



## **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF DETENTION**

Parliament is launching an inquiry into detention in the UK. The inquiry is taking testimony from people who have gone through detention. Tell us your thoughts on detention to help René Cassin change the immigration detention system.

**NAME:** Christine Nankya Nakato

**ARE YOU OVER 18:** YES

**DATES IN DETENTION:** Detained in April 2012 for 9 months and 1 month between March and April 2013.

**WHERE YOU UNDER 18 AT ANY POINT DURING THE TIME YOU WERE DETAINED:**  
YES/NO

**NAME OF DETENTION FACILITY:** Yarl's wood and then in Colnbrook (November 2012) and then displaced between the two detention centres.

### **1. What were your experiences of living in immigration detention, including the context and duration of your stay?**

I am from Uganda and I left my country in 2011, aged of 27. Since the age of 17, I was subject to sexual abuses by close members of my family.

As part of a family feud over land my father was killed by my brothers, members of the Uganda's Internal Security Organisation. When he died, my brothers disputed the ownership of land my father had gifted me and started bullying me. When they began to threaten to kill me too, I escaped to the UK with the help of some friends

I claimed for asylum after arriving in the UK but my case was refused because I think they said it was not in the category. I was in Glasgow trying to rebuild my life with support from the Unity Women's Group, and counselling at Rape Crisis, leaving in the community when I was detained and sent to Yarl's Wood.

In October 2012, in one attempt to remove me from the UK, I was dragged naked out of my room by several male guards. The conditions of my



deportation were so shocking that it led to spontaneous protests by more than 100 woman detainees from the Yarl's Wood detention centre<sup>1</sup>.

The way I was treated in detention was inhuman and degrading. I can never exactly explain how awful it was because I was physically and psychologically mistreated in detention.

The conditions of detention are so awful that my health, especially my mental health, started deteriorating very quickly. I had nightmares, sleep disturbance, difficulties to eat and suicidal thoughts. I didn't understand why I was detained when I did nothing wrong. I was just looking for help and they detained me like if I was a criminal, guilty of something but I did nothing wrong and they just mistreated me there.

In November 2012, when they took me from Yarl's Wood to put me in Colnbrook before a deportation attempt, all my legal documents were lost so it was almost impossible to make a case before the deportation.

It ended in diverse attempts of suicide when I was in detention and also after I was released.

When I was at the hospital in 2013, I was detained again despite of my health conditions. I was at the hospital after another suicide attempt, my mental health was really bad but they didn't care. They just said that my case has been refused and that they had to deport me so they just detained me again despite my health state.

The conditions of detention were terrible but it was worse because I was always threatened to be removed. During my two detentions, the UKBA made 7 attempts of forcible deportation but they all failed either because of my health conditions, legal intervention or public support.

Nb: At the last attempt to deport Christine in March 2013, some British MPs and MEPs have supported the action protesting against the decision of the British authorities to deport her. UNHCR has acted according to his means. Kenya Air virtually had to shut down their number because so many people were calling, The Kenyan Embassy were inundated with calls from people asking that Kenya not be complicit in the attempt to deport Christine and the Home Secretary, Theresa May, made very clear that the UKBA would be held if anything would happen after her deportation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "Statement from the women of Yarl's Wood", October 19, 2012, available at: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2012/oct/07yarl-s-wood-statement.html>

<sup>2</sup> Everyone, Group for International Cooperation on Human Rights Culture "The flight of Christine Nakato Nankya has been stopped", March 29, 2013. Available at:

**2. What were the conditions in immigration detention like, including your ability to access services such as legal advice, healthcare, pastoral support?**

You can always book an appointment with a solicitor but it takes a very long time to be able to see a lawyer. Then when the solicitors come, you tell them your story and they just say they can't do anything, that they can't take the case. They don't help.

In detention centres you don't have real access to doctors, it's just a formal access to respect the rules. When you manage to have an appointment, the doctors are there, in the room, you can see them but you cannot speak to them. You are just allowed to speak to a nurse but never directly to the doctors, the nurses always speak on your behalf and you have a limited amount of time so you can't explain everything.

Also even after my suicide attempts, I never had access to counselling or to psychiatric or psychological care. I was never able to speak to a psychiatrist or a psychologist to tell how I feel and I was just receiving medication despite the fact that I was in suicide watch.

Once, after a suicide attempt, I saw a nurse and she just said she was very sorry for me, that she would like to help me but that her hands were tied and that she could not do anything for me.

**3. Were there any longer-term impacts of detention on you, your family and/or your wider community?**

I still have mental health problems and suicidal thoughts and I'm still not free because I still have to report every week and I don't have the right to work or study here. I'm in a UKBA housing accommodation and I receive 35 pounds a week to leave. But now I am receiving counselling and health care treatment.

**4. Is there any other information about detention that you would like to share?**



I would like to be granted the asylum status to be able to study to improve my English and learn about computer and then be able to work and start a new life.