

Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention: written evidence submitted by Mr X.

Dictated to Anna Beesley and Mary Child, Committee Members for Scottish Detainee Visitors

Formatted by Anna Beesley

Sex: Male

Date of statement: 15/09/14

Detention record: Mr X. was detained for five months under immigration powers in Edinburgh prison after his sentence was completed. He was then moved to Dungavel for eight months. He was then moved to Colnbrook for three months for an appointment with his embassy. He was then moved back to Dungavel. From Dungavel he was released on bail for three months. He was re-detained in Dungavel in October 2012 and he has remained there since.

Total length of time held under immigration powers (at submission): 3 years 3 months

Current Detention Centre: Dungavel

The following is all Mr X.'s own words bar what is in brackets [...].

1. EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN DETENTION

1.1. Where do I start... If you are here for a week, a couple of weeks people find it hard but that's fair enough but when it comes to months and months and years this is not a joke anymore. I look forward to nothing. I've been in this situation for so long that to get through a day you have to switch yourself off. There are so many rules and no breathing space. Normal stuff that people take for granted like waking up when you want, which doors to open, what to eat, are decided for me.

1.2. You have to make use of anything in the environment [in detention] because every single thing could save your life, I think differently here because after a long time here I'm switched off to what [people outside] do daily. It's hard to explain what it's like here. You have to find something that keeps you going and for me that's work. I do a lot of jobs here in Dungavel. That's quite scary as I'll miss the work when I get out. I earn £15 a week. I help with the induction of new detainees. And I work in the library, that's the most important building in the whole centre, where people learn English and use the internet and fax machines and emotions change there all the time. I keep an eye on other detainees there. Someone might read the news from their own country and it might be upsetting and I try to calm them down before they leave the library.

1.3. I don't even taste the food anymore because I've eaten it for years I can't even say if its good or bad.

1.4. I'm lucky I'm still standing. I think differently since I came here. I have to protect my emotions. It has to mean something, me being here. After this experience that I've been

through I've never felt this hungry to achieve. There's a purpose in life for me to achieve, at the end of the day I have three children who are all British citizens.

2. INDEFINITE DETENTION

2.1. It's mental torture in here. There's no time limit that's the problem, you come in with the fear that I can be here forever. The second time I was brought back to detention I was prepared, I was going into the unknown and I was prepared for it. I was programmed to know I was going to come in and be here for a while.

2.2. I've been in here for so long now that every immigration official and judge knows me personally. You look forward to your court date, have all evidence gathered, your Mrs there, your kids there, and then the judge shows no respect and in two minutes just says no. That's the icing on the cake. The worst thing is that there's never anything on a personal level, they have a rule book and don't want to hear anything about how I am or how I feel.

3. MAINTAINING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

3.1. People deal with detention differently, you have to find one thing to keep you going, for me it's my kids. I have three young children in Edinburgh (all British Citizens between the age of 3 -9). [The Home Office] put me in a situation where the worst thing can happen to me, to not be a dad to my kids. That's in [the Home Office's] hands not mine. It's the only thing that keeps me going, that's the scary bit.

3.2. My wife still visited me with the children when I was in the prison in Edinburgh. It was after I was sent south [to Colnbrook] that things started going pear shaped with my family. I was hoping to see them at Christmas 2011, but I was still in Colnbrook in England, so no visit was possible. It's been a long while since I spoke to my kids.

3.3. [My wife] had to move on, I didn't know if I was staying [in the UK] or going. I have tried to keep a relationship with my wife so that I could still see my kids but it's so much stress for her. It was too much for me in the situation I was in. She did her best too, but the uncertainty I'm living in, nobody wants to get involved, even my caseworker doesn't want to see me. With my kids someone else is making decisions about their lives. I'm not in control. It makes me feel like I'm a failure. I can't be a dad to them.

4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF

4.1. The [centre] officers are they only people who know about our daily things [for] the senior managers it's a different ball game, one is thinking about financial one about numbers.

4.2. Immigration people, I know their faces but I don't want to know their names, they are part of the problem. They don't ask about you, they know you've been here for a long time, they don't ask how are you. In here we're human beings, they just see numbers we are files in a filing cabinet

5. CASEWORKER

5.1. There's not enough communication between me and my case worker. If there was better communication between me and my caseworker I wouldn't be in this situation. I have never met my caseworker in 36 months, she is [based] in Glasgow. In here we are human beings, but to her I'm just another file in a filing cabinet. I've tried to make a picture of her

in my head, how does she feel? Is she human too? [I ask myself] is she a human when she is dealing with sensitive things [in my case].

6. SOLICITOR

6.1. I have a solicitor but I don't think he's taking it too seriously but I can't do anything now, if I change it's a lot, a lot of paperwork and I don't want to go through the whole thing, my whole story again. I have to involve myself more and more to keep on top of things. If I can keep myself together I can also help other people here understand what is going on.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INQUIRY

7.1. I think MPs should get their act together, get more involved in detention centres. Whenever an official visits Dungavel they are escorted by suits and ties who are interested in the finances and how the place is run, we don't even see those people. MPs should visit and have the freedom of speaking to anyone. Actually talking to detainees would help them to understand better what it is like here.