



James Austin-Smith
Chairman
Human Rights Commission
2nd Floor Artemis House,
Fort Street, George Town,
Grand Cayman

Friday, July 13 2018

Dear Mr. Austin-Smith,

Conditions at Immigration Detention Centre

Firstly, thank you for writing to me to report the outcomes of the recent visit to the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) by the Human Rights Commission. I am grateful to the Commission for highlighting the issues identified.

I have instructed the prison maintenance team to conduct an appraisal of the physical conditions at the IDC and in particular, have directed that immediate action be taken to effect repairs where possible.

You have asked specifically for a written response to the presented issues; I respectfully do so below.

With regard to the absence of an obvious sprinkler system, I am advised that the IDC facility was designed and constructed under the 1999 SBCCI code and is considered an Institutional Group I establishment which falls under Group I-Restrained Occupancy (Section 309.2). Section 903 of 1999 SBCCI code does not require the buildings of Group I to have an automatic sprinkler system. However, appropriate fire risk prevention measures will be taken to minimise risks and hazards that could lead to fire. Routine smoke detector checks will be regularised and we will install a liquid petroleum gas leak detector to the kitchen area. Appropriate hazard identification checks will also be enforced.

I am extremely disappointed at the conditions encountered within the restroom areas of this facility. I have directed a number of immediate responses. This will include engaging a local plumbing contractor to affect repairs to all malfunctioning mixing valves on showers and to repair malfunctioning toilets. Whilst I am grateful to the Commission for articulating their concerns with regard to ablutions facilities, it should also be noted that the detainees have a responsibility to ensure that their environment is cleaned; clearly they have not done this. I will instruct, and provide the resources, to have the restroom areas deep cleaned. I will also reinforce to my staff the importance of ensuring that detainees maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of all IDC areas going forward.

The issues highlighted within the kitchen are unacceptable. Food storage and handling areas will be deep cleaned and a programme of hygiene inspections commenced. A member of my management team will be assigned specific responsibility for overseeing this.

Detainees are provided with access to fixed line telephones at public expense. They are furnished with phone cards to assist them in making calls to family, friends and legal advisors. With regard to the issue of detainee possession of mobile telephones, there are certain security related challenges connected to the use of mobile phones within the IDC. These concerns are not only recognized by authorities in the Cayman Islands but also in other jurisdictions. In particular these concerns relate to the taking of photographs and making audio and video recordings (as has happened in Cayman).

That said I would be keen to look at the possibility of having a system where controlled use of mobile telephones is permitted subject to certain conditions being met. Obviously the detainees have managed to acquire mobile telephones given the fact that they have uploaded and streamed videos from within the IDC. It would follow that they also have the capacity to access online Spanish news/media platforms. Nonetheless, I will have someone explore what options are available to us to provide legitimate access to Spanish language news media. Accordingly I am looking to provide a Spanish free view channel package for the detainees to use.

I am not in a position to comment on the other matters you have mentioned with regard to why detainees are routinely held within the IDC. That particular matter is not within the remit of my Director of Prisons role.

The safety, security and care of the detainees is extremely important to us and I am thankful to the Human Rights Commission for raising and seeking responses to the points outlined in your note. I hope that this response goes some way to provide assurance that reasonable actions are being pursued to mitigate the issues that are of mutual concern.



Steve Barrett
Director of Prisons