

Evidence of injustice, unfairness and disrespect to the detainees in the IRDCs.

Written for the Parliamentary Cross-Party Panel to Inquiry into Immigration Detention Centres.

By Robbie Islam

1. I am called Robbie, my Name is Rabiul Islam. I am a retired secondary science teacher. I live in Becontree Heath, Dagenham in Essex. I have been working in London since November 1989. I speak English, Bengali, Sylhett, Urdu and Hindi mainly.
2. My objective is to do anything possible to bring peace, tranquillity and harmony among human beings without prejudice. I believe respect, fairness, and justice are the three basic ingredients of my objective.
3. I am working individually as an activist to promote awareness of social injustices & unfairness among fellow citizens to achieve my objective. I respond to anyone who I believe is working to uphold any of the three basic ingredients; **RESPECT, FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE.**
4. On Tuesday, 1st July 2014 at 13:00, one of my former colleagues phoned and informed me about the conditions of the immigrant detainees in different IRDCs, he emailed me a list of 53 detainees of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. The list contained their phone numbers, and was requested if I could talk to them to find out about their situations in the IRDCs. I contacted most of them and their relatives and gave feed back to my colleague and that is how I got involved with activates such as phoning the detainees to support them mentally, writing letters to the Home Secretary & MPs, hosting an online Campaign to stop deportation of a detainee and participating demonstrations in the front of the Home Office and Harmondsworth Immigration Detention Centre to support the detainees. I met one detainee inside the Harmondsworth IRDC to hand in a FORM, this was good experience about the Centre and the securities. I also attended the first Parliamentary Inquiry into Immigration Detention Evidence Session held on Thursday; 17 July 2014. Currently, I am actively involved with a detainee's death in Morton Hall Detention Centre.
5. My last three months experience related to Immigration Detainees is nothing but pain, every time I listen to them on the phone I feel like crying, then I become angry, I wish there is someone who can change the system once for all, and do justice to these detainees. They have done no crime, the only crime if it is, then it is to seek a decent life. Who does not want a decent life?
6. I would like to add the stories of the following detainees as evidence of injustice , unfairness, disrespect and negligence:

The 1st detainee was Mukther Uddin.

7. On Friday, 15 August 2014, Mukther was bundled into a flight to Dhaka, Bangladesh, and he was escorted to Dhaka by 4 (four) security guards. Mukther phoned me before he was taken inside the plane by force; he told me on the phone, that the security guards have threatened him with injection to make him quite. Mukther was under treatment for his back injury resulted from a fall from a Bunked Bed inside Harmondsworth Detention Centre. Mukther lived in the UK for 14 years. Currently he is in hiding in Bangladesh; he has two young daughters and a wife. He has been denied the natural justice

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The followings are some information from his application and campaign.

The screenshot shows a petition page for 'CAMPAIGN TO STOP MUKHTER'S REMOVAL'. The page is dated Thursday, 14/08/14 at 22:04. It includes a 'Sign this petition' section with fields for Name, Email, and Comments, and a 'SIGN NOW' button. Below the button, it says '87 SIGNATURES'. The main text of the petition reads: 'Mukther is facing deportation tomorrow at 8.00am on Friday 15 August, on Qatar Airways flight QR006 from Heathrow Terminal 4. Mukther's life is at risk, he is someone who has fought against injustice and repression in two countries: Bangladesh and Britain. Mukther was twice on hunger strike and injured his back in Harmondsworth Detention Centre. Mukther was an inspiration for the inmates of the detention centre. Mukther Uddin has been an important figure in the fight to expose abuse in the UK immigration system, his deportation a cynical attempt to silence that exposure. As a prominent political activist, his life is in danger if he is returned to Bangladesh. We must act urgently to demand that Qatar Airways refuses to deport him and to demand that the Home Office cancels his removal. WHAT YOU CAN DO: 1. CONTACT QUATAR AIRWAYS EMAIL Qatar Corporate communications department:qrmedia@qatarairways.com.qa PHONE:0161 8320022 (main office for Qatar Airways in Manchester - press option 1 or 4 when you get through) and 0207 3269880 - the press officers for Qatar Airways.Mukther's Home office reference is: U1058517'.

The screenshot shows an email attachment list with the following items:

- (1) A copy of statement written by Mohammad Mukther Uddin
- (2) <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/campaign-to-stop-mukthers-removal>
- (3) <http://robbie@london313.com/please-dont-remove-mukther/>
- (4) <http://london313.com/>

Below the attachments, it says: 'Copy of this letter forwarded to the member of the Cross-party Panel of Parliamentarians inquiring into use of Immigration Detention Centres:'

1. Rt Hon Sarah Teather MP
2. Rt Hon Paul Blomfield MP
3. Rt Hon Jon Cruddas MP
4. Rt Hon David Burrowes MP
5. Rt Hon The Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE (Ruth Lister) MP
6. Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP
7. Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP
8. Rt Hon The Baroness Hamwee (Sally Hamwee) MP
9. Rt Hon Julian Huppert MP
10. Rt Hon Richard Fuller MP
11. Rt Hon The Lord Ramsbotham GCB CBE, MP

And also to:

1. Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP (Mukther's MP)
2. Jon Reatorby
3. Jerome Phelps, Director of Detention Action
4. M Mukther Udding by email

8. "Mukther's life is at risk, he is someone who has fought against injustice and repression in two countries: Bangladesh and Britain. Mukther was twice on hunger strike and injured his back in Harmondsworth Detention Centre. Mukther was an inspiration for the inmates of the detention centre. Mukther Uddin has been an **important figure in the fight to expose abuse in the UK immigration system**, his deportation a cynical attempt to silence that exposure. As a prominent political activist, his life is in danger if he is returned to Bangladesh."

Today (29/9/14), Mukther informed me by a text message that his health condition is deteriorating and he is very concerned about his two young daughters and wife. Mukther demands justice for all that happened with him when he was in detentions centres. After receiving the text message, I phoned Mukther's local MP office & I spoke to a lady, possibly the secretary of the MP, who told me that they cannot do anything about Mukther as he was deported from the UK.

9. **The 2nd detainee was Mohammad Arif Uddin of Rajshai, Bangladesh.**

Arief, a young man, suffered a heart-attack inside Harmondsworth, he had a heart operation and he is now been out on a conditional bail of weekly signing. Arif has been moved from London to Stock on Tees, he lives in a room rented by the Home Office, he lives on his own and there is no one to support or look after him. He told me that the IND has given him a Card to buy his food from Sainsbury. There is no TV or phone or Computer in the room, he is completely isolated. He needs to travel to a hospital in Middleborough for his treatment but he has no money to travel to. I contacted several organisations, e.g. Justice First Limited and County Durham Foundation and few locals but he has not yet been helped by anyone, he tells me. Arief needs to be moved closer to a place closer to a hospital and a neighbourhood where he can see people from his community. His conditional bail needs to be removed and his leave to remain indefinitely in the UK to be granted on compassionate grounds. His heart problem, length of living in the UK and his overall circumstance are the main grounds. He tells me that whatever money he had this was being taken by

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different solicitors giving him high hopes of getting him out of the prison but at the end the solicitors did do nothing.

10. The 3rd detainee is Lotefur Bahaman, a stateless detainee.

Lotefur is a non-Bengali, locally called Birahee in Bangladesh, was born in 1972 in a Geneva Camp in Dhaka in Bangladesh, his dad got killed during the Bangladesh liberation war. Geneva Camp is a notorious Camp in Dhaka. Lotefur grew up in the Camp and then ran away and came to French where he claimed Asylum, the French Govt. issued him with a REECEBEECE, later he came to England in 2003 because he was unable to settle down in French. All his applications for leave to remain in the UK were refused; he was arrested then given bail and then re-arrested. While he was in room no.4 of Morton Hall IRC, Rubel Ahmed, a fellow immigration detainee, died in his adjacent room no: 5. Lotefur told me everything he knew about the death, the Police have taken his statement and he is one of the 4 vital witnesses. Yesterday Lotefur told me that the Home Office has issued him a ticket, and the flight is on 16/10/2014, he will be deported to Bangladesh which is not his country. The Home Office has told him that they have prepared travel documents needed to deport him to Bangladesh. Is it fair to deport a person who is a vital witness to the death of an immigration detainee in a Prison Cell? How did the Home office prepare travel documents for a detainee who has no country to go; stateless?

11. The 4th detainee is Mohammad AKTHER SOHEL, Bangladesh

Sohel entered into the UK on a student visa 2009, because of his academic and personal issues, such as he is a Gay person and there were other numerous other problems, he was unable to return back to Bangladesh and he overstayed. He was arrested by the Home Office in a restaurant in Bath, in Wales. With the help of some local native people and an application he made to the Humanitarian Rights and Judicial review he was given a conditional bail. The condition was to sign in a local police station every week. In February 2014 Shoel was arrested again when he went to the police station for his weekly signing. He was told by the arresting officer that his judicial review application has been refused. Since his arrest, Soheli has been moved to different Immigration Detention Centres until he ended up at the Morton Hall IRDC where he was issued with a deportation flight ticket with Qatar Airlines, and the date of his deportation was 19/09/2014 However, this deportation has now been cancelled by the Home Office because Soheli is one of the witnesses of Rubel Ahmed's death in the Morton Hall IRC. Soheli told me that his Case Worker at Croydon Home office has told him that there is not any legal immigration case against him. So, why he is still in a detention?

Soheli is a gay person- if he is sent back to Bangladesh he may be burn to death for his sexual orientation, he is a vital witness of a fellow detainee's death in a Cell in his Detention Centre, and he is a young man, an important stage of his life he spent in the UK's IDCs. These are evidences of unfairness, injustices and disrespect and these needs to be rectified.

12. The 5th detainee is dead Rubel AHMED, Bangladesh

On Saturday, 6 September 2014 at around 10:00 I was phoned by one of my colleagues, he told me that a young Bangladeshi detainee (Rubel Ahmed) has died in Morton Hall IRDCs; he also gave me two phone numbers of two detainees of the Morton Hall. I immediately contacted those detainees and heard from them how the Rubel died, I found out the contact numbers of Rubel Ahmed's relatives member. Later I contacted his relatives, Bengali news papers and TVs by email, and Bangladesh High Commission in London and Birmingham. I spoke with several people including some journalists as well; I gave an interview about the death of Rubel to a journalist at the BBC office in Regent's Street. I saw Abdul Jalil, father of Rubel Ahmed at his sister's house before I joined the first protest demonstration at the Harmondsworth, Detention Centre, I was one of the speakers and I passed on the information that I had from the father of the dead Rubel Ahmed

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to the demonstrators. Later I joined the 2nd demonstration held in front of the Home Office organised by the Movement for Justice, after that I attended the Funeral Prayer for Rubel Ahmed held at the East London Mosque, after that I also participated at the Press Released organised by Rubel's family at the Montifior Centre at Hanbury Street, near Brick Lane. After that I joined the demonstration held in the front of the Home Office at Marsham street on 23 September 2014. Last Friday, 29/9/14, I attend a prayer session, called MILAD, at the Bricklane Jamay Mosque, this was held after the Friday Prayer. I heard from a family member about how they got the dead body out from the Morton Hall detention centre, Hospital and also about the INQUEST's and CORONA's report, and that of the INQUIRY started by the Home Office to find out the truth about Rubel's Death in a Prison Cell. I have also read the news published in Bangladesh news papers and have watched the video footage of Rubel's Funeral processions in his village in Sylhet, in Bangladesh and the demonstrations in Rubel's home town and their demands

The reason why I have got myself involved into so many activities is to find out the truth about Rubel's Death in a prison Cell. From my experience of all the actives above, I believe Rubel did not commit suicide. It is the injustice, disrespect, unfairness and negligence of the authority which are the main reasons of his untimely death. I would like you to read the following extracts from a journalist's report which I believe would help you to understand what actually happened.

"We are being told it was suicide and he didn't press his bell once," one prison guard tells me, on condition of anonymity. "The death was used as an excuse for unrest."

According to this account, Ahmed was alive and well at 21:00, when the first of the night's cell checks are conducted by the guards. There is another check at 23:00 and one again at 05:00. At the 23:00 check, the guards couldn't see him. They then called for help and found him dead.

"No-one knows who he was," the guard says. "He'd never come to our attention for any reason. He wasn't being watched closely because he wasn't a suicide risk. They say his flight was quite imminent. Everyone's assuming he didn't want to get back on the plane to leave."

The detainees were also told it was a suicide. Some of them mention that they were told it was a result of hanging. They held a meeting and said he committed suicide with a cable from the TV and hanged himself in the shower," a group of them whisper to me down the phone from one of the cells.

"There's no space for him to tie a rope or cable. The cable from the TV isn't that strong that it could hold the weight of a person. No-one believes it. Everyone knows. We are here, we know how the showers are. There's no space on the shower to tie the cable."

Detainees in neighbouring cells say Ahmed was complaining of a feeling of suffocation and that there was a pain in his chest. They say he repeatedly tried to get the guards' attention, but none came.

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"The guys in the nearby rooms said he'd been kicking the door, he'd been pressing the alarm bell," they say.

"Usually they come in a minute. But that day, nobody came. The staff said he didn't ring any bell. The guys in the other room said he was ringing the bell, he was kicking the door, he was screaming, but none of the staff came."

Even the guards do not necessarily believe the authorities' version of events.

"They are fucking liars," the guard tells me, of his own bosses. "They don't tell the truth, not by a long way. I've been in this job a long time and I know it's a load of bollocks. We're being told no-one is in the frame for this. Whatever the truth is, it's never going to come out. We won't even look at it. How will we ever know if he pressed his bell or not? We'll never know. They're saying he didn't and it's as simple as that."

There's good reason to be sceptical about both accounts. On the one hand, the authorities may want to conceal their behaviour, especially if they failed in their duty of care.

Their response to the death on Saturday was lacking. Not only did they not announce it, but they failed to even get in contact with journalists until hours after the story had broken. Morton Hall directed calls to the Ministry of Justice, who answered an hour later and passed the call on to the Home Office, who did not answer until several hours later. It was a disgraceful approach by the state to the death of someone in its care. They did not even contact Ahmed's family. They were informed by his solicitor, who had been told what happened by a fellow detainee.

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But the description of a TV cable and the shower is problematic. If Ahmed died of a heart attack, as many detainees believe, authorities are unlikely to inform them of a method of death which would leave evidence to the contrary. Detention centres are, after all, hotbeds of rumour. That said, the authorities' response was so shambolic, you wouldn't put this past them. There are many contradictory accounts whirling around the staff and detainees of the centre.

It'll be a while before we get a clearer picture. First there need to be investigations by the police and the prison and probation ombudsman. Only then do we get a coroner's inquest.

Either way, news of the death spread at breakfast time the next day. Things very quickly became heated.

"My personal opinion is we shouldn't have opened any doors," the guard says. "We should have spoken to everyone. Whoever was in charge made a bad mistake to stick to that regime. The dining hall was opened for breakfast from 8am. That allowed them to go organise whatever they wanted.

"A death in custody is never nice, it needs to be explained. But it's typical prison service - we don't like to communicate."

According to this account, the staff retreated to safety after being secretly told by a detainee that they were in danger.

"A detainee tipped us off," he said. "He went back and said to the guards: 'You need to withdraw, because you're going to be in danger. We rang round very quickly and said we need to leave. Threats were being made. It was getting very uncomfortable indeed."

The detainees say they woke that morning and by the time they went for breakfast a protest was already happening.

"The guys were doing a protest outside the main gate," they say. "We came outside and by about half nine all the staff were off the facilities. There was no-one in the main building. They left the building straight away. They didn't give answers to anyone.

"All day, the guys did the protest. We weren't asking guards for anything. We were just standing outside."

A shop window was broken, so detainees could grab snacks after not being fed all day. There was damage to the medical centre and guards say there was damage to the residential units.

The guards point out that Morton Hall is unlike many other detention centres, because it holds a disproportionate number of former criminals, who are often at the centre of disorder. They are surrounded by law-abiding men who have been made desperate by the immigration system.

"These people have been in the UK 30 years - some were born here," the guard says.

"They've Yorkshire accents, cockney accents. They're being sent back to countries where they've got no ties whatsoever. They will riot. And that's what they've done."

There have been numerous complaints about how many former prisoners end up in Morton Hall. Guards find it hard to deal with the influx. Immigration detainees, who have committed no crime, are flung in among them in open conditions.

"It's very tribal," the guard says. "The Vietnamese hang together, the Afghans, the Nigerians. If one Nigerian has a problem with an Afghan, then it's the Nigerians versus the Afghans. We don't get a lot of trouble, but when we do, we get carnage. The incidents have gone up since the Home Office decided to send us former foreign national prisoners. We're getting far too many."

Once staff got behind the fence, they called in a Tornado unit to retake control of the detention centre. Meanwhile, they filmed proceedings so they could later pick out the ringleaders and ship them out to other institutions. Thirty or so men have already been removed.

Eventually the Tornado unit turned up. The sight of the riot squad scared the detainees.

"It was scary when everyone saw them," they say. "They were in riot gear, with proper boots, helmets, masks - black riot gear. There were dogs in there as well."

As the guard puts it: "One hundred and fourteen of them fully kitted up is enough to scare the shit out of anyone."

The unit got the men back in their cells by late evening, where they stayed without food. Order was returned to Morton Hall. The trouble died down.

But there will be a next time. Morton Hall is an incendiary combination of factors. Men who have been imprisoned for months on end without having committed a crime, faced with return to a country they have never visited, torn away from family and friends, thrown in with over 100 former prisoners, some of them very serious. The question is not why there was trouble on Saturday. It's why there wasn't trouble earlier.

In the meantime, we wait for the inquiries into the death of Rubel Ahmed. However he died – suicide, heart attack or something else - he was a victim of Morton Hall. """""