

Manchester Testimony 4 - Written evidence submitted by Sana

I will call myself Sana. I am not wanting to give oral evidence. I am from Pakistan and was detained in 2010. I was in detention for 4 months and 18 days. During this time my health problems got worse and I was sexually assaulted on three occasions. They take advantage because they think there will be no consequences, they treat people like us like criminals, like animals. I still get nightmares, can't sleep, because of being in detention. So many of the girls are vulnerable. Detention centres should be closed down today.

The day I was detained they called me around 10am and said they would provide me with accommodation. Later I told them I was hungry but they said that's not our problem. Around 4pm the officer said come with us, a woman took my bag from me and said I was going to be detained. I had been here for 10 years but I didn't know what detention is. 'Very nice', I was told, 'a very good place. You will see people from your country'. They detained me and said it would be done on fast track. Four girls were in the van, crying. 11pm I arrived at Yarl's Wood. The attitude of officers was very bad. They took my mobile as it had a camera and I had to wait for three days to get a phone. I had a period, was bleeding, they didn't care. I couldn't sleep. I was really sick. I didn't cope. I was really scared. After 4 days I was refused.

There is no privacy. The guards come straight into our room. We couldn't lock the doors. My English was not good. I didn't even know how to find my way around the detention centre. I had to keep asking where is my unit. I started smoking in detention. Before, I was living with my husband, domestic violence, they told me they couldn't do anything. So many girls have so many problems, but the Serco people don't care. We can't cope. The Serco people say it's not our decision. When you need healthcare or need an interpreter the Home Office staff say this is just a normal thing, you don't need it, this is not a legal visit. They told me I will return to my country. I have no-one for me in Pakistan.

Healthcare was especially poor. I have big file of health notes. Whenever I was ill they just gave me paracetamol or co-codamol. I was bleeding for one month, ignored. I went to healthcare 74 times. I was so stressed I banged my head on the wall. They just said we will make big security, put you in solitary. I went to the Dr and tried to explain. The Dr said no, someone will come from outside, so I saw Medical Justice.

I see so many girls crying, they have removal directions. I have seen women being grabbed and pushed, drugged with sleeping tablets so they can be taken to the airport. When I asked about them, people said don't ask, they are just gone.

I was sexually assaulted three times by a man in healthcare. The first time, I was vomiting and had diarrhoea. They put me in healthcare and gave me a sleeping tablet and stress tablet. A man came into the room and said; 'I like you, I want sex with you'. He was doing wrong things. I was scared. I told him don't do that, I'm in stress. He showed me his private parts, erect, and asked me to touch his penis. I had to get my tablet from him. I was scared and ran away to my room. For three days I didn't leave my room, I was crying. I told another woman who encouraged me to tell, but I was scared. I kept quiet. I didn't go to healthcare for days.

After ten days the same happened, it was the same man. I had bad diarrhoea so had to go to healthcare. He said; 'you don't need medication, you need this' and he said to touch it. He grabbed my hand and said 'look, my penis is long'. He wanted me to hug him. I ran from the room. Next time I needed healthcare I asked for a female nurse. I was told this is not your choice, you get whoever's on duty, so I kept quiet. I got scared when I heard about another woman who

was pregnant with an officer. She was deported, seven months pregnant. I was shaking, feeling dizzy with what was going on. I went to healthcare when I thought he was on holiday. He did the same things. He checked my blood pressure and touched my breasts. He said when you are released we will have sex properly. He touched my vagina and pulled me to hug him. He gave me four calm tablets, twice my normal dose. I told the officer at my unit. I was told this is a wrong story, a bluff, it must be a lie as I didn't tell before. After that I didn't go to healthcare at all. I had no medication, just paracetamol which I could get on the unit. I had no calm tablets as I couldn't go to healthcare.

Prior to the sexual assault I had no interview. Afterwards, they said you are going to be sent back to your country, so we need to get a quick interview done about the sexual assault. I asked for an interpreter but they said it's OK you can speak English well enough. They already knew I had health problems and depression. The next day a policeman came and listened to my whole story then said you are lying, you made up this story, you just want to stay in this country. He didn't give me a crime reference number.

Three days after I spoke up about the sexual assault I was given a removal ticket. My solicitor said they would be in breach of the law if they remove you as he did bad things, a criminal offence. I spoke out and told all the agencies in Manchester. My solicitor took the case to the High Court. My English was not good. I was scared. I didn't know if I had done the right thing or wrong.

Whilst I was in detention my case went to the High Court and the Judge said I was to be released but nothing happened for 17 days. I was eventually released but they didn't tell me why I was released at that time.

I won my sexual abuse case, got justice, got compensation. My interview was in the news and radio. I will tell people. I am still an asylum seeker, not got justice yet, still waiting.

It applies to all girls there, not just me. They take advantage because they think you will be sent back. Now my hand is shaking talking about this. I have mental health problems. It is like a film going round in my head, reliving it all.

After detention I was still effected. I couldn't see a good man. I was seen as a mental woman. It was a very depressed situation. Depression, stress about my asylum case and also about the sexual abuse. I have images at night about being in detention. Frightening images. The doctor gives me tablets for sleep but I can't sleep, thinking...

I have no family here. It is too hard to keep in contact with friends when in detention. You get 60p for 1 day, not too much. Good friends in Manchester came to see me. The judge refused my bail three times. Befrienders in the detention centre were very helpful. One woman, she was like my mother, she saw my expression in detention and she got me the civil solicitor.

I think women's detention centres should be closed. It is not appropriate the way people are detained. They treat people like us like criminals, like animals. There's so much stress in detention centres, when women are vulnerable in detention the guards take advantage, they think we must behave, do as we are told. Male guards and male doctors shouldn't be working in women's detention centres. They treat us like we are here today, will be sent back tomorrow. They don't think we will be released, or that we will speak up,

So many girls are vulnerable. I was vulnerable because I couldn't speak English and I was scared. So many girls have so many problems. I think detention centres will get closed down. Detention centres are very poor. They cost a lot of money to run and they are bad places.

I wish that detention centres be closed down today. Not tomorrow, today. It is a prison, not a normal place. People come out mad. Shut down Yarl's Wood and release all the girls.