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Asylum delays at heart of Yarl's Wood protest

North East Bedfordshire MP Alistair Burt will use an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on Wednesday 10th February to highlight delays in the asylum system as the likely frustration behind the recent hunger strike protest at Yarl's Wood which ended yesterday. The debate comes the day of the Ombudsman's report into the UK Border Agency which found the immigration service to be failing.

"Yarl's Wood copes with many hundreds of women detainees during the course of a year, and the centre is supposed to be for very short detention periods before detainees are deported. But frustrations build up as a number of cases take a long time to resolve, and I believe this was behind the protests of the last few days. I do not condone or support hunger strike protests, or anything at the centre which might put at risk the health and safety either of staff or detainees, but equally the concerns behind the protests must be examined.

In relation to the action which finished yesterday, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Independent Monitoring Board at Yarl's Wood who were on hand to observe the way in which Serco managed the protest and dealt with it. Although these things are never easy I believe there were no serious injuries and the health and welfare of staff and detainees was paramount at all times.

To be on the safe side I will be asking the Government to make available CCTV footage for the Inspector of Prison Ms Ann Owers in case any detainee or those representing them is concerned about how the protest was managed.



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My debate will raise other issues, particularly the detention of children, rogue legal advisers, and how concerns of detainees are dealt with. Our system of border controls requires that there must be a deportation process if, after all due legal process is exhausted, those who have not been allowed into the UK must return. It is the right of our country to be able to do this, but in depriving anyone of their liberty in detention the processes must be seen to be transparent, fair and just. Yarl's Wood occasionally throws up stories where these things are questioned, and the voices of those in detention, particularly children, deserve a hearing in Parliament".

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