

**DETAINEE EVIDENCE OF BEING DETAINED
TO THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY
ON IMMIGRATION DETENTION**

My name is Roseline Akhalu, I write here to give evidence of my personal experience of being detained. I was detained twice that is, from 16th March 2013 to 10th April 2013 and from 16th May 2012 to 31st May 2012. From both of my detentions I was denied the use of the toilet, denied my medication, handcuffed like a common criminal, locked in a maximum security criminal cell in Colnbrooke Immigration detention centre. Detention made me suffer from mental health problem, depression, anxiety, fear, insomnia and mental torture. Detention does more harm than good to the detainees.

My detention in Yarl's Wood in March 2012 caused me irreparable damage to my life both physically, and psychologically. Physically because I contracted a urinary tract infection which resulted in me having a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus). This happened because of the cruel and degrading way I was treated by the Reliance (Transcon) staff when they were taking me to Yarl's Wood Detention Center. On 16 March 2012 at about 11.00 am I arrived at the UK Border Agency Reporting office for my monthly reporting when I was told I was being detained. The Reliance firm was contracted to transport me from Leeds to Yarl's Wood. On our way I got the greatest inhuman, embarrassment and humiliation of my life, because of the cruel and degrading manner I was treated.

My cruelty started when I demanded to use the toilet some distance to Manchester; I was told I will be taken to the Police Station to use the toilet. On getting to Manchester, rather than take me to the Police Station to use the toilet the Duty Custody Officers (DCOs) took me to their unit office for a duty change over. My need for toilet was ignored. I was not allowed to use the toilet in the unit office even when I could see the toilet door from the stationary van where I was held. As I could no longer endure to hold back my urine, the DCOs gave me a plastic bag to urine. At this time I had started urinating on my body and when I eventually used the plastic bag the urine was in the van my hands and body. I felt very humiliated and upset. It is pertinent to note that I urinated in the full view of the CCTV camera in van. My Privacy was not a matter of concern to the DCOs, and my dignity was not respected.

Reliance said plastic bags are used in an emergency situation when it is not possible to use the toilet. But in my case the van was stationed/stopped at their unit, I could see the toilet when I rose to be led there only to be disallowed. Except for malicious cruelty with intent

to mentally torture me they knew what was proper to do. This was done with the intent and purpose to torture, degrade, dehumanize, disrespect and humiliate me.

This cruel treatment made me suffer a serious urinary tract infection on my arrival at Yarl's Wood because I had to sit on my wet urine soaked clothes till we got to Yarl's Wood at 10.30 PM. Although I was subsequently treated for this infection by the Yarl's Wood doctors, it did an irreversible damage to my life. Upto today I have flash backs, depression, anxiety and fear, as I still find it difficult to comprehend the whole incident.

Reliance Staff think it was unsafe for my use the toilet in their office, when in fact, I was safe in the Van where I was held. I was treated worse than a criminal or a terrorist. I am a vulnerable person living with a kidney transplant which means I have to use the toilet very frequently.

Issues

1. The urinary tract infection I suffered was very devastating and has left me vulnerable to other infections which are dangerous to me a kidney transplant patient;
2. My privacy was breached and my dignity taken away as I was made to urinate on the full view of a CCTV camera on the van;
3. I sat in my own urine from Manchester to Yarl's Wood a cruel treatment that cannot be given to a dog in this civilized country
4. The whole experience has made me depressed because I still find difficult to think that humans can be so cruel to fellow human.

During my first detention I was driven to Heathrow Airport on 22nd of March 2012 even when they were already aware that I will not be removed, because my solicitor had lodged a Judicial Review case. They still forcefully drove me to Heathrow.

My Second Detention

I was detained again on the 16th of May on my reporting day at the Leeds Waterside UKBA reporting centre. On getting there that morning the Officer told me your Judicial Review has been decided by a Judge and he said "*There is nothing to review, this lady can be detained, and this lady can be removed*". So I was detained based on this one judge's judgement. It was after handing me the detention papers that I told the officer that I had written to be considered on grounds of Exceptional Circumstances two weeks earlier then she remembered that she had the refusal letter for me and she handed me the refusal with no right of appeal. When I refused to travel with Reliance for fears that I will be maltreated again I was told I must go with them whether or not I like it. Also, my medication was not collected. I left Leeds without any medication. As a person living with a Kidney transplant it is very dangerous for me to miss my medication even for one day.

A week after arriving at Yarl's Wood, I was taken to Colnbrooke Immigration detention centre. On getting there, there was not enough room for female detainees. So, I and one other girl were taken to the lock-up cells which were full of smoke, filthy and smelling. The Asian Lady Officer on duty that night put us into the room locked the door and went away. Then we started knocking on the door she came back with her senior officer saying that we were causing a disturbance. I told them we were not going to sleep in that cell full of smoke and filth. The smoke in the cell makes me choke that I have to be given inhaler. Then the officer threatened to take us to a worse and isolated cell if we did not behave. On seeing the appalling state of the cell he sent a cleaner to clean it. It took the cleaner over 30 minutes to clean the cell because it was very dirty.

Also, I was the only person who did not get a mobile phone at Colnbrooke; I was told they were finished. So, I was using the Box phone to make calls to my solicitors and friends

I was psychologically traumatized when on my second detention I was handcuffed by the five Officers that escorted me to Leeds from Yarl's Wood to attend my Renal Clinic appointment. The officer insisted on handcuffing me not because she feared I will escape but because she wanted to humiliate me psychologically. To make me feel lower than the lowest, humiliated, demonized, criminalized and torture. So she chained my hand with hers to lead me to see my Consultant at St. James Hospital on the 24 of May 2012. I actually felt very ashamed in the presence of the nurses and doctors I usually laugh and joke with as they saw me being lead like a common criminal. I wept on that day because of the shame and disgrace those handcuffs gave me.

It is pertinent to mention here that the immigration detention officers find great pleasure in maltreating immigrants. They taunt, disgrace, ill treat, humiliate and mal-handle them sometimes to the point of death.

The moment your removal notice is served you are seen like an outcast, an intruder, an enemy and a loner that you can be treated like an animal.

Conditions in Detention

Access to health

Although there is a quasi Clinic in Yarl's Wood it is very inefficient because the number of detainees needing medical support far outweigh the staff running the mini clinic. So, getting health care is not adequate. The Nurses and Doctors there work with the Ukba to send people away. Even the nurses also look down of immigrants..

Rose Akhalu 26 September 2014

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