



# GLOBAL DETENTION PROJECT

Annual Report  
April 2022





The Global Detention Project is a non-profit organisation based in Geneva that promotes the human rights of people who have been detained for reasons related to their non-citizen status.

Our mission is:

- To **promote the human rights** of detained migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers
- To **ensure transparency** in the treatment of immigration detainees
- To **reinforce advocacy** aimed at reforming detention systems
- To **nurture policy-relevant scholarship** on the causes and consequences of migration control policies

*Front cover images: Van, Turkey, 30 September 2021: Afghan nationals at the Kurubas Detention Centre in Van (Credit Image: © Alba Cambeiro/ SOPA Images via ZUMA Press Wire).*

*The departure of U.S. and other foreign troops from Afghanistan and subsequent Taliban take over in mid-2021 spurred a large exodus from the country. To deter an influx of refugees, Turkey built a concrete wall along its border with Iran and stepped up detention and pushback operations. In September, the Global Detention Project published a "Situation Report" detailing how the humanitarian situation had spurred Turkey and many other countries to implement measures that could negatively impact refugees and summarising recommendations from human rights bodies.*

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# 1. Letter from the Executive Director and President

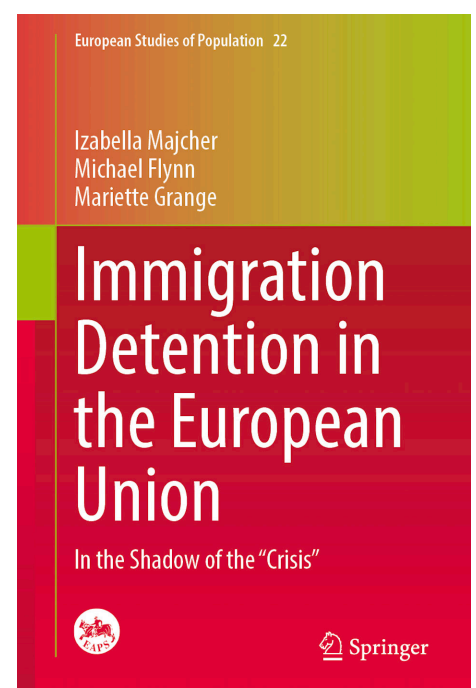
When we began drafting this Annual Report, Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine had already driven millions of people into neighbouring countries, spurring the largest refugee emergency in Europe since World War II. As we looked back on 2021—a year during which the COVID-19 pandemic, cruel border control practices, and burgeoning conflicts from Yemen to Myanmar to Afghanistan all had devastating impacts on migrants and refugees—it was hard to imagine that yet another calamity awaited around the corner that would upend our collective sense of security and well-being, and create dramatic new challenges in our efforts to promote the human rights of detained non-citizens. But just as the COVID-19 pandemic revealed important lessons about the harm caused by migration-related detention, so too has the war in Ukraine placed a spotlight on a darker side of our humanitarianism.

**Europe's dramatically different responses to the 2015 Syrian and the 2022 Ukrainian refugee exoduses are a sober reminder of the challenges we face overcoming entrenched racism and ensuring respect for the human rights of all refugees and migrants.**

It was not so long ago that Europe faced another critical refugee challenge, the 2015 “crisis” spurred by the conflict in Syria. However, the starkly different responses we have witnessed thus far to the 2015 Syrian refugee exodus and the 2022 Ukrainian one provides a sobering lesson. The case of Hungary is particularly telling: While Prime Minister Victor Orbán has said that every refugee coming from Ukraine will be “welcomed by friends in Hungary,” he has continued to denigrate non-EU refugees, arguing on national TV that one doesn’t have to be a “rocket scientist” to see the difference between “masses arriving from Muslim regions” and Ukrainian refugees. Hungary has refused to admit refugees from non-EU countries since 2015 and its detention practices have been ruled illegal by the European Court of Justice.

But Hungary has not been alone in its harsh response to refugees who come from countries in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia. In our book *Immigration Detention in the European Union: In the Shadow of the “Crisis”* (Springer 2020), we detail the evolution of the detention systems of all EU Members States before, during, and after the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis. Among our key findings: During the years leading up to 2015, migration-related detention had largely plateaued across the EU, but the “crisis” spurred increases in detention across the entire region, which largely remain in place today. Fuelling these increases was anti-migrant rhetoric that spread from Brussels across the continent, abetted by EU-wide migration directives that allowed for lengthy detention periods.

Importantly, while the EU argued in 2015 that all arriving refugees could be detained for up to 18 months, there are no such pronouncements from Brussels today. This is a welcome change, but one which raises questions about Europe’s double standards in the treatment of refugees.





Ukrainian refugees cross into Romania, February 2022 © Independent Photo Agency/Alamy Live News

As you will read in this Annual Report, the GDP has sought to engage the numerous challenges of the past year proactively, effectively, and in partnership with allies and advocates at all levels, from local advocacy groups to networks spread across the international community. **A common thread that ties our work together over the past year is our effort to ensure that global tools have local impact.**

We have sought to achieve this in part by bolstering our staff with seasoned advocates—including a former detainee and award-winning human-rights defender **Abdul Aziz Muhamat** and an experienced refugee advocate **Rachael Reilly**, both of whom have played important roles during 2021 engaging human rights agencies and tying our work more closely to on-the-ground needs and realities.

Among our notable achievements, which you will read about in this report:

- **The launching of a new interactive webinar series introducing local activists to international human rights tools that can assist them in preventing arbitrary detention;**
- **Producing the world's only comprehensive survey of national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to detained migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees;**
- **Developing new partnerships with NGO networks and UN agencies, including notably the World Health Organisation, which invited the GDP to produce a chapter on detention for its first ever global report on health and migration and an evidence review of health indicators in detention;**
- **Working closely with civil society partners from every region of the world to develop multilevel responses—targeting local, regional, and international mechanisms—to bring attention to human rights violations faced by detained migrants and asylum seekers;**
- **Mobilizing key actors in both regional and UN human rights systems to directly address urgent situations, including notably the plight of migrants and refugees trapped in the border regions between Belarus and neighbouring EU countries; and the deportation of refugees from abysmal detention centres in Egypt to life-threatening situations in Eritrea.**

We have achieved all of this—and much more—with our small but remarkably effective team and in the face of an ever more-complicated funding environment. Today, more than ever, there are crucial human rights challenges facing migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees that require attention and resources. The GDP's work promoting the human rights of detainees remains as relevant as ever, and our ability to make an impact has grown in the face of each new challenge and calamity.

**Michael Flynn**  
Executive Director

**Roberta Cecchetti**  
President

## 2. The GDP Index: Key Numbers from 2021

Working as a research and advocacy fellow at the Global Detention Project helped me to connect my experiences as a former detainee to global refugee and migrant rights advocacy. It was also a good experience in terms of learning, researching, and understanding databases and how they can communicate problems about immigration detention. This kind of experience is dependent on the working environment, on having resourceful colleagues who are passionate about bringing refugee and migrant rights to the forefront.

*Abdul Aziz Muhamat (GDP Research & Advocacy Fellow, Former Detainee on Manus Island, 2019 Martin Ennals Human Rights Defender Award Laureate)*

<b>8,052</b>	New data entries in the GDP's Global Immigration Detention Database
<b>4,672</b>	New data entries by GDP partners
<b>186</b>	Countries with new data entered during year
<b>81</b>	Countries updated on the COVID-19 Detention Platform (All countries covered since 2021 except the Vatican)
<b>100</b>	Total number of new COVID-19 updates ( <u>480</u> in total between March 2020 and April 2022)
<b>5</b>	Comprehensive country studies
<b>20</b>	Submissions & appeals to international human rights monitoring bodies
<b>8</b>	Number of targeted monitoring bodies
<b>258,484</b>	Website users (2020: <u>197,193</u> )
<b>112</b>	Number of media stories that cited the GDP (partial estimate)
<b>181</b>	Number of research publications that cited the GDP (partial estimate)
<b>6</b>	Civil society partners on the Global Immigration Detention Observatory project
<b>6</b>	Interns
<b>1</b>	Refugee Fellow

**Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Malaysia, United States**

Top five visited country pages on the GDP website

**Kuala Lumpur, Dubai, London, New York, Mexico City**

Top five cities of GDP website users

**English, Spanish, Italian, French, German**

Top five registered languages of GDP website users

### 3. Country Studies: Developing Comprehensive Information About Global Hotspots



I have worked with the GDP for several years to document the terrible situation that migrants and asylum seekers face in Mexico's immigration detention system and to explore angles for advocating key reforms, like ending the detention of children. Only by persistently unearthing and publicizing this kind of information can we hope to have better informed societies that embrace the human rights of all migrants.

*Salva Lacruz (El Rebozo/Fray Matias)*



The GDP continued producing in-depth national studies, focusing on key countries where detention is an important immigration function and critical reforms are needed. We produced studies on five countries—Canada, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa, and Turkey—the selection of which reflects our efforts to cover a cross-section of detention contexts, including major destination countries, transit states, and developing detention systems.

The number of comprehensive country profiles we produce annually has fallen steadily in recent years (in 2020, we produced 14), which reflects the GDP's ongoing shift towards a more partnership-oriented model. Instead of focusing most of our time on comprehensively studying as many countries as possible each year, our main priority today—which is reflected throughout this Annual Report—is to engage with partners in activities that directly address national reform efforts and to ensure that local realities impact global processes ... and vice versa. This shift has also been enabled by the fact that the GDP—since its earliest days as an academic project, more than a decade ago—has methodically developed a deep reservoir of data and resources on the detention systems of nearly all major migrant detaining countries in the world. As a result, we now have firm baselines of evidence to work with on most countries of concern, which enables us to focus on ensuring that their information and data is up to date rather than producing lengthy new studies.



**"It was a pleasure to work with the GDP team on their Canada report. Their high-impact, readable, and policy-relevant country profiles are an invaluable resource for the research, advocacy, and policymaking communities interested in detention worldwide."**

*Stephanie Silverman (Centre for Migration Studies, York University, Toronto)*

*Top photo: Protestors in Toronto call for international help for Afghans, September 2021, © Paul McKinnon / Alamy Stock Photo*

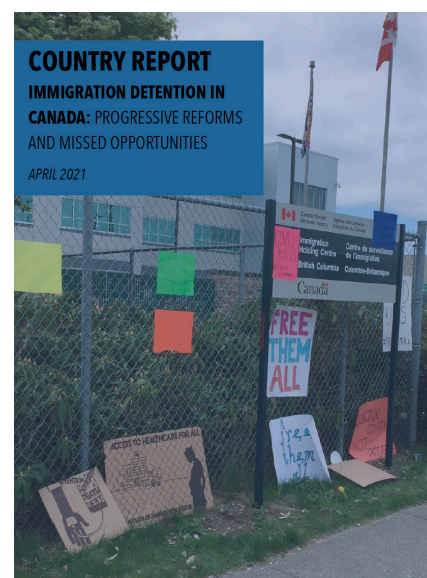
Importantly, the GDP has long-standing partnerships in all the countries about which we published studies during 2021. Two of these partners—the International Refugee Rights Association (Turkey) and Lawyers for Human Rights (South Africa)—are currently engaged with us in data-based advocacy initiatives as part of our Global Immigration Detention Observatory (see Chapter 4, below). Each of the five profiles we produced, which average roughly 50 pages and cover all aspects of a country's detention system, has emerged from a series of rich interactions with a broad range of partners who are deeply involved in promoting human rights-related reforms in their countries. The result is invariably a cutting-edge report that offers insights into opportunities to promote reforms, highlights gaps in human rights protections, and serves as a comprehensive, meticulously developed account of laws and policies that engage multiple academic disciplines and policy arenas.

## IN FOCUS

### CANADA, MEXICO, SOUTH AFRICA, TURKEY, MOROCCO

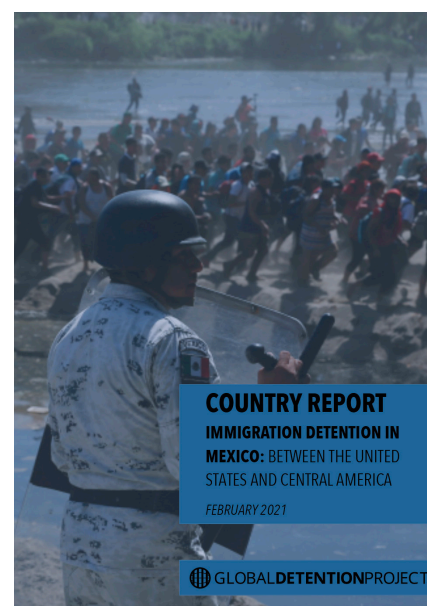
#### CANADA: Progressive Reforms and Missed Opportunities

Canada has adopted both progressive refugee policies and restrictive border control measures, including agreeing to accept more refugees than other countries while at the same time adopting policies that restrict asylum eligibility. Canada's immigration detention system has also continued to attract criticism, particularly because of its persistent use of prisons for immigration purposes, the carceral environments of its dedicated immigration detention centres, and its failure to adopt a maximum time limit for immigration detention, leaving some detainees facing indefinite detention. The country also continues to have important gaps in transparency and detention monitoring. It has failed to adopt the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and there is no publicly available system in place to investigate which prisons are being used for immigration detention.



#### MEXICO: Between the United States and Central America

Mexico has one of the largest immigration detention systems in the world, employing several dozen detention centres that detain tens of thousands of people every year. Intense pressure from the United States and continuing migration from turmoil-wracked Central America have helped drive up detention numbers, which reach some 200,000 annually. The COVID-19 pandemic further stressed the country's migration response. It temporarily released most detainees after the onset of the pandemic even as the United States continued deporting both Mexican and third-country nationals to Mexico. In late 2020, the country adopted reforms to its migration law prohibiting the detention of all children, though many observers expressed scepticism over whether it would be respected.



## **SOUTH AFRICA: Stricter Control of Administrative Detention, Increasing Criminal Enforcement of Migration**

An important destination for migrants and refugees from Africa and Asia, South Africa frames cross border movements through the lens of national security and criminality. According to experts, the country's Border Management Act, adopted in 2020, embraces a securitisation agenda that encourages the expansion of detention, both domestically and in nearby countries. There has been a clear improvement in the Department of Homeland Affairs' efforts to adhere to key detention standards, which has been spurred by lawsuits over the government's detention powers. However, tightening judicial control appears to be spurring the use of criminal procedures to enforce migration laws.



### **COUNTRY REPORT**

**IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN  
SOUTH AFRICA: STRICTER CONTROL  
OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION,  
INCREASING CRIMINAL  
ENFORCEMENT OF MIGRATION**

JUNE 2021

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## **TURKEY: At the Crossroad Between Asia and Europe**


Turkey operates more than two dozen removal centres in addition to ad hoc detention sites at its borders, airports, and police stations. A reluctant gatekeeper for refugees and migrants seeking to enter Europe, Turkey's influential role has repeatedly been put on display, including in the wake of the Syrian refugee "crisis" in 2015, which culminated in the adoption of the controversial EU-Turkey refugee deal. More recently, after the 2021 Taliban takeover in Afghanistan spurred an exodus of Afghan refugees, Turkey constructed a 295-kilometre wall and surveillance system along its border with Iran and engaged in often violent pushbacks, detention, and deportation of refugees.

### **COUNTRY REPORT**

**IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN  
TURKEY: TRAPPED AT THE CROSSROAD  
BETWEEN ASIA AND EUROPE**

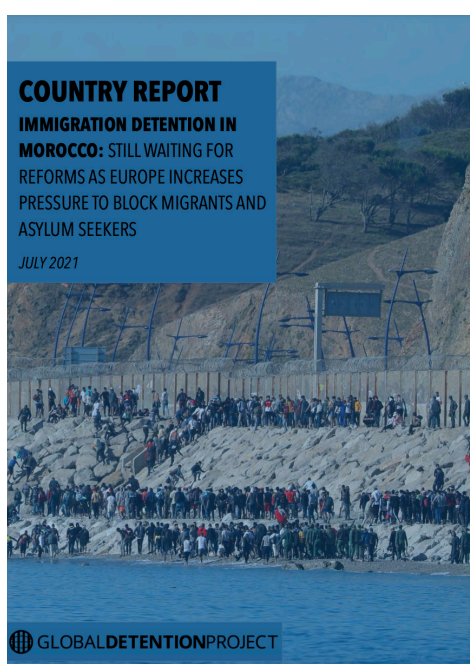
OCTOBER 2021



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## **MOROCCO: Still Waiting for Reforms as Europe Increases Pressure to Block Migrants and Asylum Seekers**

Morocco has long prided itself for defending the rights of migrants, a reputation it sought to reprise when it took a leadership role in the negotiations over the Global Compact for Migration, adopted in Marrakech in 2018. However, it has received growing criticism for its treatment of asylum seekers, who face obstacles in accessing protection procedures; for its mass forced removals of sub-Saharan migrants; and for its failure to adopt long-awaited migration and asylum legal reforms nearly a decade after the Kingdom first announced them. In the meantime, increasing pressure from Europe to block the movement of migrants and asylum seekers is encouraging the use of enforcement tactics that violate migrants' fundamental human rights.



### **COUNTRY REPORT**

**IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN  
MOROCCO: STILL WAITING FOR  
REFORMS AS EUROPE INCREASES  
PRESSURE TO BLOCK MIGRANTS AND  
ASYLUM SEEKERS**

JULY 2021

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# 4. The Global Immigration Detention Observatory: Turning Data into Advocacy

“Participating in the Observatory project has empowered us in a number of important ways. It has helped us to build accessible data, to carry out detailed research on facilities that we hadn't attempted before, and to develop a holistic view that enables us to compare centres in and outside Turkey. The GDP partnership also gave us an opportunity to conduct advocacy activities beyond legal work, to understand how different fields approach detention, and to learn about networks outside the country that can be used for promoting the human rights of migrant detainees.”

*Dilara Karaagac (International Refugee Rights Association-Turkey)*

Since launching in 2016, the GDP's online database—a custom-built application that enables researchers to document conditions of detention, the laws governing detention, adherence to human rights norms, relevant institutions, and statistics—has grown to become an important tool for a range of civil society actors monitoring detention in countries across the globe. The database forms the heart of the GDP's Global Immigration Detention Observatory, a collaborative project that engages GDP staff members, scholars and academics, human rights practitioners, students, and migrant rights advocates in a joint endeavour to build evidence that can empower advocacy efforts at both the domestic and international levels.

During 2021, more than 8,052 data entries were added to the platform (compared to 5,433 in 2020), of which 4,672 were added by our partners working in coordination with the GDP's Mario Guido. Detention data was entered on 186 countries, and 81 countries were updated on the database's COVID-19 section, the GDP's **COVID-19 Immigration Detention Platform**, which we launched in early 2020 in order to track globally how countries have responded to the pandemic in their treatment of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees (see more about the COVID platform on page 12).

With support from the **City of Geneva**, the **Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs**, and the **Oak Foundation**, we have been able to support the work of numerous NGO partners who have collaborated with us on database development and the production of related advocacy



The screenshot shows the 'GLOBAL IMMIGRATION DETENTION OBSERVATORY' dashboard. It features a navigation bar with 'Dashboard', 'Inbox', 'Centres', 'Countries', and 'Sources'. Below the navigation bar, there's a 'Default' tab. The main content area displays a table titled 'HIGHEST RECORDED NUMBERS OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION'. The table has two columns: 'Country' and 'Total number of immigration detention'. The data is as follows:

Country	Total number of immigration detention
Saudi Arabia	1,996,069
United States	182,869
Mexico	59,155
Malaysia	47,092
France	46,800
Russian Federation	42,740
Greece	31,126

Below this table, there's another section titled 'COUNTRIES THAT CRIMINALISE IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS'. It features a table with a 'Region' column. The regions listed are: Africa, Americas, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Europe, and Europe.

**“We are grateful for the opportunity to have worked with the Global Detention Project in raising issues of concern during the Lithuanian-Belarus border crisis in late 2021. GDP initiative and support during this time, which was very challenging for migrants and refugees at the EU border, was invaluable and our joint submission to the UN Committee against Torture resulted in a very strong set of recommendations for the government in managing this crisis according to international human rights standards.”**

*Mėta Adutavičiūtė (Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania)*



outputs within the scope of the Observatory project. As of 2021, the GDP had six formal partnerships with civil society organisations from a wide range of regions—including South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and northern and southern Africa—who collectively collaborate on developing evidence and advocacy outputs on more than 20 countries. The work of this current group of Observatory partners, originally slated to continue through 2021, has been extended through 2022 due to complications stemming from COVID-19 travel restrictions. A key remaining part of these collaborations is the planning and programming of advocacy visits to Geneva, where our partners will be able to interact directly with relevant UN human rights mechanisms, human rights experts, and international bodies to bring attention to detention-related concerns in their countries.

The Observatory project has also benefitted from the work of many interns, research fellows, and students, including in particular students from the NGO Clinic at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) School of Management and Law, which joined our database project in 2020. Working under the direction of Prof. Alexandra Dufresne, a member of the GDP’s Executive Committee, in 2021 the ZHAW students focused on documenting detention-related recommendations that have been issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which included more than 1,500 recommendations (in 2020, the ZHAW students focused on recommendations made by the Committee on Migrant Workers). Interns from other universities focused on updating our COVID-19 platform and developing country data.

It is important to underscore that the Observatory is more than a database; it is a shared platform that combines investigative techniques with unique documentation tools to facilitate awareness and accountability in the treatment of detainees and to support advocacy organisations in their efforts to hold authorities to account for the treatment of detainees. As part of our efforts to ensure that advocates are able to easily access data and analysis to support their own work, we launched a re-design project of the GDP website in 2020, which remained ongoing through 2021 and into 2022. Based on feedback from website users and Observatory partners, the central goal for this work has been to ensure that data is more prominent and accessible. We have sought to achieve this by re-structuring the site; amending terminology for clearer user comprehension, regardless professional or academic background; improving site navigability; and updating the visual design of the site.

## IN FOCUS

### THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 GLOBAL IMMIGRATION DETENTION PLATFORM

The launching of our COVID-19 platform in early 2020, just weeks after the onset of the pandemic, represented an ambitious effort by the GDP team to quickly and effectively re-adjust the focus of our work as travel restrictions and other measures prevented key activities, including our work with partners targeting UN human rights mechanisms. The pandemic helped reveal many important aspects of immigration detention, including that countries could easily shutter their detention facilities in order to prevent spread of disease without facing major repercussions to their societies. The futility and wastefulness of immigration detention was there for all to see. But it also revealed the cruelty inherent in some detention systems, like Australia's, where despite the patent inability to deport anyone, the country managed to ramp up—rather than diminish—the numbers of people they placed in detention.

As of this writing in early 2022, we had published more than 480 updates on the platform, covering every country on the globe (except the Vatican), reporting on measures they have adopted—or failed to adopt—to protect immigration detainees and other vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. The many policy-relevant insights that have emerged from our platform have informed a host of important global actors and received widespread attention in major press outlets and specialised media. Key lessons learned from this initiative were summarised in a June 2021 submission to the **UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants** in preparation for his report on the treatment of migrants during the pandemic. Importantly, our submission not only influenced the Special Rapporteur's report, which discussed at length COVID-19 in detention situations, it also impacted press coverage of the pandemic (see, for example, the quote from the Telegraph on page 25).

Our platform has been widely cited elsewhere, including in the Network on Migration's COVID-19 briefings and by the World Health Organisation's Migration Health Programme, which invited the GDP to produce the chapter on detention in its first ever global report on health and migration, due out in 2022, and to produce an evidence review of health indicators in detention.



*Unaccompanied migrant children are processed at the U.S Customs and Border Control immigration processing center in Donna, Texas, March 2021, © Jaime Rodriguez Sr./Homeland Security/Alamy Live News*

## IN FOCUS

### “AND SO ADVOCACY BECAME HEALING” - THE POWER (AND TRAGEDY) OF LIVED EXPERIENCE: A Q&A WITH ABDUL AZIZ MUHAMAT

In 2013, Abdul Aziz Muhamat's father put him on a flight departing Sudan when conflict threatened the family. His journey to freedom and safety, however, was cut short when the Australian navy intercepted the boat he had boarded leaving Indonesia en route to Australia and sent him to the notorious—and now-defunct—offshore detention centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. Aziz languished on Manus for nearly six years, but throughout that time he was an indefatigable advocate for those trapped in Australia's offshore detention system. Today, Aziz lives in Switzerland, where he was granted asylum after receiving Geneva's prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2019. In 2021, Aziz joined the GDP as a research and advocacy fellow, where he has applied his lived experience as a refugee and detainee to learn, critique, and enrich our efforts to develop data and evidence that can empower calls for protecting the human rights of all people ensnared in abusive migration detention systems. Executive Director Michael Flynn spoke to Aziz about his experiences, challenges he sees in making advocacy more effective, and his plans for the future.

**MF:** I had initially considered calling this interview “The Power of Lived Experience.” However, it may be more appropriate to frame this as the “tragedy” of lived experience given what you and others have suffered on Manus Island and in other immigration detention centres around the world.

**Aziz:** Well, that is true, because this lived experience is not one that I chose to live, it was imposed on me, I was unwillingly forced to live it. But I have taken this as an opportunity to learn, and I want to use the experience to prevent others from having to live this tragedy. So there has been this positive experience built on a negative one: Learning about the need to bring visibility to the suffering we experience in immigration detention. And this has led to a second positive experience: Actually, getting out of detention, finally, after so many years, because of our efforts to ensure that people knew what was happening to us. This is empowering.

**MF:** You're now working on a degree at university, you've been granted asylum by Switzerland, you've received an important human rights defender award, you have worked with us at the GDP to document detention through data, you have had many experiences engaging the international community here in Geneva ... all of this after spending some six years in Australia's offshore detention system. This lived experience gives you a unique perspective on advocacy. How do you view these different worlds and what value does each bring?

**Aziz:** When you are an advocate at the grassroots level, as we were at Manus, you only have very limited resources—a cell phone, social media, written words, rallies, media outreach. You have to make every effort to get the most out of these. This is hard to replicate at the international level: I can't use the same limited resources and get the same





Detainees protest their confinement on Manus Island, September 2017  
© Abdul Aziz Muhamat

impact because there is a system that everything goes through, a different way of expressing yourself. ... But you also have the possibility of getting much more visibility. And this international visibility can help you to use the few tools that we have at this level, like naming and shaming. You can also find many more allies at the international level, something that is just not accessible when you are advocating from inside detention.

**MF:** What can we do to improve the impact that research and advocacy at the international level have on the ground?

**Aziz:** A lot in fact. For example, when I read an academic paper about immigration detention, I sense that there is something missing, and that is the human experience of what the paper is talking about. This same view is missing from international advocacy as well. As a refugee and former detainee, I constantly ask myself whether what I am reading reflects what I have been through. And I think that there is always a gap.

**MF:** Reflecting on your experience working with us at the Global Detention Project, what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of our approach?

**Aziz:** The strength of the GDP project is that it works to draw clear lines around what we can observe in detention and the systems that create it. The experience of trying to understand how to do this has given me a strong feeling that there is a way to actually document this reality, to know it and express it in new and effective ways. But this effort by itself does not lead you to a solution, it does not show you how to change the system. As a former detainee there can also be discomfort in thinking this way, like getting statistics on detainee “stock” and “flow.” I was part of that stock and flow.

**MF:** You are one of a group of former Manus detainees who have made your voices heard in calling for change in Australia’s and other country’s immigration detention practices. What is it about your experience that produced so many committed and outspoken advocates?

**Aziz:** What happened to us on Manus drove us to make a strong commitment to let the world know about it. But our efforts made us realise that even in these liberal democracies that are supposedly committed to human rights, in fact few people knew about the suffering their countries were causing, which drove us to speak out about it on a day-to-day basis, every day, using a smuggled cell phone, contacts with NGOs, journalists. Some of us were good at writing, some were good at speaking. Our commitment led us to build a method out of advocacy: We were not only working to let the world know what was happening to us, but we were also healing ourselves. And so advocacy became healing.

**MF:** Where do you go from here?

**Aziz:** This is a question I have been asking myself for some time. But I know that I will always move towards suffering, to where I can contribute to alleviate pain. The issue of refugees and how they are treated is not a new one, it has been here for a long time. I know this. But if I can make a contribution to change how refugees are treated, to prevent the harm of detention, then I intend to proceed along that path.

## 5. Human Rights: Making an Impact, Globally and Locally



**As an international body, it is not easy for the WGAD to reach out to organisations working on the ground and the GDP has been an important partner in providing a bridge. But it has been more than that: The GDP has also played an important role in assisting the WGAD to spread the message that arbitrary detention can and does occur outside the criminal justice context. Detention in the migration context take place worldwide and it is essential that safeguards are in place to guard against arbitrary detention.**

*Elina Steinerte (Chair, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention)*



**The GDP made important strides impacting the outcomes and trajectories of global consultations and international human rights monitoring, including boosting their impact and relevance at the local level.**

Building on our well-established initiative of producing submissions—often jointly with partners—for UN treaty bodies and other human rights institutions (see page 16 for a list of submissions), we directly engaged several mechanisms as part of their consultations. We also facilitated the participation of our partners at several events, and were able to successfully draw the attention of (and spur action by) numerous human rights monitoring bodies in response to urgent developments. For instance, as we discuss in more detail below IN FOCUS, when Belarus precipitated a crisis along its borders with EU countries in late 2021 by weaponizing cross-border movements of migrants and asylum seekers, we worked closely with partners in Lithuania (the Human Rights Monitoring Institute) and Geneva (the World Organisation against Torture) to bring concerns about abuses and disappearances in border areas to the UN Committee against Torture and to spur an ad hoc grouping of UN Special Procedures to issue an Urgent Appeal to the Lithuanian government regarding the situation.

A key event from 2021 was the UN Committee on Migrant Workers' release of its General Comment No. 5 on migrants' rights to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention. In the lead up to the release, which took place at an event in Geneva in October, the GDP provided submissions and written comments regarding key aspects of the General Comment, including in particular its framing of "alternatives to detention" and the critical roles played by necessity and proportionality tests in preventing arbitrary migration-related detention. The GDP also worked with committee members in organising the release event, including by suggesting possible speakers for the event. Among the speakers were the GDP's Director as well as Abdul Aziz Muhamat, the former Manus Island detainee from Sudan who had recently joined the GDP team as a Research & Advocacy Fellow. Aziz's comments, available on the GDP's website, were particularly insightful, relevant, and impactful (see also his interview on pages 13-14).

## 2021 SUBMISSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, URGENT APPEALS

TARGET	SUBJECT	PARTNER
Universal Periodic Review	<b>Papua New Guinea:</b> Issues Related to Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigration Detention (39th Session)	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
	<b>Hungary:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Detention and Border Enforcement Measures (39th Session)	Hungarian Helsinki Committee
	<b>Zimbabwe:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Enforcement (40th Session)	Lawyers for Human Rights (South Africa)
	<b>Sudan:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Enforcement (39th Session)	
	<b>Greece:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Detention (39th Session)	
Committee against Torture	<b>Lithuania:</b> Issues Related to Migrants, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Migration-related Detention (72nd Session)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
	<b>Guatemala:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Detention (72nd Session)	
	<b>Egypt-Eritrea:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning mass deportations of Eritrean refugees from Egypt to Eritrea (November & December 2021)	
European Committee for the Prevention of Torture	<b>Austria:</b> Submission in Preparation for the Committee's 7th Periodic Visit (November-December 2021)	
	<b>Lithuania:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning the Lithuania-Belarus Border in in Preparation for the Committee's 8th Visit to the Country (October & November 2021)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
Committee on Migrant Workers	Recommendations on final draft of General Comment No.5 on Migrants' Right to Liberty and Freedom from Arbitrary Detention (September 2021)	
	<b>Chile:</b> Issues Related to Immigration Detention (32nd Session)	
	<b>Egypt-Eritrea:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning mass deportations of Eritrean refugees from Egypt to Eritrea (November & December 2021)	
Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants	Submission on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Human Rights of Migrants in Migration-related Detention (June 2021)	
	<b>Belarus - Lithuania:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning Lithuania-Belarus Border (October 2021)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances	<b>Belarus - Lithuania:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning Lithuania-Belarus Border (October 2021)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
Working Group on Arbitrary Detention	<b>Belarus - Lithuania:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning Lithuania-Belarus Border (October 2021)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
	<b>Egypt-Eritrea:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning mass deportations of Eritrean refugees from Egypt to Eritrea (November & December 2021)	
Special Rapporteur on Torture	<b>Belarus - Lithuania:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning Lithuania-Belarus Border (October 2021)	Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
	<b>Egypt-Eritrea:</b> Urgent Appeal concerning mass deportations of Eritrean refugees from Egypt to Eritrea (November & December 2021)	

## IN FOCUS

### THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL-LOCAL COLLABORATION: URGENT APPEAL CONCERNING THE BELARUS-LITHUANIA BORDER

In October 2021, the GDP and the Vilnius-based Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HRMI) teamed up to harness the tools of the UN human right system to bring attention to the plight of migrants and asylum seekers in the border regions between Belarus and neighbouring countries and to pressure relevant authorities to take action to stop abuses. In mid-2020, after the EU imposed sanctions on Belarus, the country was accused of weaponizing the plight of migrants and asylum seekers by encouraging them to come to Belarus and to cross irregularly into neighbouring Poland and Lithuania. Both Lithuania and Poland responded harshly, pushing back migrants, including women and children, who became stranded in dire conditions along borders. Lithuania quickly approved legislation that significantly extended the mandatory detention of migrant and asylum seekers and limited access to legal procedures

The GDP and HRMI used the opportunity of Lithuania's then-upcoming periodic review before the UN **Committee Against Torture** (CAT) to issue a joint written submission documenting abuses suffered by migrants on the Belarus-Lithuanian border as well as to bring attention to this problem to a broad range of other human rights bodies based in Geneva. The submission, which was based in large part on first-hand testimonies gathered by HRMI in visits to detention centres and camps in the border region, was followed up by an oral statement to the CAT in November 2021. Working in collaboration with the Geneva-based **World Organisation against Torture** (OMCT), which serves as CAT's civil society focal point, we facilitated HRMI representative **Mėta Adutavičiūtė's** travel to Geneva, where she gave compelling in-person testimony on Lithuania's treatment of migrants and asylum seekers and answered questions from committee members.

Working in parallel to the CAT review, the GDP reached out through its network in the broader human rights system to bring the alarming situation to the attention of a range of other international and regional monitoring bodies. We issued urgent action appeals to the **European Committee on the Prevention of Torture** (CPT) as well as to a group of UN Special Procedures. As a result of our interventions, the **Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants**, the **Working Group on Arbitrary Detention**, the **Special Rapporteur on Torture**, and the **Special Rapporteur on Trafficking** jointly issued an urgent appeal to the government of Lithuania in November 2021, which was made public in January 2022, along with the official response from the Lithuanian government.

The joint action by the GDP and HRMI, working in collaboration with other Geneva-based civil society partners and contacts in the international community, demonstrated the important impact that strategic international-local partnerships can have. We were able to bring an urgent migrants' rights crisis to the attention of UN and regional human rights mechanisms and achieve concrete outcomes.



Refugees and migrants protest their detention in a camp in Rudnikai (Lithuania), August 2021  
© Alexander Welscher/dpa/Alamy Live News

## UN LETTER TO LITHUANIA CONCERNING TREATMENT OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS ON BORDER WITH BELARUS

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children**

Ref.: UA LTU 1/2021  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

25 November 2021

Mr. Donatas Tamulaitis,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 43/6, 42/22, 43/20 and 44/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Government information we have received concerning **amendments made to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens No IX-2206 (the “Aliens Law”) and its impact on the human rights of migrants, including asylum seekers.**

According to the information received:

In 2021, Lithuania has been affected by an unprecedented increase in border crossings of third country nationals including asylum seekers via Belarus: as of mid-August, over 4,110 migrants had been detained at the Lithuanian-Belarus border, while 81 were detained for the whole 2020. Although the majority of them originate from Iraq, over 40 different nationalities have been accounted for, including nationals from Cameroon, Syria, Afghanistan and other countries. Lithuanian authorities have reported that 90% of migrants detained at the border have requested asylum in Lithuania. This situation has put a great pressure on national reception and asylum processing capacities.

In response to this influx of migrants, on 2 July 2021, the Republic of Lithuania declared an “extraordinary situation” in the country. After this declaration, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, following a fast-track procedure, approved legislative changes to legal instruments governing migration and asylum rules, by adopting amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens No IX-2206 (the “Aliens Law”) and the accompanying legislation. On 13 July 2021, the Parliament adopted Law No. XIV-506, which amended Articles 5, 71, 76, 77, 79, 113, 131, 136, 138, 139, 140 of the Aliens Law. Article 67 of this law was later amended on 10 August 2021, with the adoption of Law No. XIV-515.

These legislative changes have led to the mandatory and automatic use of immigration detention for all migrants including asylum seekers arriving in Lithuania and limited their rights and safeguards during asylum procedures. Additionally, amendments to the Aliens Law and subsequent practices adopted by the Lithuanian authorities have allegedly allowed for the push back of migrants including asylum seekers at the Lithuanian-Belarus border. While

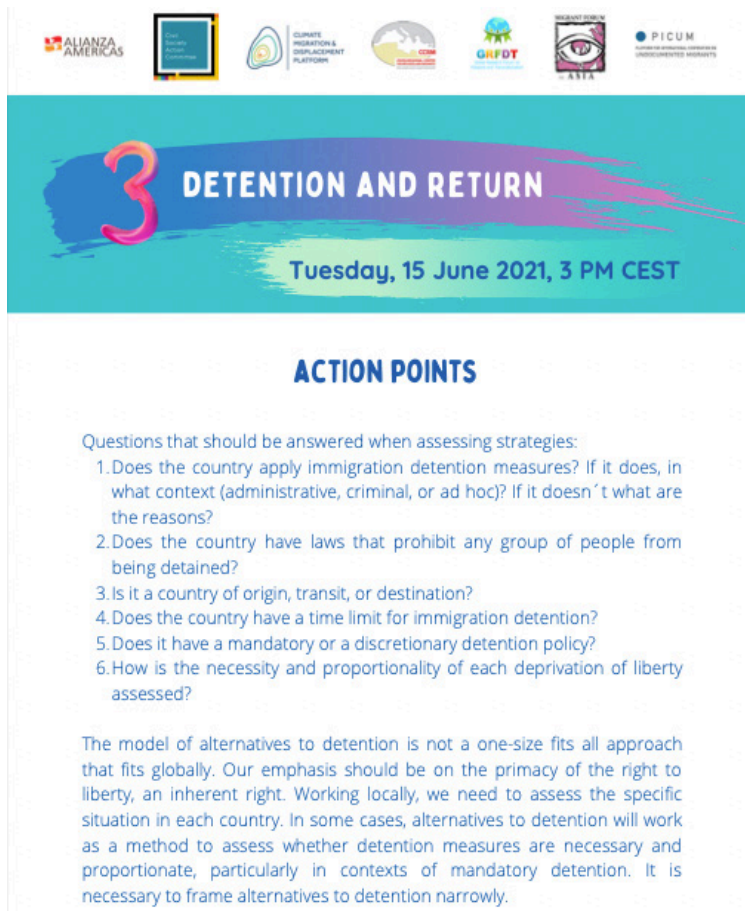
## IN FOCUS

### ENCOURAGING A HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS IN GLOBAL ADVOCACY

With the Global Compact for Migration set to hold its first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in 2022, the Compact's coordinating body—the Network for Migration—and migration rights advocates across the globe have been gearing up to develop key messages for member states. The GDP continued its engagement with the Network's **workstream on “alternatives to detention” (ATDs)** and participated in civil society events aimed at strategizing for the IMRF (for more information on this, see page 23 of our Annual Report 2020).

A key GDP concern has been to ensure that migrants' human rights remain the core focus for both states and other stakeholders. For instance, while the Compact underscores in its Objective 13 the need to respect detainees' fundamental rights, it also insists that states “expand alternatives to detention.” The GDP has urged the Network and its partners to promote ATDs as procedures that are tied to legally established necessity and proportionally tests for each detention decision process—in line with relevant international human rights norms—which could help ensure that detention is never arbitrary and prevent ATDs from being instrumentalised in ways that undermine migrants' right to liberty.

Also, instead of focusing on a global campaign promoting any single approach or overarching idea to advocacy on migration-related detention, we have encouraged ground-up, evidence-driven approaches, which GDP staff members addressed during various panel discussions hosted by civil society networks during the year. In May, for example, the GDP's Michael Flynn was invited to present a set of recommendations concerning a way forward on the Compact's Objective 13 at a webinar hosted by the People's Migration Challenge, a global coalition of leading migrant rights groups. After the event, the organisers circulated “Action Points” that reiterated Flynn's argument that strategies for reducing the use of immigration detention must be built from the ground up, based on the unique set of opportunities and challenges that each domestic context presents. In prepping a national strategy, Flynn argued, there are a set of key initial questions that should be asked, which were later presented as the People's Migration Challenge “Action Points” for strategizing on “Detention and Return.”



**3 DETENTION AND RETURN**  
Tuesday, 15 June 2021, 3 PM CEST

**ACTION POINTS**

Questions that should be answered when assessing strategies:

1. Does the country apply immigration detention measures? If it does, in what context (administrative, criminal, or ad hoc)? If it doesn't what are the reasons?
2. Does the country have laws that prohibit any group of people from being detained?
3. Is it a country of origin, transit, or destination?
4. Does the country have a time limit for immigration detention?
5. Does it have a mandatory or a discretionary detention policy?
6. How is the necessity and proportionality of each deprivation of liberty assessed?

The model of alternatives to detention is not a one-size fits all approach that fits globally. Our emphasis should be on the primacy of the right to liberty, an inherent right. Working locally, we need to assess the specific situation in each country. In some cases, alternatives to detention will work as a method to assess whether detention measures are necessary and proportionate, particularly in contexts of mandatory detention. It is necessary to frame alternatives to detention narrowly.

## IN FOCUS

### HARNESSING GLOBAL TOOLS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE GDP'S NEW WEBINAR SERIES

Senior Advocacy Coordinator Rachael Reilly oversaw the launch of a new webinar series aimed at briefing grassroots activists on how to harness the UN human rights system to challenge abusive and arbitrary migration-related detention practices in their countries. The webinar series will introduce advocates to the broad range of UN bodies that have relevance to immigration detention and the various review procedures, urgent appeals, and judicial tools that each offer.

The first webinar was a two-hour information session with the Chair of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), Elina Steinerte. Attended by more than 60 migrant rights activists from 40 different civil society organisations representing every region of the world, the event highlighted how advocates could bring individual cases of arbitrary detention to the attention of the WGAD. Ms Steinerte gave an overview of the WGAD's mandate in relation to migration-related detention, the judicial mechanisms for bringing cases of arbitrary immigration detention, and the Working Group's track record on this issue, highlighted through its jurisprudence ("Opinions") on individual cases. She also explained how civil society organisations can engage with the WGAD through urgent appeals, submitting individual cases for review, assisting and supporting with country visits, and suggesting topics for thematic reviews. Ms. Steinerte drew particular attention to the WGAD's "Deliberation No. 5 on the Deprivation of Liberty of Migrants" and "Deliberation No. 11 on the Prohibition of Arbitrary Deprivation of Liberty in the Context of Public Health Emergencies," both of which have relevance in the context of migration-related detention.

Feedback from participants during the Q&A and after the event was overwhelmingly positive: Participants told us that it gave them extremely helpful background information and tools to engage with the WGAD in the future. For many advocates working on migration-related detention, this was their first introduction to this UN human rights mechanism.

### Opinions of the WGAD

- Tool available to anyone around the globe but **unique to the WGAD**- other SPs do not have this;
- The treaty obligations of the State(s) concerned does not matter;
- Submission about the circumstances of the alleged arbitrary detention- who detained, when, by what authority, under what circumstances etc.
- Not exceeding 20 pages, in one of the three WGAD's Working languages;
- CONSENT to be named in the communication to the Government, in the public Opinion of the WGAD and UN reports;
- Model Questionnaire and Model Consent Form: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Detention/Pages/Complaints.aspx>
- Written, quasi judicial proceedings that lead to the adoption of Opinion;
- Follow Up procedure.



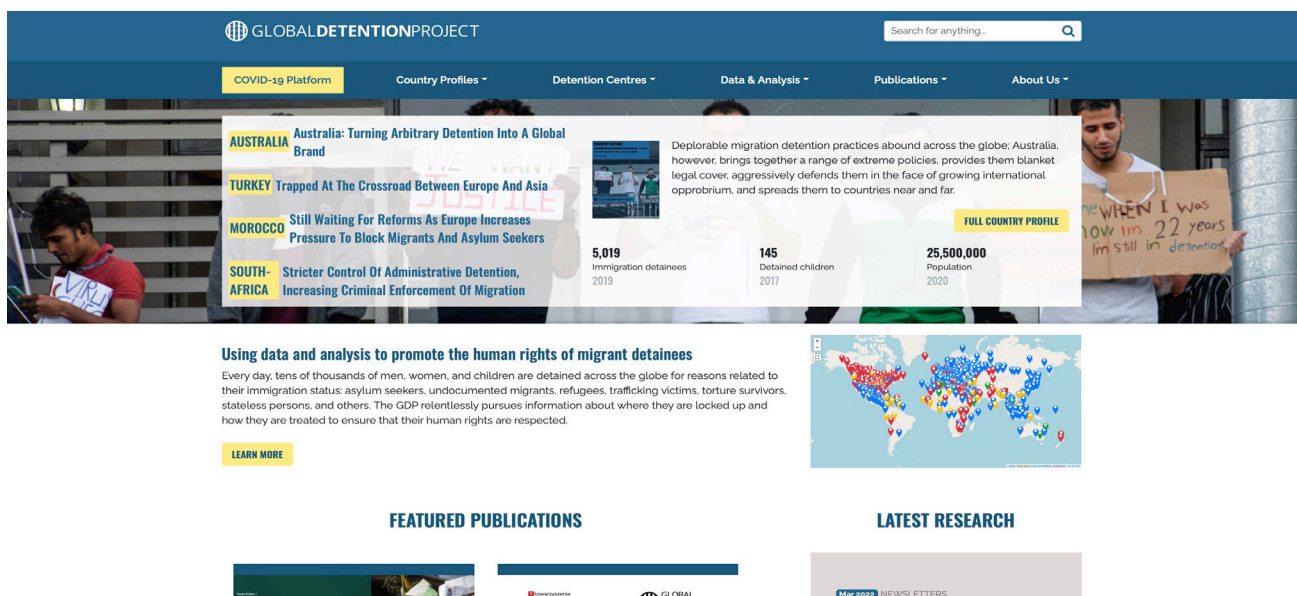
## 6. On The Record: Shaping the Public Conversation

“The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to an increase in anti-migrant rhetoric in many different countries, says the Global Detention Project. In a submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, GDP said that blame for spreading Covid-19 was being laid on refugees and migrants. Using data compiled by its Covid-19 Global Immigration Detention Platform, the NGO concluded that some states had been reluctant to ‘establish firewalls between health and immigration authorities, resulting in many non-nationals fearing arrest and detention should they seek Covid-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination’.

*The Telegraph (16 June 2021)*

At the heart of the GDP’s strategy is focusing public attention on the damaging impact that detention has on migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and revealing the dynamics that encourage the growing use and spread of detention measures. This requires having a strong online presence, well-crafted communications messages, and a compelling story to tell. It also helps to be able to offer—as the GDP does—insightful, evidence-driven analyses and an extensive archive of information and data.

During 2021, the GDP had a pronounced impact across a range of areas of public discourse, including shaping news items for major newspapers, undertaking collaborative engagements with academic researchers, and drawing attention to emerging issues and urgent situations through our social media platforms, which have helped spur urgent action by key human rights bodies (see “IN FOCUS: Using Social Media to Bolster Calls to Action: The Case of Egypt and Eritrea” on page 23). An important cornerstone for all of these activities is the GDP’s website, which had its most users ever.



*The GDP website's homepage (www.globaldetentionproject.org)*

## IN FOCUS

### THE GDP WEBSITE'S RECORD YEAR

Since our inception, the GDP's website has attracted increasing numbers of users nearly every year. But 2021 was by far the best year yet as the website experienced record growth—with some 258,484 people from around the world accessing the site (a 31 percent increase on 2020, and 177 percent over 2016).

In total, we also recorded 459,780 page views in 2021 (a 23 percent increase on 2020 and 158 percent on 2016), and 313,996 website sessions (a 29 percent increase on 2020 and 99 percent on 2016). Importantly, all sections of the site were regularly accessed—from detention centre and country profiles, to information on detention related laws and treaties, op-eds, and submissions to human rights monitoring bodies.

#### USERS' TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

United States
Canada
Mexico
Malaysia
Australia
Italy
United Kingdom
United Arab Emirates
India
France

#### WEBSITE USERS

	2021	2020	2016
<b>USERS</b>	258,484	197,183	93,293 (new users only)
<b>WEBSITE SESSIONS</b>	313,996	243,382	121,794
<b>PAGE VIEWS</b>	459,780	372,137	230,717

#### MOST FREQUENTLY VIEWED COUNTRY PAGES

Mexico
Saudi Arabia
Canada
Malaysia
United States
Qatar
Australia
Libya
South Korea
Turkey

#### MOST FREQUENTLY VIEWED DETENTION CENTRES

Reynosa Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)
Tapachula Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)
Alaweer Detention Centre for Men (UAE)
Lampedusa (Contrada Imbriacola) Centro di Primo Soccorso ed Accoglienza (Italy)
Tuxtla Gutierrez Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)
Mexicali Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)
Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (Australia)
Villahermosa Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)
Kajang Prison for Men (Malaysia)
Iztapalapa Estacion Migratoria (Mexico)

## IN FOCUS

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BOLSTER CALLS TO ACTION: THE CASE OF EGYPT AND ERITREA

Working in coordination with journalists and NGO partners in North Africa, we launched a multi-pronged awareness campaign about the plight of Eritrean refugees—including children and families—detained in Egypt's abysmal police detention centres.



Egypt has repeatedly deported refugees back to Eritrea despite the fact that many have disappeared upon arrival or suffered severe abuses or torture. Based on information from our partners, the GDP began in September posting messages on Twitter, publishing reports on our website, and reaching out to contacts in the international community to provide updates on the situation of Eritreans facing imminent deportation, which included photos we had received that were taken by detainees. We also tagged the Twitter accounts of Egyptian ministries as well as of various key actors, including regional offices of UNHCR and IOM. As the deportations continued unabated, we issued a series of urgent appeals—in November and December—to UN agencies, which complemented efforts in Egypt by civil society groups, foreign embassies, and UN agencies. In late

November, a group of UN Special Procedures, including the WGAD and the SR on the human rights of migrants, issued a letter to Egypt expressing their “grave concern” about the situation and underscoring the human rights violations of their arbitrary detention and forced deportation. Sadly, while the pressure campaign appears to have led to some delays in deportations, Egypt has pressed ahead with them—including deporting children—into 2022.

#### **UN experts deplore the expulsion by Egypt of Eritrean family seeking asylum in violation of the principle of non-refoulement**

GENEVA (19 November 2021) – UN human rights experts expressed grave concerns about the forced return of seven Eritrean asylum seekers today, including five children, from Egypt, despite the risk of enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, and in violation of international human rights obligations.

"Individuals who have fled Eritrea and subsequently forcefully returned are considered as "traitors" and are often detained upon arrival to Eritrea, questioned, tortured, held in extremely punitive conditions and disappeared," the experts said.

The asylum seekers were part of a larger group of 18 Eritreans – all members of the same family – who entered Egypt through Sudan in October 2019, and who had been detained in Egypt since then. They were denied access to legal representation, to the asylum system and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"We are concerned that instead of being granted protection, this group of asylum seekers has been subjected to what would appear to be arbitrary detention for over two years, and forcibly repatriated to Eritrea without any individual assessment of the human rights violations they may be subjected to upon their return," the UN experts said.

## IN FOCUS

### IMPACTING RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP



Even though the GDP departed from its purely academic base many years ago to focus more on advocacy and social change, we continue to have a significant impact on scholarly studies and policy research. According to a non-systematic count, the number of research-related publications that cited GDP materials increased by nearly 40 percent between 2020 and 2021, reaching no fewer than 181 publications last year (compared to 132 in 2020).

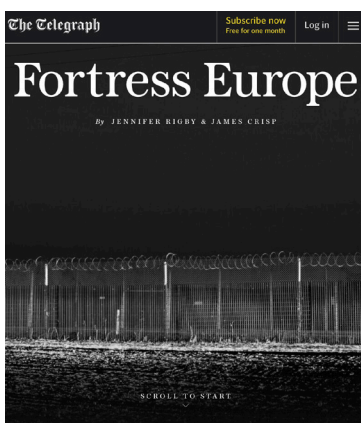
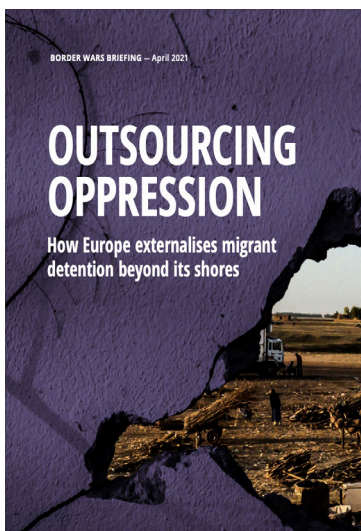
GDP staff members also continued to publish articles in academic journals and to be invited to participate in scholarly events. In May, for instance, the GDP chaired a panel on monitoring detention and borders, which included representatives from several regional and international detention monitoring institutions, as part of Oxford University's Border Criminologies three-day conference "Landscapes of Border Control and Immigration Detention in Europe."

An increasingly important area of migration and refugee research is "externalisation" — the effort by the world's wealthy countries to push immigration control and asylum processing beyond their borders, into neighbouring countries on their periphery. The topic has been much in the news as many countries—notably Denmark and the UK—have promoted policies eerily reminiscent of Australia's notorious "Pacific Solution."

The GDP has had a marked impact on research into externalisation because of the wealth of data we have developed revealing how the Global North has abetted the emergence of immigration detention systems in many countries where the rule of law is weak, there are ongoing conflicts, and migrants and refugees face endemic abuses.

In April, The Transnational Institute, an international research centre based in Amsterdam, published a ground-breaking report, "Outsourcing Oppression: How Europe Externalises Migrant Detention beyond Its Borders." The report makes extensive use of GDP data and resources (12 citations or direct quotes) in making the case that "there are clear patterns regarding how the EU and its member states directly influence migrant detention policies and practices in third countries. These include funding the construction of detention centres; funding the implementation of detention-related activities, such as training; and other less direct forms of influence, such as concluding agreements that request or encourage migrant detention."

In November, Oxford University's influential journal Forced Migration Review published a special issue on externalisation that included contributions from many leading refugee and migration studies scholars. The special issue also included a piece from the GDP's Michael Flynn titled "Externalisation, Immigration Detention, and the Committee on Migrant Workers." The article discusses the increasing relevance of the UN treaty body that oversees implementation of the UN Migrant Workers Convention—the most poorly ratified UN human rights treaty, which provides important protections for detained migrants—as a direct result of the efforts of wealthy countries to create detention systems in countries on their borders, many of which are members states of the convention.



## IN FOCUS

### SHAPING THE NEWS

An increasingly important destination for people seeking robust and reliable data concerning immigration detention, the GDP's website has continued to not only provide key contextual information to journalists publishing relevant stories, but to actively drive coverage and shape narratives. More than one hundred articles in publications from across the globe cited the GDP during the year—some of which relied solely or heavily on GDP advice or input.

Particularly notable was a Daily Telegraph interactive feature published in December detailing the growth of “Fortress Europe.” Relying heavily on information gleaned from the GDP's website and based in part on a series of conversations the newspaper had with the GDP, the Telegraph feature detailed interception and detention policies in several frontline countries—Greece, Hungary, and Poland—as well as offshore processing centres in North Africa. “Fortress Europe is about far more than land walls,” states the article. “It also involves ‘outreach’ efforts that form a more sinister virtual wall, off-shore. Nowhere is this more obvious than in North Africa, where a virtual wall established by the EU has slashed the numbers of migrants crossing the Mediterranean in recent years.”

In some cases, our social media platforms have been able to focus attention on important emerging situations. In October, for example, after Bangladesh announced that it was planning to increase the size of its controversial camp for Rohingya refugees on the island of Bhasan Char, The Guardian quoted our Twitter feed to raise attention to questions about whether UNHCR's involvement in the plan made it complicit in detaining refugees.

In other cases, our social media outreach helped draw public attention to urgent detention situations and alert key policymakers and stakeholders in the international community, including the summary mass deportations of Eritreans from Egypt (see “IN FOCUS: Using Social Media to Bolster Calls to Action: The Case of Egypt and Eritrea” on page 23), critical developments on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis of sub-Saharan Africans being interdicted at sea and sent to nightmarish detention centres in Libya.

## GDP IN THE PRESS: THE HEADLINES

**“Migrants in Chiapas Inoculated with COVID-19 Vaccine”**  
– *Mexico Business News*

**“DHS Seeking Private Contractor for Migrant Camp on Guantánamo Bay”** – *The Hill*

**“Climate Migration Driving Brutality on the Mediterranean”**  
– *The Outlaw Ocean Project*

**“Errores mortales en la gestión de las migraciones climáticas”** – *El País*

**“UN Quizzed over Role in Prison-like Island Camp for Rohingya Refugees”** – *The Guardian*

**“Japan Drops Plans to Fast-Track Refugee Deportations After Sri Lankan's Death in Detention”** – *This Week in Asia*

**“Desumana, desnecessária, dispendiosa: há que abolir a detenção de migrantes”** – *Publico*



# 7. The GDP Team and Governance

## STAFF

### Michael Flynn, Executive Director

Michael Flynn is the founding director of the Global Detention Project. He previously was a project director at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.; a project coordinator at the Graduate Institute's Programme for the Study of Global Migration in Geneva; and an editor at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in Chicago. He is co-author (with Izabella Majcher and Mariette Grange) of *Immigration Detention in the European Union: In the Wake of the "Crisis"* (Springer 2020) and co-editor (with Matthew Flynn) of *Challenging Immigration Detention: Academics, Activists, and Policy-Makers* (Edward Elgar 2017). Flynn has a BA in Philosophy from DePaul University and a PhD in International Studies from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

### Rachael Reilly, Senior Advocacy Coordinator

Rachael Reilly has more than 30 years of experience in global refugee, migration, and human rights advocacy and policy. She was the founding Refugee Policy Director at Human Rights Watch; served as Geneva Representative for the Women's Refugee Commission, where she spearheaded several major projects, including the organisation's ground-breaking work on disability inclusion in humanitarian emergencies, gender equality in nationality rights, and organising the first-ever global consultations with refugee youth and adolescents; and was the regional advocacy director for Oxfam International, where she led the organisation's advocacy on the Rohingya refugee crisis in the Asia-Pacific region. She has a BA in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge and a Masters of Science in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics.

### Abdul Aziz Muhamat, Research & Advocacy Fellow

Abdul Aziz Muhamat is an experienced refugee rights advocate who began his advocacy work while a detainee on Australia's offshore detention centre on Manus Island (Papua New Guinea). A Martin Ennals Award Laureate for Human Rights Defenders (2019), Aziz advocates for the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in detention, community detention, and post resettlement. He has assisted the Global Detention Project in reviewing our database, providing critical insights into our methods based on his lived experience, and assessing ways to impact advocacy through improved documentation of detention systems. He is currently completing a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science at the University of Geneva.

**"My experience working at the GDP was both academically and interpersonally enriching. The close-knit working environment created a sense of community and purpose. ... At the same time, I gained a vast array of country-specific, as well as legal- and advocacy-specific knowledge on UN Treaty Bodies and other human rights mechanisms. It has definitely complemented my graduate studies in political science and critically enriched my outlook on systems of migration, border control, and surveillance."**

*Sara Kallis, GDP Fellow 2021 (ETH Zurich/The Graduate Institute)*



### **Katie Welsford, Communications Officer**

Katie Welsford has a background in non-profit communications and journalism and specialises in conflict and displacement. She previously worked for the AMAR International Charitable Foundation, overseeing digital communications and campaigns focused on the IDP crisis in Northern Iraq. She also worked as a coordinator for the human rights NGO, Reach All Women in War, and as a freelance journalist in the Middle East and Caucasus for publications including The Guardian, Daily Beast, and Le Monde Diplomatique. She holds an MSc in Political Science from the University of London's Birkbeck College and a BA in Social Geography from Durham University.

### **Mario Guido, Project Coordinator**

Mario Guido coordinates the GDP's "Global Immigration Detention Observatory" project, helping oversee collaborative work between the GDP and external partner organisations on developing detention data in key geographic regions to raise awareness of human rights concerns. He holds an LLB in European Legal Studies from the University of Reading and an LLM from University College London. He previously worked at the Advice in Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE) Centre and at Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) in London. Guido's academic research has focused on the involvement of private entities in the provision of employment for prisoners through the lens of the International Labour Organisation Forced Labour Convention.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEMBERS**

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**George Kourous** (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), Vice President & Board Member

**Yves Klein** (Monfrini Bitton Klein), Secretary & Board Member

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**Alexandra Dufresne** (ZHAW School of Management and Law & University of Zurich Faculty of Law)

**Seta Hadesian** (Middle East Council of Churches)

**Robert Norris** (Federation of American Scientists)

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**Kirsten Sandberg** (University of Oslo)

**Michaela Told** (HumanImpact5 HI5)

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## GOVERNANCE

A non-profit association under Swiss law, the GDP has two main governance bodies: the General Assembly of association members, whose responsibilities include appointing the association's Executive Committee, which is responsible for managing the association, approving budgets, and authorising grants, among other activities. Executive Committee members, who participate on a volunteer basis, may appoint a Board that is intended to interact more closely with the Executive Director and provide assistance on short notice for a range of activities, including banking and finances, drafting contracts, addressing legal questions, and generally serving as an easily accessible advisory body to the Executive Director. Board members include the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Executive Committee. The Board is directly involved in financial oversight of the association and has direct access to all of its financial information. Copies of banking and financial records are sent directly by the association's bank to the Treasurer. The association also has appointed a nonbinding Academic Advisory Council, which is made up of prominent academics and scholars working on issues central to the GDP's mandate. The academic council is intended to serve in a consultative capacity to the Executive Director, helping to help ensure that the GDP's outputs meet the highest standards, providing advice on research, suggesting areas to focus GDP efforts, and collaborating with staff on producing material published by the association.

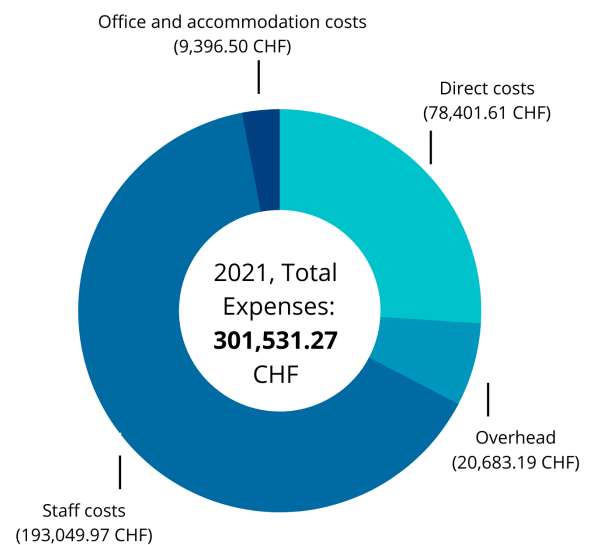
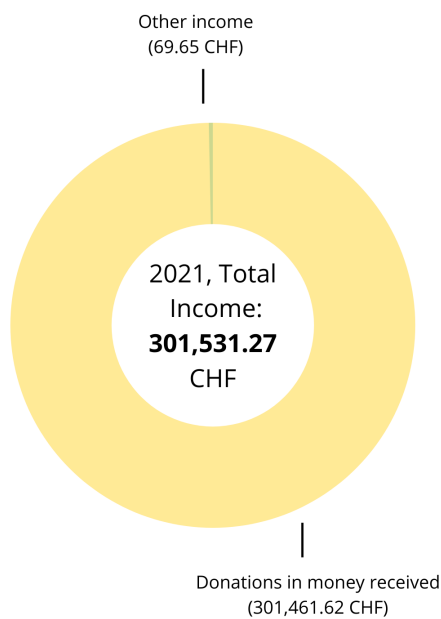


*Cape Town, South Africa. 24th Sep, 2020. Foreign nationals at a camp near Cape Town after being relocated due to xenophobic violence during a surge of COVID-19 in the country. © SOPA Images Limited/Alamy Live News*

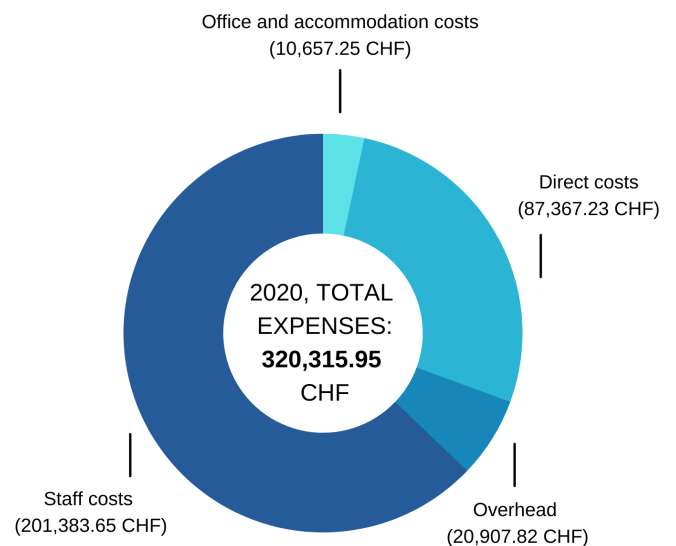
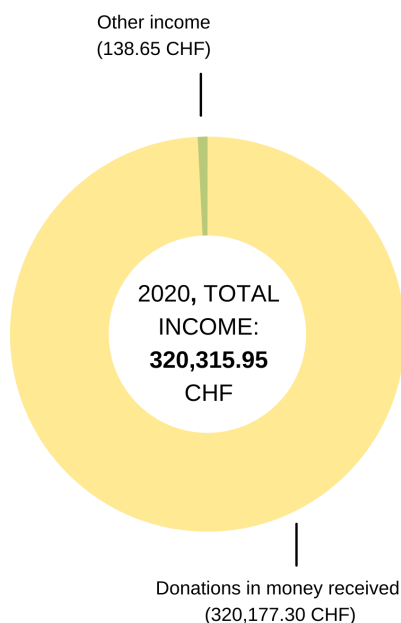
# 8. Finances

This is an extract of the Global Detention Project's financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2021. To request a copy of the full audit, please email [admin@globaldetentionproject.org](mailto:admin@globaldetentionproject.org).

## 2021 - INCOME & EXPENSES



## 2020 - INCOME & EXPENSES



# 9. Acknowledgements

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