

## RABBIS SPEAK OUT AFTER VISIT TO DETENTION CENTRE: 'THE IMMORAL PRACTICE OF INDEFINITE DETENTION MUST END NOW'

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Following a meeting with René Cassin, Detention Action and Freed Voices, the rabbinical social justice group Tzelem were inspired to visit Harmondsworth Detention Centre just out of London to see the human impact of the policy of indefinite detention.

By seeing conditions first-hand, the Rabbis were able to understand fully the suffering wrought by this policy and the serious cost on the physical and mental wellbeing of those in detention detainees.

Rabbi Zvi Solomons spoke to Mark who had been in limbo for 7 months whilst his immigration status was being decided, fighting a case that had lasted "over a decade". Harmondsworth IRC is the largest detention centre in the whole of Europe. Mark feels like "his life is being wasted", prevented from achieving liberty by a decision-making process that Rabbi Solomons described as ["unfair and arbitrary, and hide-bound by bureaucracy."](#)

The visit connects to a larger campaign with the aim of ending the policy of [indefinite detention](#). The visit coincided with Pesach, the Jewish festival celebrating the liberation of the Jewish people in Egypt. Rabbi Lea Mühlstein declared in reference to indefinite detention that "what we truly must fight for at Pesach is for freedom for the most vulnerable."

Attending the detention centre had an emotional effect on those in the rabbinical group, with Rabbi Solomons "almost in tears". Rabbi Alexandra Wright describes her [encounter with Deepal](#), a student who came to study business management at a college that took his fees and closed soon after: "the promise of this young man's life is darkened by unjust imprisonment and a daily diet of uncertainty about his future."

[Pesach sermons](#) about the plight of asylum seekers in the UK link ancient thought and morality to an immediate problem that must be acted upon here and now. Jerome Phelps of Detention Action states that change can only occur if "the leaders of our communities come out and demand an end to this black hole at the heart of British justice".

There is a growing movement from all across civil society proclaiming that it is time for a time limit on detention. Working together with [Tzelem](#) we hope to continue to raise awareness of this issue and end this unjust practice.