

# SUBMISSION TO THE DETENTION INQUIRY

Date 30.9.14

Name:

Rajasingham Brad Harries

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Do you want your name to be made public?

No

Do you wish to give oral evidence before the inquiry panel?

Yes

Are you making this submission by yourself or is someone helping you? If so, who is this person?

Lucy Lucy of Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield (DASH) is helping me to make this submission

I am no longer in detention.

I was released from detention on 4.9.14.

I was in detention for nearly three weeks.

I was in Morton Hall Detention Centre.

The Home Office put me in detention because I did not have a live claim with them, although my solicitor was ready to submit one and the Home Office knew this.

I still do not have the right to remain in the UK and have been awaiting the outcome of my fresh submissions for about six weeks now.

More detailed information for the panel:

1.I was very afraid whilst I was in detention and had chest pains and palpitations because of the stress. I am still not sleeping well. During the journey to the detention centre I was afraid because the doors to the van had been locked

and I knew that if there was an accident I could not get out. Whilst in detention I was on two occasions told that I was to be taken for interview at the removals centre, but this was not in fact true and I believe it was said to increase my stress levels. I was detained because the Home Office said I did not have a case in the system, even though my solicitor confirmed that he was ready to put in fresh submissions. As I had been signing whenever required I felt that this was unjust. I was detained for almost three weeks.

2.I was held in a small cell, which was locked from 8.30pm to 7am, midday to 1pm and 5-6pm. Food was provided in the canteen and it was also possible to buy food there. I was afraid of the staff and stayed in my room because of this. I was in frequent contact by phone with my solicitor and members of DASH who were all working to try to secure my release. The healthcare in the immigration centre was not good. I had to wait for a week to see a doctor, although it was possible to see a nurse at once in an emergency. The nurse did an ECG and told me that it was normal and that it was probably inevitable that I would be removed as I could not stay on medical grounds. There was pastoral support in the form of a chapel and a female vicar, with whom I talked.

3. There were no mechanisms to deal with any mental, physical or emotional issues during detention, other than access to board games, which I did not pursue.

4. My sleep pattern was significantly disturbed and I still find I cannot sleep before 3am, sleep until 7am and then wake. Whilst I was in detention I remembered the circumstances of being in prison in Sri Lanka and now I think about this constantly, whereas before I did not and it did not trouble me. I am still afraid and suffer from chest pains and shivering which I understand are due to stress.

When I have to go to report at the Home Office I experience significant fear levels even though DASH members go with me.

5.I felt like I was going crazy inside, and that I was being treated like a terrorist, locked up in this prison with a big fence, razor wire and a gate. I heard of one detainee who was deported despite the fact that his case was due to be heard in court.

6.There was an amputee who had to walk 100m to the canteen to collect his food at mealtimes. I was shocked that he was not given any assistance with this.

7.Whilst in detention I met other Sri Lankans who had been there for four months or more. I felt that I might have to stay there a long time, even though my solicitor had put in a fresh claim after one week and I was assured that my release would be secured quickly. I was refused temporary admission after the first week when my claim was put in.

8.I felt that there was no reason to detain me. I had never missed signing at the Home Office and the whole process felt very arbitrary. Being able to phone someone to ask for help was the only thing I could do and this was very disempowering. I was detained around 1.30pm and did not arrive at Morton Hall until 10 or 11pm that day; this was an unacceptable wait.

9.I feel that the wider consequences of the detention system mean that there is no incentive for refused asylum seekers to stay within the legal framework and sign regularly. It has made me more fearful of signing. In terms of the financial cost, this must have been significant, and I cannot see any benefit to the Home Office in detaining me as I was not at risk of absconding. I feel the Home Office and those in the detention centre want to put

pressure on people to persuade them to return to their countries, but in my case, and in many other cases, this is not desirable and sometimes it is even not possible. I was made to feel like a criminal, when I have always signed when required and have tried to keep within the rules.

10. I believe that the reporting requirements are quite sufficient in themselves and that the threat of possible detention is a definite deterrent to people signing.

Further comments by Lucy Lucy of Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield, 14 New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP, tel. 07730021823, email [info@huddsdash.org.uk](mailto:info@huddsdash.org.uk):

I visited this gentleman twice whilst he was in detention. It was difficult to access by public transport and I was shocked that young children were exposed to seeing huge fences, gates, locked doors and razor wire. I feel that it would have been appropriate for detainees who were being visited by children to have access to the reception centre and see them there as this would be less distressing for the children.

On the second occasion when I visited I was told by one of the guards that this gentleman was in chapel and could not be disturbed. In fact he was awaiting an appointment to see the doctor and could have been brought to see me earlier. I had a five hour journey and a one hour visit, which I felt was unacceptable. After a suitable time has elapsed I intend to make a complaint about this.

I contacted the visitors' group for Morton Hall and spoke to a very pleasant gentleman who said that there were ten or twelve volunteers available at any one time to visit a population of four hundred, and each would only see one person, for the duration of their stay, after which they would take a break. I feel it would be good if a larger,

frequent visiting system could be encouraged so that all detainees could have access to a visitor who wanted one.