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SUBMISSION TO THE DETENTION INQUIRY c/o jonathan.featonby@parliament.uk

1. About us

RAPAR (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research) is a Manchester-based human rights organisation working with people, both locally and further afield, who are at risk of having their rights denied.

1.2. We work with – and many of us are, or have been – displaced people facing challenges relating to citizenship, housing, deportation, employment, education, personal safety and other problems. We enable people's access to the services they need, and release their abilities to find effective solutions to challenges facing them. We also assist in the formation of community groups, and develop research projects and learning opportunities that advance the general body of knowledge about displaced people.

1.4. Founded in 2001 by a group of volunteers, RAPAR is still run on an entirely voluntary basis by people from all over Greater Manchester, who come together from many different backgrounds, cultures, histories, experiences and challenges. RAPAR is a frontline organisation, responding to needs that are continually presented. We challenge and act on situations with people whose human rights are being threatened. We do this through our CASEWORK. RAPAR works with – not on or for – people to help them to help themselves, to support them should they wish to work together rather than in isolation, to release their abilities to understand and find solutions to the situations they and others face, and to develop and empower themselves and others as individuals and as communities. We do this through our COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. RAPAR develops and delivers cutting-edge participatory RESEARCH and learning opportunities nationally and internationally, ensuring that our work takes place within a context of continual action learning, research and development.

2. *Illegally attempting to deport a human being who has been on hunger strike for more than 30 days and then handcuffing them to their hospital bed.*

2.1. In November 2011, Mr S.* aged 36, from Eastern Sudan, began a hunger strike in Colnbrook Detention Centre. Mr S., who prior to being detained was living in Leeds, preferred to die here in the UK than be returned to the Sudan from which he fled in 2005 during the Port Sudan Massacre. He began his hunger strike after he was detained and told by the Home

* Identity anonymised for the purposes of this submission and dates have been changed to months only – we have all exact dates on record.

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Ms Miwanda Bagenda, Mr Gary McIndoe, Ms Zeinab Mohammed, Dr Rhett Moran, Canon Professor Nicholas Sagovsky

Office that he was going to be sent back to Sudan. “I started the hunger strike because I did not have any choice” he said. Mr S.’s one remaining brother and sister were in Saudi Arabia; the rest of his family had died in the Sudan.

2.2. In mid-December 2011 RAPAR was approached by a fellow Sudanese, and RAPAR member, for help. RAPAR faxed an authorisation form to Colnbrook Detention Centre for Mr S. to sign and return. This form would give RAPAR permission to share information about Mr S. That authorisation form was not given to Mr S. at the time but, within 24 hours of RAPAR sending the fax, the UKBA served Mr S. with removal directions. The removal direction was set for a couple of days’ time away at 09:30 on Gulf Air via Bahrain to Sudan.

2.3. It was illegal to attempt to make a person board a flight after day 30 of a hunger strike and Mr S. had been medically assessed and declared unfit to fly.

2.4. On the 35th day of his hunger strike, it was established that Mr S. was in the medical wing at Colnbrook Detention Centre beside Heathrow.

2.5. The next day, RAPAR issued a call for people to register their objection with Gulf Air and tell them that Mr S. Must Not Fly. Simultaneously, an application for an injunction to stop Mr S. being boarded onto the plane the following morning was being prepared for the High Court. This action was taken because the Home Office failed to meet the Judicial Review deadline of 10.30 on that day.

2.6. RAPAR also reported that Mr S. had disclosed to us that the medical supervisor and doctor at Colnbrook had not offered him any help apart from advising that he should take food. Mr S. says they told him “if I accept food, they will help me”. The independent doctor who assessed Mr S. says that he attempted suicide in early November and also experienced ongoing chest pains. Authorities at Colnbrook were advised that Mr S. should be seen by a psychiatrist but this did not happen.

2.7. Mr S. did not fly, but several days later, having been removed to Hillingdon Hospital, he was photographed handcuffed to his bed (right).

2.8. By mid-January 2012 Mr S. was back in Leeds, having been bailed out of detention. His lawyers then continued to mount the legal framework that could secure his safety in the UK while Mr S. recovered from his hunger strike ordeal.

2.9. We have been advised that since then, Mr S.’s solicitors have secured compensation from the Home Office for this episode and the illegality of its actions. However, given his current status as a person seeking asylum who is also homeless, Mr S. cannot open a bank account and therefore cannot access this compensation. He is currently attempting to survive on £10 a week from the Red Cross. This situation of course reflects the broader context of the UK’s current approach to refugees and human rights.



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