainees. There is a definite pattern emerging of asylum seekers being held for long, indefinite periods up to two years, and then being transferred to prison when their spirits break.

What’s their suicide prevention strategy? They don’t have one. There are indications of a suicide culture taking hold at Dungavel, which houses whole families after all, and the authorities cannot cope with the suicides and broken spirits they have created. They appear to be simply dumping long term detainees in Prison after they become depressed or suicidal at Dungavel.

This dossier documents the atrocities committed in the name of asylum & immigration policy. The cases highlighted make a mockery of the Home Office's claim that Dungavel is not a prison and only holds asylum seekers for a few days. By its actions, the Home Office doesn’t care that asylum seekers are being detained indefinitely, without charge or trial or even a crime to pin on them. These cases highlight a scant disregard for the UK’s human rights obligations which declare it unlawful to detain asylum seekers indefinitely without charge or trial. The actions of the Home Office in these cases indicate severe breaches the human rights of those fleeing torture, persecution, and civil war.

We want to make sure their stories do not go undocumented or unheard. We are calling on Amnesty International and UNHCR to take up these cases and investigate human rights abuses in Scotland and the rest of the UK. We are also calling on Scottish politicians to raise these cases and speak out on a detention system that is more about systematic psychological abuse and less about immigration control. We believe these cases are only the tip of the iceberg.

See also: [http://www.closedungavelnow.com/names\\_not\\_numbers.htm](http://www.closedungavelnow.com/names_not_numbers.htm)

## **2. THE CASES BELOW HIGHLIGHT HOW DETAINEES:**

- Are being held indefinitely for up to two years and longer;
- suffer the psychological abuse of not knowing when they have been released or exactly why they are there
- have lost contact with solicitors or have concerns about their legal representation or find it impossible to pursue their claims from inside the detention system or are deserving of judicial review;
- are being dumped in prison after becoming suicidal, depressed or alerting the media to human rights abuses inside.
- are being moved around the country by the Home Office when their cases come to light
- are being held in contravention of the European convention on human rights

Dungavel is creating a catalogue of potential suicides and its answer is to dump them in prison after an interminable length of detention.

### **ANDRE ALIEV (29)**

#### **VASSEL GABBES (n/k)**

Andre is a Russian Asylum Seeker. He was detained since January 2003 – almost 19 months – In early August 2004, he was taken to Greenock Prison from Dungavel after becoming depressed. He sewed up his lips and went on hunger strike in protest at his imprisonment and length of detention. His case, and that of his fellow hunger striker in Greenock Prison, **Vassel Gabbes**, a Palestinian man, came to light on 26<sup>th</sup> August. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 he was transferred to Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre in Middlesex. The whereabouts of Gabbes is unknown. Colnbrook Removal Centre opened on August 30th and is modeled on a 'High security' Category B criminal prison with wings running into a central area. Each cell is designed to hold two detainees. There is a toilet built into the cell which is only half partitioned and does not have a door, not affording detainee proper privacy. The capacity is believed to be 326 persons.

Positive Action in Housing is calling on supporters to please arrange to contact and visit Andre Aliev at: B Wing, Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre, Colnbrook Bypass Longford, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 0HB Tel: 020 8607 5200

**JOHN OGUCHUCKWU (27)**  
**MUSTAFA MOHAMMED (20)**  
**A N OTHER**

In Greenock there are currently three asylum seekers, John Oguchuckwu, Mohammed Mustafa and A N Other.

John Oguchuckwu is 27 years old. He is a student priest from Nigeria. He was detained in Dungavel Removal Centre for 8 months. After the suicide of **Tung Wang**, a 22 year old Vietnamese man, in July, John was sent to Greenock Prison from Dungavel after alerting the press to the suicide. John also became depressed. In Greenock, John was told he was being kept on suicide watch. However, he is now in a shared cell on A Wing with other convicted prisoners. John is seeking asylum. He has never committed any crime other than to flee persecution from his own country.

John says of his experience in Greenock:

*“I came from Nigeria to save my life. I’ve never committed a crime because that is not my nature.*

*“The other prisoners keep asking me what I have done. I say I haven’t done anything. They ask me “how long are you serving?” and I say “I don’t know, I did not commit any crime, I don’t know for how long I am in here”. They are annoyed for me to be in prison.”*

Through the Dungavel Bail Fund, led by Actor/Director Peter Mullan, we are trying to get John released. Bail money has been collected for John and a bail hearing is expected to take place in the week beginning September 6th. John’s case has won many high profile supporters in the past week alone, including poets, actors, members of the film industry and campaigners.

John shares his cell on A Wing with a Palestinian man, **Mustafa Mohammed**, whom he has befriended. Mustafa was detained for six months, then sent to Greenock where he has been for five months. He is only 20 years old. He speaks little English and has asked John to help him get a lawyer. Mustafa is very confused and upset, according to John. He speaks only Arabic. Mustafa does not have contact with a lawyer.

**AVEN HUNG, (31)**

Aven Hung is a Chinese asylum seeker, he has been detained 25 months, in Dungavel Removal Centre, where he currently is now. What is he doing in there when China will not even accept returning asylum seekers.

**MARIA RAMANOVA (56)**

Maria is a russian asylum seeker. She was detained 20 months before released from Dungavel in January 2004.

**TUNG WANG (23)**

Tung Wang was a Vietnamese asylum seeker. He has been detained for 12 months and simply gave up hope of ever being released when he committed suicide by hanging himself inside a toilet at Dungavel Removal Centre in July 2004.

**JOHN RAZEK KHALID (34)**



John Razek Khalid, a Christian Iraqi, was detained for two years and made several attempts at self harm. He was bailed in July 2004.

**SARAH RICHARDS (n/k)**

Sarah Jane Richards, South African, detained in Dungavel, then taken to Cornton Vale Prison in August 2004 after she spoke to the press about the suicide of Tung Wang in July.

For a complete list of all identified cases, see:

[http://www.closedungavelnow.com/names\\_not\\_numbers.htm](http://www.closedungavelnow.com/names_not_numbers.htm)

### 3. MAIN ISSUES

#### ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE NOT CRIMINALS

None of the men or woman held in prison have been charged with any crime or sent to prison by the order of a Scottish court. They Should Not Be In A Prison.

#### DETENTION V. PRISON:

The British Home Office treats Greenock and Cornton Vale Prisons as just an extension of Dungavel immigration Removal Centre, which makes a mockery of their argument that Dungavel is not a prison.

#### NO SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY:

Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre has in the past segregated asylum seekers at risk of suicide into dedicated 'Suicide Watch' rooms at Dungavel. Why are these rooms not being used? Because they are full up or the authorities cannot cope with the repercussions of indefinite detention and the possibility of another suicide. (Tung Wang a Vietnamese refugee took his own life at the centre last month). These men have been clearly psychologically damaged by the process of indefinite detention. They need psychiatric help.

#### PR STRATEGY:

The Immigration Service does not want another suicide to draw attention to the fundamental abuse of human rights at Dungavel. They do not want the embarrassment of people finding out that refugees are being 'detained' for months and years inside the detention system.

#### LONG TERM DETENTION CREATES A SUICIDE CULTURE:

The system of detention is creating people who become suicidal.

*"The experience of immigration detention has difficulties beyond just deprivation of liberty. It is the uncertainty that most undermines the spirit: they do not know how long they might be detained; they do not know, and have reason to fear, the outcome. "*

The system of indefinite detention is creating a suicide culture, which is resulting in people taking or attempting to take their own lives. Why are asylum seekers being detained indefinitely to the point of becoming suicidal?

The Home Office claim that asylum seekers are held in detention for only a few days is FALSE. These cases highlight the extent to which innocent people claiming asylum in the UK are left to rot in a detention system for months on end.

ZERO STATUS AND INVISIBLE:

The cases of asylum seekers imprisoned in Greenock and Cornton Vale show how powerless the individual is within the detention system. They have no family and have been ripped out of the communities where they settled before being institutionalised and criminalised by the detention system. The system is neither accountable nor transparent nor open to public scrutiny. It is them against the system.

**4. URGENT CALL FOR ACTION**

**On this third anniversary of Dungavel Removal Centre, we are make an urgent call for action:**

**TO ALL SCOTTISH MPS/MSPS AND MEPS:**

It is sheer hypocrisy for us to condemn human rights in Iraq or Afghanistan when here in Scotland we have a detention system which carries out identical human rights abuses, and is further compounded by the deafening silence emanating from the Scottish Executive.

The detention system specialises in psychological abuse and indefinite detention of innocent people. We are calling on the major human rights agencies to investigate and flag up these cases and level pressure on the UK to stop indefinite detention and imprisonment of innocent people.

Why are human rights abuses allowed to be carried out on Scottish soil?

**TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND THE UNITED NATION HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES:**

Britain has moved as far as is possible from having a refugee policy. We are calling on amnesty and the unhcr to investigate human rights abuses in the detention system operating in Scotland and other parts of the UK.

R Qureshi  
Positive Action in Housing  
2 September 2004