



NUJ submission on immigration detention to the Home Affairs Select Committee

April 2018

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is the voice for journalism and journalists in the UK and Ireland. It was founded in 1907 and has more than 30,000 members. The NUJ represents people working across the media – as staff, casuals and freelancers at home and abroad. NUJ members work in broadcasting, newspapers, news agencies, magazines, books, public relations, photography, videography and new media.

The NUJ stands up for journalists and journalism and is committed to the protection of the right to freedom of expression. The union fights to defend the right of journalists to operate in the public interest, and to do so without interference from government or vested interests of any type. Members are required to uphold the NUJ ethical code of conduct, which is a cornerstone of the union's rule book.

A key tenet of the union's ethical code is principle 1 which states that members shall: "at all times uphold and defend the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed."

Immigration detention – the right to report

The NUJ's delegate meeting is the union's sovereign decision making body. At our conference last week on Sunday 22 April, the union agreed to step up its campaigning efforts to call for journalists to have the right to report on and gain access to immigration detention centres.

The conference motion noted that Callum Tulley and others involved in the BBC Panorama programme broadcast on 4 September 2017 had exposed the abuse of people detained in the Brooke House immigration detention centre near Gatwick and run by G4S.

The BBC has reported:

"Callum Tulley was so shocked by the chaos, violence and abuse he saw as a detainee custody officer in an immigration removal centre, he decided to become a whistleblower.

"Putting on hidden cameras for a BBC Panorama investigation, the 21-year-old

exposes a toxic, brutal and failing environment, where self-harm and drug abuse are commonplace.

"Ten staff and former staff have been suspended as a result of his allegations."ⁱ

Panorama's coverage was made possible by the use of subterfuge and a hidden camera – this method was utilised because journalists are not normally admitted into immigration detention centres in the UK.

Delegates at the NUJ conference agreed that state-funded institutions, whether publicly or privately run, should be subject to scrutiny by the public and that journalists should be granted physical access to detention centres with the right to talk confidentially and unhindered to detainees.

This select committee inquiry about immigration detention was prompted by these media reports about the running of Brook House. As a consequence we wish to highlight the valuable role of journalists in reporting on these issues and we would urge MPs on the committee to support the NUJ's call for journalists to gain access.

This is a situation that already exists in other countries. For example, the right of journalists in France to have access to immigration detention centres has recently been recognised by the French government.

ⁱ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/q4s_brook_house_immigration_removal_centre_undercover