

Amendments: To REMOVE Union Notes 4 and Union Notes 5. To amend Union Resolves 2.

1980 Motion to Support #ShutDownYarlsWood Demonstrations passed 3 November 2016

(Content notes for rape, self-harm and sexual violence)

Proposer: Abbie Mulcairn (Women's Officer)

Seconder: Lucy Auger (Momentum UEA)

Union Notes:

1. Yarls Wood is an immigration detention centre in Bedfordshire which detains refugees (mostly women) for an unlimited period of time without them having committed or been convicted of any crime.
2. In 2010, women at the Yarls Wood detention centre went on hunger strike in order to protest their detainment and the conditions in which they were being kept. They were subjected to physical violence and verbal abuse as a result.
3. Over 70% of the female detainees at Yarls Wood are survivors of rape and are ill and vulnerable¹
4. ~~Movement for Justice, alongside a range of different activist groups organize mass demonstrations outside the detention centre, the next of which is due to occur on the 3rd of December~~
5. ~~The demonstration will run under the slogan 'Surround #Yarlswood' or '#ShutDownYarlsWood' and aims to force the government to close this detention centre and ultimately the system of immigration detentions entirely.~~
6. The demonstration aims to bring together activists, organisers and asylum seekers from across the country to help build a network of campaigners and create links between movements. It is also an opportunity for detainees (many of whom are not native English speakers) to contact campaigners and access legal counsel.
7. Theresa May, the Prime Minister, has been accused of state sponsored violence against women after an investigation found guards at Yarls Wood ignoring self-harm and using racist terms to address detainees²
8. Last year, one man died while being detained in Yarls Wood³
9. Britain is the only EU member state with no limit on the time that asylum seekers can be detained.
10. That the detention centre is run by private contractor Serco, who won a new 7-year contract from the government in November 2014 worth over £70 million

¹ Cristel Amiss – Black Women's Rape Action Project -

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/feb/08/hungerstrike-women-detention-yarls-wood-protest>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/03/yarls-wood-may-state-sanctioned-abuse-women>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/apr/20/detainee-dies-yarls-wood-immigration-centre>

11. A Human Rights Watch report states that women are held in detention for administrative convenience, have very little time to prepare a legal case, and if refused, only have a few days to appeal. Their claims often involve sexual violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking and domestic abuse. These are all things which take women time and trust to disclose and lawyers time to verify.⁴⁵
12. In August of 2015, the chief prison inspector Nick Hardwick called Yarl's Wood detention centre a 'place of national concern'⁶
13. The UN's special rapporteur on violence against women, Rashida Manjoo, was refused access to Yarl's Wood detention centre by the government and raised concerns about what they were trying to hide⁷
14. New legislation has been released making university compliance with Prevent obligatory, and students, especially international and BME students are at risk of being reported to the Home Office and UKBA for supposed "extremist views."
15. Earlier this year, Theresa May was found to have wrongly deported over 48,000 students⁸

Union Believes:

1. That women are being unfairly detained and mistreated and subjected to physical abuse, at Yarl's Wood and other detention centres across the country
2. That a culture of rape and sexual coercion is never acceptable, regardless of the legal status of the women involved.
3. That refugees, women, migrants and fellow students are being unfairly locked up indefinitely for no crime other than to seek freedom, safety or to escape poverty and build a future for themselves and their families
4. Universities should be spaces where students are able to express themselves without fear of detention or persecution by the government.
5. That as a Student Union we have a duty to protect all students, especially international and BME students who may be at risk of being unfairly deported or detained.
6. That one of the most effective ways of resisting detention centres is through direct action like the #ShutDownYarl'sWood movement organised by MFJ
7. That women who are often fleeing from violence and sexual abuse in their home country, arrive in detention centres only to be subjected to ongoing abuse

⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/melanie-mcfadyean-the-scandal-that-is-yarl's-wood-.html>

⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/home-office-refusing-to-reveal-whether-women-in-yarl's-wood-have-been-raped-to-protect-the-commercial-a7077736.html>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/theresa-may-wrongly-deported-48000-students-after-bbcpanorama-exposes-toeic-scam-a6958286.html>

8. That detention centres are unjust and inhumane and are used to generate profit for private companies while ignoring a number of serious allegations of physical and sexual abuse⁹
9. That as a Student Union, we have an obligation to protect our students, especially vulnerable

Union Resolves:

1. To release a public statement condemning Yarls Wood and its treatment of women
2. To mandate SOC to fully support ~~the #ShutDownYarlsWood demonstrations organised by Movement for Justice and all other~~ future demonstrations and direct action for the closure of detention centres
3. To mandate SOC to actively campaign, in line with NUS policy⁹ against all detention centres and support students being unfairly detained
4. To fund all transport to future Yarls Wood demonstrations including the upcoming demo on the 3rd of December
5. To mandate SOC to use all available resources to promote the demonstration to students

⁹ [https://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-](https://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/21268/CD6_motions_0.4.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1475707433&Signature=d6TfRz4JQrexWM6eu4qHzDWzvFs%3D)

[1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/21268/CD6_motions_0.4.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1475707433&Signature=d6TfRz4JQrexWM6eu4qHzDWzvFs%3D](https://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/21268/CD6_motions_0.4.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1475707433&Signature=d6TfRz4JQrexWM6eu4qHzDWzvFs%3D)

⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/home-office-refusing-to-reveal-whether-women-in-yarlswood-have-been-raped-to-protect-the-commercial-a7077736.html>

Amendments: To REMOVE Union Notes 1, 2, 4, 6. REMOVE Union Believes 2, 3. To AMEND Union Resolves 2.

2066 Reproductive Justice for All

Proposer: Abbie Mulcairn (Women's Officer)

Seconder: Sophie Chapman (Feminist Society)

Union Notes

- ~~1. The Abortion Act 1967 has never been extended to Northern Ireland~~
- ~~2. The foundation of NI abortion law remains the Offences against the Person Act 1861 which makes it a criminal offence to have an abortion or perform one on another person. The 1861 Act is still in effect in England and Wales~~
3. The introduction of the Abortion Act 1967 did not decriminalise abortion in England and Wales: it allowed exceptions to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act under which the obtaining or performing an abortion would be lawful
4. ~~An abortion will be lawful in NI only if performed:~~
 - ~~a. to save the life of the pregnant person;~~
 - ~~b. where continuing the pregnancy would risk permanent and serious damage to the physical or mental health of the pregnant person¹⁰~~
5. In the past, people have been arrested for trying to procure an abortion (be it through a GP, travelling to England to obtain an abortion or through backstreet/ selfinduced abortions)
- ~~6. International students and students from elsewhere in the UK may understandably arrive in Northern Ireland under the false impression that because Northern Ireland is part of the UK, abortion will be legal and accessible on the local NHS. However, this is not true. When registered with a GP in Northern Ireland, you no longer have access to abortion.~~
7. Reproductive rights activism, like the feminist movement, has often been exclusive and focused on white, cisgender, able-bodied, middle-class women. People of colour often face abusive and coercive reproductive medical practices, such as: forced sterilisation of women of colour across the globe; the use of experimental and dangerous contraception like Norplant, etc.
8. There is increasing pro-choice hostility around the globe. Donald Trump's administration is placing harsher barriers on access to abortion services and Planned Parenthood services. Already, the POTUS has passed an executive

¹⁰ <https://www.mariestopes.org.uk/overseas-clients-abortion/irish/abortion-and-law/abortion-lawnorthern-ireland>

order banning international NGO's who provide abortion services from receiving US funding.¹¹

9. In October of 2016, women in Poland went on a national strike to protest the government's ban on abortion.¹²

Union Believes

1. Access to reproductive healthcare is a student welfare issue: students do face crisis pregnancies which have an adverse effect on their university lives
2. ~~The unavailability of safe and legal abortion in Northern Ireland places an undue burden on these students in an already distressing situation~~
3. ~~If an international student falls pregnant unexpectedly while living in Northern Ireland, they will likely not be able to extend their study visa to accommodate their pregnancy or maternity, nor can they access abortion services in Northern Ireland unless they meet the very strict criteria;~~
4. There is a rise in anti-abortion and pro-life sentiment in the UK due to the Trump administration and increasing European pro-life movements. We need to be prepared to face threats to abortion and other reproductive services as a result of this growing hegemony.
5. UEA SU should support and promote pro-choice activism but it must be recognised that the ability to have choice is a privilege. Some people do not have choice or their choice is taken away from them due to their circumstances and oppressions.

Union Resolves

1. To take a firm pro-choice stance and stand in solidarity with anyone seeking access to free, safe and legal abortion
2. To release a formal statement of solidarity with those ~~in Northern Ireland~~ ~~and~~ across the globe who do not have safe or legal access to abortion services
3. That the Women's Officer and Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer continue to support pro-choice activists in Northern Ireland, the UK and the rest of the world and campaign against any cuts to vital abortion services in the UK
4. That all UEA SU pro-choice campaigning and activism should be carried out according to the NUS Women's Campaigns toolkit on Reproductive Justice to ensure campaigns are inclusive of all marginalised groups

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¹¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/23/politics/trump-mexico-city-policy/>

¹² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37540139>

