

## Liverpool Testimony 1

### Notes to Panel:

For further context, see also Liverpool Joint Submission.

Bahram would like to give oral evidence to the panel. Contact c/o Regional Asylum Activism project: [NorthWest@regionalasylumactivism.org](mailto:NorthWest@regionalasylumactivism.org) | 07557983264. He got help to write his testimony and would need an interpreter to give oral evidence.

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

*My name is Bahram. I am from Iran (Kurdistan). I was detained in September 2011 because I was smuggled to the UK and I was arrested and detained at the border. I was entering the country illegally and I hid in a lorry. I was arrested and taken to Dover to be sent back to my home country. I tried to commit suicide and I was taken to hospital for one night. I was then taken to the detention centre while they investigated my case.*

*I was in detention two and a half months. I think it was a few weeks before Christmas when I was released. I was in Harmondsworth, then London Heathrow, then taken back to Harmondsworth, then back London Heathrow again.*

*I had been in jail as a political prisoner in Iran. I am a refused asylum seeker and I am in the process of appealing the decision (I am waiting for a High Court hearing on my appeal).*

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

*When I got to the detention centre, they took my medicine, my sim card and mobile (everything). I was unable to contact anyone. Later they gave me a mobile, but as I had no sim card I was unable to contact anyone. They took my clothes. I was in a cell with a Pakistani person.*

*No one helped me regarding my health. At first nothing was offered to me. They took my asthma spray off me and I had an asthma attack after three days. A nurse came to see me and he advised them to take me to another place where I was near a clinic.*

*They didn't provide an interpreter and after five days they told me to go to the library and choose a solicitor. How could I choose when I couldn't speak the language? I chose one who only saw me once after I sewed my mouth together and went on hunger strike. I got pastoral support after a week, in the church in the detention centre.*

*After a month I was taken to an outside hospital, while chained up. I got some medication, which later in the centre they took off me.*

### 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.

*Not at all. I got information from my country that my family were in danger. I was really stressed and I told them that I needed help; they laughed at me.*

*As I was in danger of hurting myself, I was constantly watched (even in the bathroom). They never explained why I was under so much monitoring.*

*I was depressed, I was unable to talk without them laughing at me. I went on hunger strike and sewed my lips together. The manager told me "we don't care if you die."*

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

*I have mental health problems. I am unable to sleep. I am on medication. I started drinking and I'm an alcoholic (but getting help to stop). I get flashbacks, I get rage attacks.*

*While I was in the detention centre, my wife got arrested in Iran and she had to divorce me to be able to get released. It made my family stressed and worried.*

*I lost respect for myself and I lost respect for the system in the UK.*

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

*There were a lot of drugs and it was not a safe place. When I was not given medication in hospital, the other prisoners would try to sell me medication and other drugs.*

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

*Not supportive at all. They actually make you worse. I had wounds from gunshots from Iran and they never dealt with my wounds. I was unable to wear shoes due to wounds but they never offered me any alternative shoes.*

*I also had no contact with the outside world and couldn't use the internet.*

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

*The impact on our lives is very negative. I think keeping someone with no time limit is against their human rights. The damage done to me while I was there will stay with me for ever.*

**8) Are the current arrangements for authorizing detention appropriate?**

*In my opinion, the whole process is inhuman. We were put with criminals and that's very dangerous.*

**9) What are the wider consequences of the current immigration detention system, including any financial and/or social implications?**

*The impact on my mental health and on other family members is immense and the consequences on my life have been indescribable. I lost my family, I became alcoholic since my release and I have dark nightmares on a regular basis. I am unable to focus on work and I am not sure if I will ever be able to recover.*

**10) How effective are the current UK alternatives to detention (e.g. bail, reporting requirements)? Are viable alternatives to immigration detention in operation in other countries?**

*Not effective at all in my case and in other cases I witnessed.*