

UK to Launch Probe into Abuse at Immigration Facilities



London, February 10 (RHC)-- The British home secretary is to open a probe into treatment of immigration detainees following complaints by activists and inmates about alleged violence and sexual abuse in immigration removal facilities.

On Monday, the Home Office announced plans to look into how well the immigration detainees are treated in the removal centers. The probe will be led by the former Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales, Stephen Shaw CBE.

"Immigration detention is a vital tool in helping ensure those with no right to remain in the UK are returned to their home country," said UK's Home Secretary Theresa May. "But I take the welfare of those in the government's care very seriously and I want to ensure the health and wellbeing of all detainees, some of whom may be vulnerable, is safeguarded at all times," she added.

Britain's coalition government has previously been criticized for policies relating to immigration detention facilities, specifically regarding the climbing number of suicide, self-harm, and sexual abuse cases in such centers.

The charity group Women for Refugee Women found last month that inmates are "routinely humiliated" at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Center, and subjected to abuse by male staff members.

Activist groups have also warned that mental health cases at Britain's immigration facilities are often ignored, with only about nine percent of official health warnings leading to the release of inmates suffering from mental health issues.

Moreover, UK courts have ruled the human rights of six mentally ill immigration detainees have been violated over the past three years. The planned probe is expected to begin within the coming weeks and will probably take nearly six months to complete.

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