

Immigration Detention: The Migration of a Policy and Its Human Impact



Edited by Amy Nethery and Stephanie J. Silverman

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This collection comprises sixteen short country surveys, which together provide a detailed panorama of immigration detention across the contemporary world. An important novelty is the inclusion of chapters on countries in Asia, as well as South Africa and Israel, rather than just the more familiar scholarship on detention from European and North American systems. The book therefore provides insights into how the detention paradigm has multiplied beyond its traditional heartlands. Each chapter represents an expert author's view of the key issues arising in his or her country. The format is thus non-standard, as often happens with collections involving a wide range of authors. The scholars' disciplines and their methods also range across law, anthropology, politics, and refugee studies. Most of the country reviews touch upon the law, history, statistics, and some of the political context of detention. It is not, however, possible to use the volume to systematically compare across countries, because the chapters are not structured in this way. This limitation is both frustrating and intriguing, because the contributors give greater emphasis to aspects that might be ignored entirely if the editors had asked them to conform to a "template" style of chapter. Certainly the editors' introduction does not seek to argue that there is a common thread throughout the volume, save for an emphasis on detention of asylum-seekers rather than other categories of migrant.

The tone of writing is generally critical of the growth of immigration detention and finds little support for governmental justifications for the practice. Each author finds flaws in his or her own system, but it is plain from reading across the volume that the legal safeguards, duration, and conditions of detention vary enormously, from a relatively "benign" system like that of France (maximum forty-five days' detention) set against "hostile" systems like Australia's (no legal limit on detention, with many years not uncommon). Conditions in some Asian countries emerge as being particularly bad, with Malaysian, Indonesian, and Australian facilities (including those controlled on Papua New Guinea) appearing very harsh, dangerous, and destructive to immigrants' health and welfare.

Common themes include the way that detention facilities and indeterminate detention have been employed by some governments as a kind of "reserve army" of enforcement to meet new challenges. Thus in the United Kingdom, initially failed asylum-seekers were targeted, then fresh asylum

claimants were detained under fast-track arrangements, and, more recently, foreign criminals facing deportation have comprised a major element of the detention estate. The United States deploys the world's largest detention estate of around 34,000 spaces to target similar groups, particularly foreign prisoners. Similarly, the use of private contractors has encouraged a "detention" lobby to emerge and created pressure to fill beds that have been contracted for. Another theme is the way that boat arrivals have triggered the emergence of harsh detention regimes across widely different locations including Australia, Cyprus, Malta, Guantánamo Bay (the U.S. territory in Cuba), and Indonesia. Governments have also off-shored processing and refused to accept such persons onto the mainland, even if they are recognized as refugees. These measures are unapologetically used as a deterrent to stop the flow of migrants.

A more positive model emerges from the French chapter, which discusses the inside of a detention centre based on field-work. It demonstrates how strong political resistance to the use of detention forced the government to allow substantial independent oversight. Thus, remarkably, NGOs and lawyers are based in the centres themselves and have a high degree of access to both detainees and officials to ensure that legal standards are maintained. They are also mandated to produce annual reports, which can be highly critical of the centres. Thus in France, the usually closed alienated world of the detention centre is laid bare in ways that are scarcely imaginable in most countries.

Many of the chapters from European nations show how the EU Returns Directive has been implemented in national detention law and the variable change that this has encouraged. Some has been positive, with its requirement that detention be based upon a risk of absconding. Other nations have used the directive to increase the maximum period of detention to eighteen months. However, the EU Reception Conditions Directive, which regulates asylum-seekers (as opposed to failed asylum-seekers slated for removal), did not provide clear guidance until recast in 2013. Thus European states were rather freer to devise their own detention policies for this group, including the harsh regimes in Malta, Greece, and Cyprus. These "gateway" states were reluctant to accept asylum-seekers at all. Turkey, although not an EU member, has been strongly criticized by the Council of Europe for its treatment of asylum-seekers transiting towards Europe. The current migrant influx from Syria increases the challenges

facing Turkey in managing migrants without infringing liberty rights. With the EU now set to fund Turkish “take-back” and asylum-processing systems, the issue of detention in Turkey will become a European responsibility.

In summary, the collection provides a rich source of data on immigration detention and gives fascinating insights into “dark corners” of the global detention estate. The effect would have been more powerful if there had been a stronger thematic chapter attempting to develop common themes. This also might have been helpful in trying to explain the

underlying causes for the growth of detention (and its continued abeyance in some countries), which scholarship has not fully addressed. There is an urgent need to understand the political processes that created the system with a view to developing strategies on how to reverse these inhumane and arbitrary practices.

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Refugees and the Meaning of Home: Cypriot Narratives of Loss, Longing and Daily Life in London



Helen Taylor

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In the past couple of decades, a large body of literature has developed in the social sciences to engage with questions of home and belonging in the context of displacement. A significant part of this work has been committed to challenging established sedentarist perspectives that tend to naturalize the attachment of refugees to their homes left behind. Sedentarism is underpinned by nationalist logics that peoples and cultures belong to clearly defined geographical spaces contained within national borders. Within this framework, repatriation and the return of refugees to their homes and houses are privileged as solutions to displacement. Helen Taylor’s book makes an insightful contribution to these debates through the study of Cypriot refugee narratives of loss, longing, and daily life in London. Taking a “middle ground” approach, Taylor shows very effectively how on the one hand “home” is socially and culturally constructed, and the way it is experienced varies among groups of refugees and individuals. On the other hand, she is cautious not to undermine the role sedentarist meanings of home play in refugees’ pleas for rights and/or return.

Inter- and intra-communal violence in Cyprus in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in mass displacement of mainly Turkish Cypriots from villages, towns, and city districts. In 1974 a Greek-backed coup was followed by a Turkish military operation that resulted in the separation of the island into two parts. The war and the division produced further mass displacement of about 170,000–200,000 Greek Cypriots and 40,000–50,000 Turkish Cypriots. Although there are a large number of studies concerned with the displaced within Cyprus, less attention has been given to those who left the island as a result of their displacement. This book closes this gap by focusing on Greek and Turkish Cypriots

who fled to Britain during and after the violent events. Britain was an obvious choice for many of the displaced, as some had already established family networks there or held British passports after having worked for the colonial administration before Cyprus’s independence in 1960. Although Britain never legally recognized these Cypriots as refugees, Taylor uses the term refugee in a broad definition, not least because it is widely used by her research participants to self-identify.

The book is based on field-work research conducted between 2004 and 2005. This was a significant historical period, as the checkpoints in Cyprus opened in 2003, allowing displaced Cypriots to visit their homes for the first time in almost thirty years. The field-work included participant observation in political and cultural events in London as well as narrative research with twenty-two Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The refugee narratives are a major strength of the book. They allow individual stories and “voices” to emerge and illustrate the overall theme of the work; that home and home-making are multi-layered and complex processes embedded within both broader political and socio-historical processes as well as individual life trajectories and cycles. Indeed, some of the protagonists of the study still maintain a strong connection with the home left behind and struggle to see themselves as fully emplaced in Britain. Others express longing for a life before displacement, but they also acknowledge that they have managed to create a home away from Cyprus. For some of those who went to visit their homes after 2003, the journey consolidated their feelings of loss and displacement and the sense of their town or village as the main site of belonging. For others, visiting long-lost homes destabilized the ways in which such places