



PRESS RELEASE: Global Detention Project launches as independent association

29 October 2014

The Global Detention Project (GDP) announces today that it has re-launched as an independent non-profit research centre after being based for eight years at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

Located in Geneva, the GDP provides policy-makers, civil society groups, and human rights institutions with carefully researched data and analyses about immigration detention regimes, with a particular focus on the impact these policies have on the health, human rights, and well-being of undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

Immigration detention has become a critically important concern in the international human rights community as a growing number of countries around the globe have come to rely on this practice in response to migration pressures.

The new U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jordanian Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Husseini, used his inaugural speech this past September to highlight problems associated with immigration detention, saying: "I must emphasise that the detention of asylum seekers and migrants should only be applied as a last resort, in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest possible duration and according to procedural safeguards." He added that the "tendency to promote law enforcement and security paradigms at the expense of human rights frameworks dehumanises irregular migrants, enabling a climate of violence against them and further depriving them of the full protection of the law."

Originally founded in 2006 as a research project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the GDP has grown into one of the world's leading sources of information and analysis on immigration-related detention.

Recognition of the GDP's standing as an important resource for academics, the international community, and civil society organizations helped motivate the Graduate Institute and the GDP's leadership to work together to re-launch the project as an independent organization.

The rebooted GDP was formally constituted as an association under Swiss law in May 2014 and began operating as a wholly independent institution at the end of September. Oversight is provided by a diverse group of individuals from academia, international organizations, the advocacy community, and private business.

"During the past eight years, the Graduate Institute has provided a rich and nurturing environment for the innovative concepts of the various students who have been involved in creating the Global Detention Project," said Dr. Michael Flynn, the GDP's founder and Executive Director. "As we embark on this new phase, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with Graduate Institute students and faculty to produce high-level scholarship on this issue of critical importance to the international community today."

Said Prof. Elizabeth Prügl, a professor of political science and the former Deputy Director of the Graduate Institute: “The GDP takes on a much-ignored human rights issue in a world characterised by migration and flows but ruled by states and their borders. It is a dynamic and forward-looking project pushing the frontiers of global governance.”

Among the GDP’s upcoming initiatives is the release in early 2015 of a new “Global Immigration Detention Database,” which will provide detailed information about detention practices in every country where this form of immigration control exists. The database will include carefully developed data on detention centres and immigration laws with indicators related to institutional oversight of detention, adherence to international standards, and efforts to reform laws and policies, including the adoption of “alternatives to detention” and ending the detention of children.

Additionally, several new GDP publications scheduled for release in coming months will look at immigration detention in Gulf States, the international normative framework for detention, and challenges investigating the detention of children.

The GDP’s Executive Committee members, who serve in their individual capacities, are:

Meghna Abraham (Amnesty International), *President*
George Kourous (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), *Vice President*
Yves Klein (Monfrini Crettol & Partners), *Secretary*
Pierre Simon (Processus Immobilier), *Treasurer*
Roberta Cecchetti (Save the Children)
Seta Hadesian (Middle Eastern Council of Churches)
Severine Jacomy Vite (UNICEF)
Luke McCallin (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
Fernand Melgar (Filmmaker/Climage.ch)
Alejandro Nadal (El Colegio de México)
Robert Norris (Federation of American Scientists)
Michaela Told (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies)

The GDP also counts on advice and assistance from a group of researchers and academics active in its field, who act as its Academic Advisory Council. Council members are:

Mary Bosworth (Oxford University)
François Crépeau (McGill University)
Jeff Crisp (Refugees International)
Niels Frenzen (University of Southern California)
Elsbeth Guild (Radboud University)
Jussi Hanhimäki (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies)
Donald Kerwin (Center for Migration Studies)
Daniel Wilsher (City University London).

The GDP’s work has been supported by a number of philanthropic organisations, including the Oak Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, Zennström Philanthropies, and the Swiss Network for International Studies.

For more information or to provide a donation, contact:

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