

Inquiry into the use of Immigration Detention: Individual Submission

Introduction

1. My name is Leon. I have been in detention for over one year and eight weeks, from 8th August 2014 until now – I still don't know how long I will be here.
2. Next month, I will have been in this country for 10 years. I have not been allowed to work and have been in and out of detention. It is psychological torture, it's a waste of your life. It is shameful.
3. I came to the UK to seek help. My uncle was a political person and I went to stay with him in that country. He passed away, so I took charge of that job – political people wanted to kill me because it was a political job. Since then, my life has just been locked up, locked up, locked up. Because I moved first when I was young, 6 or 8 years old, they don't believe me about where I come from.
4. I have two children born here, and I have never committed any crime.

Your experiences of living in immigration detention, including the context and duration of your stay.

5. Before, I was in detention for 17 months, in Brooke House and Harmondsworth – I got released in November 2011. I went to sign on, I hadn't committed any crime, yet they took me into detention. I want to tell the officials and parliament what this is like – last time I went into detention, during that time I felt I was dying, they didn't take care of me in there.
6. When I came back from detention, I registered with my GP. I explained to him the same thing what I explained in detention: I could not eat what I wanted, they didn't look after me. I explained the problems I was having, and he told me that I had got diabetes in detention.
7. They cannot remove me, because my nationality is disputed – they don't have the papers or travel documents to remove me. Throughout that time in detention, they never gave me removal directions. So why did they spend that money to lock me up?
8. The money they have spent is just to kill people here, but slowly. Where are our human rights? I should not be again living in detention, locked up, as they still cannot remove me. It is because those government people don't believe us. My ex-wife has told them where I come from, but they don't believe her, they don't believe me. Still they can't get papers for me.
9. It is like a nightmare – I'm having to keep faith in god to keep strong. It's not anyone who can live like this. I have no future here. Being in detention is like death because you have no idea how long you will be released. Detention is like a never-ending sentence. How long can you hold someone like this?
10. I have seen so many people in detention dying a death inside themselves – it is psychological killing. I have seen many people: when they came they were well. After a few months, they

become mad and some of them have killed themselves. Some killed themselves when they got removal directions. I was the only person I can count on for all my detention – I was always praying, it is only my belief in God that kept me safe. All around me people felt like they were dying – being locked up in here is like you are being killed.

11. This time, I have had my removal directions, but they were cancelled – it was only praying to God that saved me. You need to be so patient. You can't be so stressed here, you know it's going to make you become mad. It is only God that is making me hold on at the moment.

Conditions in immigration detention

Healthcare

12. The food here is not good. It is too late for me, the 17 months I spent in detention before already damaged my body. I developed diabetes. When I came I struggled to eat the food. We are cooked for, but the food was always underdone.
13. The medical attention is very poor. I've been on medication a long time. When I was in detention they didn't give the medication to me, so I couldn't take it weekly as I was meant to – this caused the problems.
14. Brooke House was the worst in terms of access to medical care. I had some big health problems in detention, and they should have released me. But when you try to book an appointment with the medical centre they make you wait for such a long time. You feel like people are ignoring you and your health.
15. At the moment my feet are near to dead already. They hurt all the time and there is a problem. The doctor can do nothing. They tell me it's the diet here and the diabetes – it's very hard for me to manage as I have to eat the food.

Access to legal advice

16. I have been able to access a lawyer, and am currently taking the government to the High Court for all the wrong they've done. They gave me the wrong address and this caused me lots of problems. I had the letter, so I called my visitor to come in. She read it and identified this mistake for me. So still I am waiting.

Communication

17. Communication is a problems – I don't have access to credit on my phone. This makes it hard to call my lawyers or speak to my family. I rely on the help that others give me to pay for a phone card. I have to contact my lawyer as there is a court case in the family courts coming up – but I have no credit so I can't speak to them.

Other conditions in detention

18. The officers abuse their power here. I got taken to Medical Justice, who saw and documented the injustice I got. They saw the scars on my hands from the handcuffs. But I know I will never get compensation from the UK government.

19. Once they put my room-mate in handcuffs and they tried to move me. I refused to move. For one week I did not eat. I was so weak. They tried to take me to Harmondsworth. I have such bad memories of Harmondsworth that I refused. I thought, I am nearly dead already from hunger, so what more can they do to me? I should refuse.
20. In Harmondsworth I lost many of my possessions. I lost my mobile phone, I lost my birth certificate and my camera. The security guards took it. Many of my things went missing. But who do you complain to? You know you have no power. The people you complain to are the ones doing wrong. So you don't complain.
21. They make you work in detention, even whilst you are locked up. It feels like a slavery that never ends: they pay you just £1 here and there, you have to work and you are being kept from your freedom.

Any other information about detention

22. The UK should do as normally other countries in the EU do – you should be able to go out of the centre and come back, and not be locked up in here. They take the freedom away from people, and there is no good reason. What threat am I? Where are our human rights?
23. The UK pretends to be a democracy. How can this country be democratic when they can just lock you up for as long as they like, with no limit. And then the UK wants to criticise other countries on their human rights record. When I was in Africa, if you told me that the UK would do this to people I would say, no, no, that's not what that country is about. You have to be locked up here to really understand what is going on in the UK.
24. Normally a government is not meant to lock people away without their freedom only if they have broken the law. What have I done? I've never broken the law, what have I done to deserve being locked up?
25. MPs have the law with them. Normally, people who have the rules should know the rules – they haven't been fair with me, so how can I trust that they will do anything to improve things for us in detention. I've committed no crime, so why am I here? I'm here with many people, many of us are angry about how we are treated – we can only pray and hope an inquiry can lead to some change.