

Information about yourself	
Name	I wish to remain anonymous.
Contact details	Please contact Madeleine Crowther (below) if you want to be in contact regarding my submission.
Do you wish to give oral evidence before the inquiry panel?	No
Are you making this submission by yourself or is someone helping you? If so, who is this person?	Madeleine Crowther from Waging Peace gave me some help writing up my account. E: maddy.crowther@wagingpeace.info T: 0207 243 0300 A: Park Place, 12 Lawn Lane, SW8 1UD
Date you are completing this form	01/10/2014
When were you released from detention?	13/01/2014
How long were you in detention?	1 month and 1 week – from 07/12/2013
In which detention centres/prisons were you detained?	Yarl's Wood
Can you tell us a little about why you were in detention?	My applications for asylum in the UK and Ireland had been refused
Do you now have a right to remain in the UK?	I have temporary admission in the UK, I do not have a right to remain here
If you are still waiting to hear from the Home Office about their decision on your case, how long have you been waiting?	Six years and seven months

Submission

1) Your experiences of living in immigration detention, including the context and duration of your stay;

I arrived in the UK in March 2008 after facing horrible persecution, torture and rape, both by individuals and by groups, in Sudan. After finding that my asylum case here would fail because I had travelled to the UK using a student visa, I made my way to Ireland and sought asylum there in July 2008. My case was refused twice there and I received a letter of deportation informing me that I was about to be deported back to Sudan. On 16 March 2012 I sought asylum in Belfast, but was arrested on 21 August 2013 and taken to London. I was detained at Colnbrook for around three or four days, then sent to Yarl's Wood. I was released on 29 August 2013 and sent to Wakefield. I stayed there until 18 September 2013 and was then given NASS accommodation in Sunderland.

On 7 December 2013, I was at my home in Sunderland when eight officers arrived – two immigration officers and six police officers – and my home was surrounded by police cars. The police officers were wearing a kind of uniform that looked like it belonged to the 'special forces'. This made me think they were going to attack me. They asked me to come with them, and took me to Washington Police Station in a caged area in the back of a car. When I arrived a file was opened for me like a criminal – I was questioned and photographed, and my height was measured. I was kept in a cell under lock and key, with a small viewing slat in the door. I was held for two days.

During this time my past became present and I had flashbacks to my experiences in Sudan. All of the faces of the officers changed to those of the men who raped me in Khartoum. I felt electricity in my legs, and felt I couldn't use them and couldn't stand. I felt very unsafe and was scared that someone was coming to hurt me. I cried for my family who died in Sudan. I started bleeding as though I was on my period, but I knew I had finished my period eleven days before so it couldn't be that. When I mentioned this to staff members there, they didn't believe me and said it was just my period. I told them I was a victim of torture but nobody would listen. I couldn't sleep for those two days.

After two days, early one morning, I was taken to Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, where I remained for the next one month and one week, until 13 January 2014.

2) *The conditions in immigration detention, including your ability to access services such as legal advice, healthcare, pastoral support;*

3) *Whether there were appropriate mechanisms to deal with any mental, physical or emotional issues you may have experienced prior to or during your time in detention;*

Absolutely not. I was experiencing severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at Yarl's Wood, but there was no understanding of PTSD or its symptoms there. No one at Yarl's Wood believed I couldn't walk or that the reason for my bleeding was not my period. They kept saying they had seen me walking around in Sunderland, which is true, but I was only unable to walk once I had flashbacks to my experiences in Khartoum.

I found it particularly traumatic that the guards came to my cell every hour to check on me. I could hear their footsteps and then the key in the lock, which reminded me of being detained in Khartoum, and I didn't want to see the guards' faces, as they reminded me of the faces of the men who'd tortured and raped me in Sudan. I heard screaming in the corridors, and each time I thought it was someone being killed, and the sound of something dragging made me think they were carrying a body away. It made me feel very unsafe, and I asked the guards to stop checking up on me so often, but they refused and just told me 'detention centres are safe'. I started to hide behind the wardrobe in my room to avoid looking at the guards and covering my ears so I couldn't hear them, but they would still check on me.

Because of the PTSD, I began shaking and lost my appetite, something that had happened before on three occasions in my life – when my fiancé was killed in front of me, when I was arrested in Khartoum, and when I was told by immigration authorities in Ireland that I'd be deported to Sudan. The bleeding stopped on its own after two days, though I did not receive any help from officers or the medical staff about this issue. But because I had no appetite, I didn't eat or drink at Yarl's Wood. The medical records at Yarl's Wood confirm this. Two weeks after I arrived they note that I wasn't eating and that I had claimed I had a history of loss of appetite when frightened or stressed.

I became very weak and needed help to move around, dress, clean myself and use the toilet. The detention centre guards wouldn't help and refused to give me a wheelchair, so my roommate and other detainees helped me as much as they could. All I could do on my own was crawl around my room. On one occasion, I tried to crawl outside into the corridor, but three officers immediately came up to me and told me to stay in my room if I was going to crawl. I asked them what the difference was between me crawling in my room and crawling in the corridor and they said because there were cameras in the corridors and it was public. The implication is they didn't want my condition to be seen by the cameras as they'd then be held accountable.

My condition deteriorated rapidly. Because I couldn't clean myself, I began to smell very bad, and because I wasn't eating or drinking my mouth began to hang open. I lost my voice entirely and my vision became blurred. At one point, I noticed the guards laughing at me in my condition.

During this time medical staff at the detention centre checked my blood pressure regularly, every one to two hours. Initial readings showed I had very low blood pressure, which explained why I was fainting and unable to walk. But the staff would tell me to swallow some sugar substance with water, and then return after an hour or so to take a measurement again. This happened many times. My blood pressure would appear higher in these readings and they'd only note this measurement down, making it appear that I was healthy in official records.

In late December I had a preliminary review by an independent psychiatrist who identified symptoms of severe depression and PTSD. My physical condition was also bad. I needed to go to the hospital, but the healthcare personnel in the detention centre refused. Some other detainees threatened to demonstrate and go on hunger strike if I wasn't taken to a hospital. I tried to get in touch with my lawyer, but I had barely enough energy to be heard and kept fainting on the line. The other detainees spoke to her on my behalf and told her of my situation. It was only when my lawyer pressed the staff at Yarl's Wood that I was sent to Bedford Hospital. This was on 31 December 2013.

The medical staff and the psychiatric team at the hospital were very concerned about my health, though they found no physical reason for my mobility issues (I was later diagnosed with dissociative motor disorder, which

explains this). I had dehydration and hypoglycaemia and was kept for three days to rehydrate – all the time watched by two Yarl's Wood guards. Yarl's Wood officers kept saying I had to go back, but the doctors at the hospital said they wouldn't release me until they knew there was appropriate care for me at Yarl's Wood. When they called Yarl's Wood to arrange this, the medical team there dismissed my health, saying I was just on hunger strike. It became apparent they knew nothing of my medical history or background. I tried to indicate to the doctors at the hospital that this wasn't true, that I wasn't on hunger strike, but because I had lost my voice and was in and out of consciousness, it was difficult. I just shook my head. I was sent back to a healthcare unit at Yarl's Wood, and told that my flight to Ireland would be the next week.

In this place, no one helped me to go even from my bed to the toilet. They refused to give me a wheelchair, except to take me to the living room, but they said I had to walk to healthcare on my own, which I found impossible. Healthcare personnel were dismissive, and clearly didn't believe I couldn't walk. The medical notes from that time state: *"resident claims to be feeling weak and unable to walk"* and that I was *"apparently now crawling on all fours to the bathroom and still requesting officers bring food to her room though she says she vomits after each intake. She is insisting her mental state renders her unable to mobilise."* This is despite the fact that other detainees had to carry me, like a baby, up three flights of stairs to an appointment with my lawyer. The guards made a point of offering me a wheelchair when my lawyer was around, though they had refused me one when I asked before. I had also requested to see a psychiatrist during this period, but no assessment was carried out prior to my release. It was when my lawyer saw my condition that she put pressure on Yarl's Wood to release me. I think they released me because I was dying there, and they didn't want to take responsibility.

I was released on 13 January 2014, but the manner in which this happened was wholly inappropriate. I was released at around 5pm, and taken in a private taxi van to the train station. When we got there, I was told the train had gone. The driver of the taxi said I had to get out of his car. I told him I couldn't walk, and he then helped me to a nearby bench. It was a cold day in January. I was freezing and had no food or water. The driver waited in his car for further instruction. I spent more than an hour there before I was taken back to Yarl's Wood. Once there, another car, this time driven by an officer, took me to Victoria Coach Station. I asked the officer for money that I could use to pay for a taxi after the coach journey, as I had nothing and didn't know how I was going to be able to make it home. The officer said Yarl's Wood was not a bank and refused.

When we got to Victoria Coach Station the officer told me to get out, and when I explained I couldn't walk he didn't believe me. I told him I would crawl across traffic to the station in that case, so he then brought a security officer from the station, and both of them helped me to a seat inside. The officer left. I sat on that seat for more than five hours, from 7-8pm until 12.45am in the morning, with no money, food or water. At 12.45am I was helped by the same security officer and the coach driver onto an overnight bus to Sunderland.

On the journey my health was deteriorating, so I gave the driver the number of a lady I knew from the Refugee Council. When I arrived in Sunderland, the driver of the bus stayed with me despite the cold as he was so concerned about my condition. I was met by the lady from the Refugee Council who I'd called from the bus and told I was unable to walk. She had asked me where I'd be staying and I informed her that I assumed I would be staying at the address where I had been living prior to detention, a housing project. The lady called my previous address to ask what arrangements had been made and was informed that my room was occupied by someone else and that they had received no information that I would be arriving, although presumably this was something Yarl's Wood could have done prior to my departure.

Seeing my condition and how frail, weak and dehydrated I was when I arrived in Sunderland, and also how I was unable to use my legs, the lady took me straight to the hospital. I was in hospital from 14 January to 5 February and then moved to a nursing care unit until 25 February before being moved to a rehabilitation centre. Although the doctors could not find a physical cause for my loss of mobility, they did not dispute my inability to use my legs. I was diagnosed with PTSD, severe depression (with signs of derealisation and depersonalisation) and probable dissociative motor disorder resulting in the loss of the use of my legs. I spent seventeen weeks undergoing 'reablement therapy' at a centre, which helped me learn to walk again and live independently. I was finally able to access the services I needed; occupational and physical therapy, psychological support (PTSD-based cognitive-behavioural therapy), social worker support and twice daily carers.

Yarl's Wood did not release me into care or make efforts to ensure further follow-up and continuity of care. No

efforts were made to ensure that I could access the services I needed in the community or indeed that my health and welfare was ensured upon my release.

4) Any longer-term impacts of detention on you, your family and/or your wider community;

To this day I have restricted mobility. My left leg is okay, but my right leg is very poor, and I need a stick to walk. I continue to have serious vitamin deficiencies, such as iron, potassium, magnesium and vitamin B, which made me lose half my hair. I think that if I had spent more time in Bedford Hospital at least, my current health situation would be better. I am giving my testimony here so that this does not happen to others in future.

5) Any other information about detention that you would like to share.

The detention centre added a new nightmare to my ones from Sudan. Now I have two nightmares. If I am arrested and detained a third time, I am very scared of what will happen to me. Detention centres are like another world to the UK. They are places where human rights and human dignity don't exist at all. I received the kind of treatment I would expect in a third-world country, but not the UK. In reality, there is no difference between here and Sudan – in Sudan the torture was physical, but here it is mental.

6) How far does the current detention system support the needs of vulnerable detainees, including pregnant women, detainees with a disability and young adults?

The medical teams there are not fully trained to work with detainees with mental health issues. I feel that they are only qualified to work in detention centres because they couldn't work with regular patients.

7) There is currently no time limit on immigration detention – in your view what are the impacts (if any) of this?

Indefinite detention can definitely affect your mental health, and make any existing problems worse.

8) Are the current arrangements for authorizing detention appropriate?

No. My initial health screening at Yarl's Wood mentioned the trauma I suffered and my history of depression. The GP filed a Rule 35 report detailing my scarring and my history of seeing my family killed in front of me, being shot and being detained, tortured and raped on several occasions by the guards in Sudan. The GP concluded that the scarring was consistent with my story but failed to comment on my current mental health. The Home Office case worker decided that continued detention was appropriate as my removal was imminent and therefore constituted exceptional circumstances. This completely ignored the re-traumatizing effect of detention. As I was a victim of severe torture in Sudan, I should not have been detained at all.