

"We will end the detention of children for immigration purposes," says the new coalition government (Asylum children will be kept out of 'distressing' detention centres, 14 May). But what about their mothers?

Paediatricians and psychologists have testified to the mental and physical harm caused to children by detention. But separating them from their mother or primary carer is even worse; it may cause "insecurity, depression and anxiety" which lasts throughout life.

The recent six-week hunger strike by women in Yarl's Wood removal centre brought to public attention that many women detained inside are mothers whose children were taken by social services or other family members. Some face deportation and permanent separation, often after years of raising a family in the UK.

One mother tries to shield her seven-year-old daughter from the painful truth by telling her that she's "working away from home". She and many others speak constantly of their anguish at being unable to care for their children, many of whom may already be traumatised by violence in their home country, and experience depression, bed-wetting and fear.

An estimated 1.5 million youngsters suffer abuse each year in the United Kingdom, many of them while in care. This horrifying reality must not be added to by separating yet more children from the mothers who love them and whom they love. Ending the detention of children has to mean ending the detention of families.

**Maria Ziwa, All African Women's Group**  
**Cristel Amiss, Black Women's Rape Action Project**  
**Oliver James, Clinical child psychologist**  
**Niki Adams, Legal Action for Women**  
**Frances Swaine, Leigh Day and Co**  
**Professor Sheila Kitzinger**  
**John McDonnell, MP**  
**Dr Jonathan Fluxman**  
**Kristina Brandemo, Women Against Rape**  
**Clare Sambrook, End Child Detention Now**  
**Rev Paul Nicolson, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust**

**Additional; signatures from Public Meeting: *Women's Hunger Strike – Louder than Words*, Tuesday 29 June, House of Commons**

Paul Jeffcoate, Fisher Meredith Solicitors  
Anna T, Global Women's Strike  
Solveig Francis, International Women Count Network  
Jim Curran, Irish Civil Rights Association  
Emma Jones, Leigh Day & Co. Solicitors  
Dr Frank Arnold, Medical Justice  
Jeremy Corbyn, MP  
Lily Barson, No Borders, London  
Estelle Hart, NUS & two others  
Elly Badcock, NUS Women's Committee (Bisexual Rep.)  
Natalie Hepperstall, NUS Women's Committee (Women with Caring Responsibilities Rep.)  
Cherie Lyster, NUS Women's Committee & two others  
Sophia James, NUS National Equalities Council  
Portia Roelofs, Oxford University Student Union Women's Campaign  
Michael Kalmanovitz, Payday Men's Network  
Khalid Omar, S.O.A.S

Kim Sparrow, Single Mother's Self Defence  
Henry Wood, Sutovic & Hartigan solicitors  
Deesha Chandra, The Testimony project  
Dr Felicity de Zulueta, Traumatic Stress Service Clinic  
Didi Rossi, Wages Due Lesbians  
Claire Glasman. Winvisible, women with visible & invisible disabilities  
Vinjiswa Ngaobongwana, Women Radio Group  
and 45 individuals