

## Excerpts from Witness Statements – Evidence for Article 3 claim

### 1) Key Points:

#### A) General Inhuman and Degrading Treatment at Harmondsworth

- Officers were frequently abusive to the detainees and humiliated them intentionally. They would use racist slurs and beat detainees without provocation.
- There was no effective complaints procedure. One detainee (K) suggests that each time a complaint was made a warning would be given to the complaining detainee. Three warnings resulted in being sent to the “block” or solitary confinement.
- Punishments were given arbitrarily. The guards would take detainees to solitary confinement for responding to verbal abuse. On the way to secure they would often be beaten severely. One detainee (N) describes seeing blood in the corridors after such beatings.
- Guards would deprive detainees of their correspondence, including with solicitors.
- Conditions were made unnecessarily difficult. Detainees were not provided with nail clippers which they found unhygienic. Very few were able to attend education classes because of very limited space.
- These conditions resulted in severe psychological damage to the detainees. Detainees would commit acts of self harm and there were several suicide attempts.
- Guards revealed the fact that one detainee (K) was a homosexual and HIV positive to other detainees which led to that detainee suffering physical abuse and depression.
- Guards bullied the detainees including one detainee (PS) who suffered from the medical condition Alopecia. The detainee was forced to remove his hat more than once and by several officers and was then taunted about his condition.
- A detainee ( [REDACTED] ) who suffered from back pain was left for many hours without treatment and received abuse from the guards when he expressed his discomfort. When he was finally taken to the on-site clinic this was in a wheel chair rather than on a stretcher which caused additional pain. Furthermore there was no doctor in the clinic to treat him.

#### B) Mistreatment following the Disturbance on 28 November 2006

- Detainees were forced to go without food and water, some for over 40 hours.

- Detainees were locked in severely overcrowded cells in squalid and dangerous conditions - some for 24 hours.
- There are reports of detainees being locked in showers and toilets during the disturbance.
- Many cells were flooded and there was a smell of gas in many areas, loose electrical cables made the situation even more dangerous.
- The detainees' fears were compounded by the fact that some of the cells were in total darkness.
- Detainees were forced to urinate on the floor of their cells and this mixed with the water which was flowing round the room and got inside their shoes.
- During this time guards were verbally abusive to the detainees and refused them permission to use the toilets on the landing.
- One detainee with diabetes (N) had no access to insulin throughout the disturbance, despite repeated requests and only received it when he had arrived at the new detention centre. During this time his blood sugar levels had risen to levels that can cause permanent eye and liver damage.
- Detainees were not allowed to take their possessions with them on leaving Harmondsworth.
- This experience inevitably had a terrible psychological effect and left at least one detainee severely traumatised (K).
- After being moved from Harmondsworth the mistreatment continued. One detainee ("V") was only allowed out of his cell for 10 – 15 minutes each day and was not permitted to call his family. Another ("N") was only released from his cell for 5 minutes each day.

## **2) Relevant Excerpts:**

A) "RR"

Paras 18 – 25: My room was on the ground floor and was badly flooded and so I went to my friend [REDACTED] on the second floor. Four other people were in the room with me because we were all trying to find a relatively drier place to rest for the night. There was water on the floors of the rooms on the second floor but they were less flooded than the rooms on the ground floor.

I was very tired by this time and I managed to get a few hours sleep during the night. There were two beds in the room and I found space on one of them to rest. When we first went into the room, two detainees spread a duvet out on the floor to try to rest on top of it. However, more water came into the room so that the water level rose to about three inches deep. After that happened, it was impossible for them to lie on the floor. The water was so high that our shoes were completely soaked if we stood up in the cell. The five of us in the room therefore shared the two beds by sitting up. The room was only a two-man cell, measuring approximately 8 feet by 10 feet, so it was very cramped inside.

Between the time I fell asleep, which was around 02.30 or 03.00, and the time I woke up at around 06.00, officers had come and locked us in the room. I was terrified to wake up and find myself locked in the room and unable to get out.

There were five of us locked in the room and we suffered very badly under the conditions in there. The air conditioning and ventilation system had broken down so there was no fresh air at all in the room. Because the windows in the rooms were always locked, we usually relied on the ventilation system to get air in and out of the room. The room was like a sealed can because there was no airflow into or out of the room. The room became very hot and we felt we could not breathe. To make things worse, there was a smell of gas but I did not know where it was coming from. It felt very dangerous in there because there might have been an explosion if the gas was ignited.

There was only a little bit of light coming into the room because the electricity and lighting had been damaged. Although it was daylight when we were locked in, it was still fairly dark in the room because there were eight metal bars placed about four inches apart across the window. Only a limited amount of light was able to get into our cell. This made the conditions in the room more unpleasant by the fact we could not see clearly. There was also a lot of smoke in the room. I assume this came from the fires set off around the building, although I am not sure exactly where it came from.

We could not go to the toilet during the time we were locked up and we therefore had to urinate on the floor in front of each other. Our urine mixed with the water on the floor so we were forced to walk in it and our shoes and feet were soaked through.

When faced with the conditions inside the room and the building, I was afraid for my life. I was concerned about protecting myself from harm and I am sure the other detainees felt the same. I felt scared, terrified and degraded because I did not know when I was going to be let out of the room. People were crying, screaming and shouting for their lives.

We were locked in until approximately 19.30 that Wednesday evening – a total of about 13.5 hours.

Paras 27 – 28: We were made to have our photos taken, from the front, the back and the side, give fingerprints and DNA swabs. I was not happy about providing these but we had no choice but to comply. I was also strip searched and required to remove all my clothes so I was naked in front of three officers. We were treated like criminals, as if we were very dangerous people, and during the whole process, the police did not provide us with any explanation of why they required such intimate personal information. I heard of other detainees being injured during the riot and the removal process but I cannot remember their names.

After I had gone through these procedures I was put on a bus and taken directly to Campsfield. I was given a sandwich to eat and some water. This was the first time I had had something to eat since Tuesday evening [approximately 24 hours previously].

B) “K”

Paras 4 -6: I believe the main cause of the problems at Harmondsworth was the staff. The officers did not care about the detainees and, when we were unhappy about how we were being treated, there was no effective complaints procedure through which we could voice our concerns. Firstly, if we made a complaint we would be given an ‘IEP’, a warning. If we were given three IEPs, we would be put in the secure block, i.e. in an isolated cell. We were scared of making any complaints against the officers because we expected to be treated badly by them if we did. I had the experience of being insulted and physically pushed around by officers on a number of occasions. If a complaint was passed on to the IMB (an organisation which was supposed to look after the interests and welfare of detainees), the situation was not usually investigated and we did not hear the outcome of the complaint. When detainees cried out for help, we received no attention from the officers. We were treated like pigs and very unfairly, as if we were serious criminals. This

made us very frustrated and angry at the system. Harmondsworth was a very difficult environment to live in and it was hard to survive.

I heard of detainees cutting themselves and a number of suicide attempts because the conditions were so bad. On one occasion, I saw blood on the wall of the bathroom where a detainee had committed self-harm by slashing his neck and there were also a number of hunger strikes there. This shows how desperate and unhappy we were. The situation was not helped by the fact that there was tension with the immigration officials regarding the progress of asylum applications.

I am homosexual and suffer from HIV. Whilst in detention at Harmondsworth I felt permanently threatened by some other (especially Jamaican) detainees who did not accept my sexuality. I always tried to keep to myself and not to cause any trouble. I was very depressed and was subject to physical abuse but the authorities did not do anything to prevent this from happening. If anything, the officers made the situation worse at times, for example, by disclosing my sexuality and the fact I had HIV to other detainees.

Paras 12 – 14: Officers came round and were banging on my door. I was locked in my room with my friend [REDACTED] at about 22.45 for approximately one hour. My room was a single room but [REDACTED] was in my room at the time.

There was water rapidly coming into my room and the water level rose to my ankles so that my feet were completely soaked. Before I was locked in, I was able to go out my room and I saw that water was flowing out of a pipe which had been broken near the vending machine in the television room on the ground floor. Water was also coming out of the water sprinklers on the first and second floors. The rooms on the ground floor were the worst affected by water.

There was a smell of gas in the building which everyone was very concerned about. When we were locked in our rooms, I could hear the other detainees down the corridor shouting about the smell of gas and the water in the building. When our doors were eventually unlocked, some detainees reported this to the officers. The officers told us that the smell came from the sprinkler system and the dirty water on the ground which had a lot of debris floating in it.

Para. 16: I went outside to D wing yard and stayed there for four to five hours in the freezing cold. I really had no choice but to remain outside because of the dangerous state of the building. The building was in a mess by now - there were electrical wires hanging loose from the walls that could have come into contact with water. There was thick smoke coming from the building and some people coming out of the building had placed wet towels over their faces to protect themselves. There were many people outside, but some detainees took the risk of going back inside after a while because they were too cold.

Paras 22 – 31: At about 06.00 five prison officers who were coming down the corridor saw that our door was open and so deliberately locked us inside. They were armed with batons and shields so it was very intimidating. The room we were in was relatively less flooded than rooms such as mine on the ground floor, and many people had come into the room in search of a drier place to rest. When the officers locked the room, there were nine people already inside. It was extremely cramped and uncomfortable because it was only supposed to be a two-man cell and we could not go out of the room.

Conditions were unbearable in that cell. The electricity supply had broken down so our lights were not working and there was not much light coming into the room through the window because it was a dull day. It was very hot because there was no air conditioning and we could not open the window. There was no air in the room and we felt like we were going to faint because it was so stifling. People were taking their tops off because it was so hot. There were electrical wires hanging down from the ceiling to about chest level. This was terrifying because we did not know which ones were live with electricity and which ones were not. If we wanted to move from one part of the room to another we had to walk around the wires or try to push them out of the way.

We were screaming and shouting to get out. We needed to use the toilet but could not leave the cell. There were officers drinking coffee downstairs but we could not get their attention. They treated us like animals and did not care about us. We were forced to urinate in the corner of the room onto the floor and to defecate inside the closet. There was a horrible stench inside the cell. Dirty water was also running on the ground which I believe came from toilets which had been broken in other parts of the building.

We were locked in there for about nine hours until approximately 15.00 in the afternoon.

Eventually at around 15.00, a detainee called [REDACTED] came from outside the room and kicked our door down. Even though we were able to leave the room, some of us were scared to do so because there were riot police officers outside. We were afraid they would beat us if they saw us out of our rooms. I desperately needed the toilet so I went to one down the corridor from the room and returned immediately afterwards.

We stayed in the cell for another two hours until five prison officers told us to move out of our cell. This happened at around 17.00. They took us out of our cell one by one. I asked the officers whether I could take my belongings with me but they refused to let me. When I pleaded with them they eventually allowed me to. I was very concerned about leaving my things behind because they contained important items such as my legal papers. I stuffed my things inside a quilt cover and two other bags which my friend [REDACTED] helped me to carry. I was pushed and dragged along the corridor even though I was not causing any trouble. They treated us like animals, even though I was trying to talk to them in a calm way.

We were taken to the sports hall where we had to take some tests and searches. I was strip searched in front of a few officers and had to remove all my clothing so that I was naked. I was made to give a DNA sample and have my fingerprints taken.

I was asked questions by the immigration officers such as “do you know what started the riot?” but I was not able to respond to them at that point. I was severely traumatised by the whole experience. I was crying and in a state of shock, so the officers stopped asking me questions and one of them said “fine” when I did not reply. They were going to take my friend [REDACTED] away to a detention centre different from mine. In the end, they allowed us to be taken to the same place because they saw how upset I was.

Before I left Harmondsworth I was made to leave my belongings at the reception. They still have not been returned to me. I have lost some legal papers amongst other items and I am unsure whether I will receive any compensation. This has caused me great distress, as it has other detainees.

I and five other detainees were put in a vehicle. I think a company called “G4” were operating these vehicles and helping to transfer detainees from Harmondsworth. I asked

the female driver if we could have something to eat because I was very very hungry and had not eaten or drunk anything since Tuesday evening. I had seen officers in the sports hall being given food and other refreshments but none were offered to us when we were waiting for our searches and tests to be carried out. The driver went away from the vehicle and came back with six bags of food for us. Each portion contained a sandwich, crisps, an apple and some water. This was the first time I had eaten or drunk anything for approximately 24 hours.

C) "N"

Paras 7 – 9: I also saw staff mistreating and physically abusing detainees. If a detainee responded to verbal abuse, the officers would take him to 'secure'. The officers would lock the other detainees in their rooms when they were taking someone to secure. I used to peep through the viewing hole in my door and I saw officers beating detainees and handling them very roughly. Sometimes there was blood in the corridors afterwards, but it was always cleaned before we were let out of our rooms.

I was never beaten because I did not react when I was mistreated. I was upset at the way I was treated: for example when I asked for help I was treated very rudely a number of times, but rather than say anything I simply went back to my room because I did not want to be beaten and taken to secure. I made complaints about the way I was treated but the complaints never made any difference; the staff were always protected.

Detainees at Harmondsworth were very upset and agitated for a number of reasons. Many could not understand why they were detained and most did not know what was happening in relation to their cases. Some people really wanted to go home to their countries of origin but were unable to leave. Conditions were bad and all these things piled up in people's hearts.

Paras 15 – 28:

At around 10am I was woken by noise in the corridor and I saw that it was anti-riot officers from the Prison Service with dogs. They locked us all in our rooms and they also locked the toilets and bathrooms. I believe that people were using the toilets and bathrooms at the time and were locked into them.



I kept knocking to attract the attention of the Prison Service officers because by this time I badly needed my insulin. I had the night time dose on 28.11.06 but I had missed my morning injection. I kept banging and shouting that I needed my medication and saying that I was not feeling well, but no-one could hear me as they appeared to have left the wing. I was hungry and this makes me feel worse. I felt dizzy, shaky and sick. At times I could see through the spyhole in the door that Prison Service officers had come back to the wing and were walking along the corridor, but when I banged and shouted to tell them I was unwell, they ignored me.

A woman from the organisation London No Borders called on the phone in my room. I explained to her what was going on and she said she would try to contact the detention centre to get help. A person from London Detainee Support Group also called and said the same thing.

At around 11am the phones went dead. I believe that this is because some of the detainees were speaking to the press on the telephone and the officers wanted to prevent that from happening.

I remained locked in my room until about 6pm. I had some fruit in my room to eat which helped a bit, but I was feeling very unwell due to the lack of insulin.

At about 6pm I and other detainees in D wing were unlocked by the Prison Service officers. I told them I needed medication but they said they could not deal with that, they only wanted to get us out. They took us to the sports hall where there were Prison Service riot officers, police officers, detention officers and immigration officers.

They were searching everyone. I was taken to a separate room with about 4 officers present and strip searched. I did not have anything prohibited. I was not arrested. My fingerprints and a mouth swab for DNA were taken without asking my consent. There was no explanation about this. Two policemen held me by each arm during the process. They asked whether I was hurt and I said no, but that I was hungry and needed my medication. They said that would be resolved wherever I was going.

I was then taken to a van and transferred to Campsfield detention centre. My stored luggage from Harmondsworth was also taken. I had two insulin pens in the luggage but I was not given access to them, although I asked, until I arrived at Campsfield at about midnight. I felt unwell in the van and had a temperature. I was given a sandwich and water in the van which helped a bit.

The following day I saw a doctor who checked my blood sugar. It has risen from about 7 to about 16. It is dangerous to allow my blood sugar to rise to these levels because it can cause eye and liver damage.

Detainees kept arriving at Campsfield from Harmondsworth over the next 2-3 days. They said they had been locked into their rooms at Harmondsworth with no food or water for all that time. D wing had been the first to be evacuated. I believe that C wing was evacuated last.

I made a bail application ( [REDACTED] ) from Campsfield. This was listed for hearing but around a week beforehand I was told that Campsfield could not keep me because of my health and I was moved the same day to Colnbrook IRC. This did not make sense as the health facilities at Colnbrook were the same as at Campsfield.

At Colnbrook I was held in the short term facility. This is accommodation which is meant to be for one person but bunk beds had been installed so that two people could be kept there. In short term I and my roommate were locked in all the time except for 5 minutes once a day when we were let out for fresh air. The room contained a shower and toilet but no partition to screen these from the bed or the other occupant of the cell. When we showered, water flooded all over the floor of the cell and the room filled with steam. The windows were sealed shut and there was inadequate ventilation. There was a fan which made the room very cold. If we switched the fan off, it became suffocating. When we called for help by pressing the call button or banging on the door, no-one came for hours.

I was extremely distressed during this time because the conditions in the short term facility were terrible.

D) "PS"

Paras 8 – 17: During my time at Harmondsworth I was treated very badly by the officers. This mistreatment made me both angry and upset. No complaints I made about the treatment I received were taken seriously or acted upon, which added frustration and helplessness to the distress I already felt. Mistreatment from the officers, in the form of verbal, psychological and physical abuse, was rife in the detention centre. I have set out in this witness statement just a few examples of the many problems faced by myself and by my fellow detainees. Above all, the detainees at Harmondsworth were treated with a complete and unjustified lack of respect.

I suffer from a hair / scalp condition called Alopecia, which causes loss of colour in my hair and in the skin on my scalp. I am embarrassed when my head is not covered up and other people are able to see my condition. It was noted on my file that I had this medical condition. I was bullied by officers at Harmondsworth about this condition.

On my first day at Harmondsworth, which was either 14 or 15 July or August 2006, I spoke to the manager about wearing a hat to cover my head. The manager told me I not allowed to wear a hat, unless it was the type of hat worn by Muslims (a small round cap). I am not Muslim and there was no reason why I should wear this type of hat. I was allowed to use mascara to colour parts of my hair and scalp.

The next day, I found my hat in my bag containing my belongings. My hat is a light blue cap. I was then told by the manager that I *was* allowed to wear it and so I wore the hat for about three and a half hours from 18.30 - 22.00. At about 22.30, I was told by an officer [REDACTED] to “remove your hat or I’ll remove it”. I removed my hat and when the officer could see the condition on my head, he teased me about the fact that it was me who was the detainee with the condition, saying things such as “oh, is that you?”. I am sure that the officer knew about my condition all along, and that this was why he made me remove my hat. I told this officer that he was not treating me with respect. The officer answered, “we do not need to give you respect. You give us respect.”

Another time on the same evening, I was bullied for 25 minutes by [REDACTED] female officer, an officer [REDACTED] and another [REDACTED] officer [REDACTED]. They were trying to force me to remove my hat. The female officer tried to provoke me to react aggressively towards them, but I did not react in this way. The officers only backed

off when I became so upset that I threatened to name them in a suicide note should I decide to kill myself.

Other detainees were also frequently treated badly and bullied by the officers.

I reported the incident involving the hat to one of the managers [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] apologised to me and said that the incident would be looked into, but no action was taken. The next day, it was a Hindu festival and I attended a service with a Sikh priest. Many officers attended this service. I told an [REDACTED] officer who was the “deputy governor” about the bullying incident but I still heard nothing more about it. At Harmondsworth, complaints were not dealt with properly and it was common that nothing happened after complaints were made. This caused detainees to become angry and frustrated with the system that was meant to protect them.

Another time I made a complaint was when officers were making a lot of noise, talking and laughing loudly in the room next to my cell at 05.00 or 06.00 in the morning. This woke me up and prevented me from sleeping. The officers ignored my complaint and nothing was done about it.

There was a lot of racial and verbal abuse of the detainees by the officers at Harmondsworth. One time I witnessed a Somalian detainee being called “you fucking nigger” by one of the officers.

At Harmondsworth, the officers checked on the detainees every few minutes and would interrupt what you were doing all the time. For example, my wife was visiting me one time and I was told by an officer that I was not allowed to cuddle her, even though I had not seen her for two weeks.

Para. 30: At about 01.00 on Wednesday, the A wing officers withdrew from the whole building and went out into A wing exercise yard. The doors to the building were open and the detainees were also able to go outside. However, when the officers left, the landing gates on levels 2 and 3 of A wing remained locked. Detainees on levels 2 and 3, i.e. the first and second floors, were screaming to let them out and banging on the windows but the officers just looked at them from outside the building and took no action. If the building

had burnt down, all the detainees who were locked inside would have died. My room was on level 1, on the ground floor, so I was not one of the people who was locked in.

Paras 35 – 37: The door to the cell was broken and so the officers were unable to lock us in there. Therefore, we were forced to move to another cell. This happened at approximately 12.00. The officers treated us very roughly, grabbed us by our shirts, pushed us and used bad language. I managed to bring my bag containing my belongings with me to the new cell. The officers locked us inside.

There were four other people in the new cell [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was already in the room when we came in. The room was a two-man cell. We were locked in this cell for about one hour until 13.00 and were not provided with any food, water or sanitation.

Eventually a [REDACTED] detainee broke down the door to our room and I was able to get out. However, even if the cell door was open, the landing gates were still locked so nobody could escape the floor and we found ourselves trapped on the landing. I could still smell gas and smoke from the fire, which was extremely worrying. The detainees were asking the officers not to lock them up because they could still smell gas, but they did so regardless of this. I tried to look in the next door cell for water but was unable to find any.

Paras 41 – 45: At about 14.00 on Wednesday, 29 November I was forced to enter another cell in B wing, together with four other people. I remained in that cell until around 14.30 on Thursday, 30 November – a period of over 24 hours. The doors were not locked because they were broken but we were guarded by officers outside the rooms and unable to leave. There were officers everywhere patrolling the rooms and they carried sticks with them. I saw people being pushed and grabbed by officers and I was scared throughout the time I was in the cell. I heard that some other detainees were beaten by the officers but I did not see this happen. There were people screaming and one detainee was locked in the toilet. A Palestinian detainee was locked in the shower for six to seven hours. He was unable to sit down because the place was flooded. I managed to escape from my cell for just a few moments to try to break the door down to help him out.

During the time I was in the cell, I was not allowed to go to the toilet. I went out of the room and asked one of the guarding officers whether I could go to the toilet which was next to the gate on the landing. The officer said “fuck off back to your cell” and told me to urinate in my cell. The other detainees in the cell and I were forced to urinate into a bottle. The officer also said to me, “you [i.e. meaning the detainees] all deserve this.”

Throughout the time in this cell we had no food or water. I was incredibly hungry and thirsty. Also, I had not been able to wash or change any of my clothes since Tuesday. There was water flooding the room to about ankle depth. The water was black, dirty and smelly because it came from the pipelines and toilets which had been destroyed. I saw debris from the ceiling and things which had been burnt also floating in the water. I had to carry my bag for the whole time I was in the cell to prevent my possessions getting soaking wet.

At approximately 14.30 on Thursday, I was told by officers to go to the D wing exercise yard. I spent three to four hours outside and was very cold since I only had my normal clothes on. I was given a sandwich to eat and tea to drink at around 15.00. This was the first time I had eaten since 17.00 or 18.00 on Tuesday evening when we had dinner. I did not have any food or water whilst I was forced to stay in the cells. It was about 45 hours since I had eaten and 29 hours since I had had a drink of water. I was one of the lucky ones because I was one of the first people let out of the cells. Some other detainees were locked in their rooms until later on Thursday or Friday.

E) “SM”

Paras 26 – 30: The next thing I knew, the riot police came and locked the door to our room so we were not able to get out. The riot police then went away and there was no way of getting any attention from them if we needed help. We were locked in the cell until 17.30 or 18.00 on Wednesday evening, a total period of about 12 hours.

We were in a helpless situation whilst we were locked in the cell. I tried to get some sleep but woke up at around 08.00 because it was extremely hot. There was no ventilation because the air conditioning system was broken. There was also smelly, dirty water flowing quickly into the room to about ankle depth. The water level was higher than it

previously had been on the first floor. This water came from toilets and pipes which had been broken around the building.

The other detainees and I were forced to go to the toilet in our cell because we could not get out. First we urinated into a bottle, but when that was full, we had to urinate on the floor of the cell, behind the door. The urine mixed with the water on the floor and was flowing around the room. It got into our shoes and to our feet and was very unpleasant. There were still no officers around so we were not able to ask to go to the toilet.

There were no lights on in the cell because the electricity supply had been damaged. When we were first locked in the early morning there was a little bit of light coming in through the window. However, as it became dark in the late afternoon, the cell was pitch black which made it even more frightening. We were panicking inside the cell and sweating a lot. The conditions were unbearable and we were scared and worried about our situation.

I had not had any food or drink for a long time and I was hungry and thirsty. The last time I had eaten was at dinner time on Tuesday night and the last time I drank was at about 22.45 on Tuesday night when I had a cup of tea.

F) "AM"

Paras 6 – 8:

I think that the disturbance on 28 to 30 November 2006 was caused because some of the detainees were frustrated, fed up and angry at having been detained for very long periods at Harmondsworth IRC whilst they waited to go home and waited to be removed from the U.K. Many of the detainees were also complaining because they had not been able to get legal representation and were really scared about this. In addition, the detention officers treated the detainees badly and bullied them. One detention officer in particular, whom I know only as [REDACTED], would bully detainees and beat them up on a regular basis. He used to grab the backs of their necks and force them onto the floor. However, he never did this to me as I stayed out of his way.

To give another example of the bad treatment that we received, on one occasion, I was in the corridor next to the site office waiting to speak to a detention officer. A detainee from Afghanistan was asking the detention officer on duty whether a fax had arrived for him. He was told that nothing had arrived for him. The man persisted, as he thought a fax should

have arrived. From my position in the corridor, I then saw three detention officers take the man into a room and beat him up.

On another occasion, I went to the office as I was expecting to receive a fax, but the Asian detention officer who was on duty told me, without checking, that nothing had arrived for me and to go away. I persisted that a fax should have arrived for me but he tried to intimidate me and threatened to put me in solitary confinement. I walked away because I did not want to get involved in an argument. The detention officer had not even looked to see if a fax had arrived for me. This had happened before. It was common for the detention officers not to give detainees faxes that had been sent to them by their solicitors. So, when we next spoke to our solicitors, we would discover that they had sent us a fax, which we had not received. Our solicitors would then have to re-send the fax to us. I made a complaint but never received any feedback.

Paras 11 – 14:

My cell was next-door to the smoking/ television room. After I had been in my cell for about 40 minutes, some of the detainees who had not been locked into their cells gathered together papers and clothes and started a large fire in the smoking/ television room. All the access doors between the wings were open by this point and I was later told that some of the detainees from B-Wing had come to C-Wing and helped to start the fire. At this point, the fire alarms started sounding, but the sprinklers were not operating yet. As my cell was [REDACTED], it quickly filled with thick smoke that came in under my door. The smoke was so thick that I could not see anything, not even the light in my cell, which was switched on. I had to close my eyes. It was very difficult to breathe and I started to choke. I banged on my door but nobody came to help me. Eventually, after being locked in the smoky cell for over an hour, I collapsed in the cell because I had breathed in so much smoke.

The next thing I remember is waking up in the reception room, which is near to the main entrance. I had been given oxygen by the doctor there and was lying on the bare floor. When I regained consciousness, I was still coughing and there was water streaming out of my eyes and nose as if I was sneezing water.



I asked for some tablets because I was still having difficulty breathing and felt unwell. I could feel the smoke in my chest and every time I tried to breathe, I coughed. However, the doctor told me that I could not have any tablets as all the medical supplies were in the healthcare room in D-Wing, which was not accessible because of the disturbance. I also asked to be taken to a hospital but the doctor told me that I could not go, without explaining to me why not. At this point I went to sleep on the cold bare floor. I was feeling sick and weak. I am not sure how long I slept for. When I woke up I again requested tablets or to be taken to hospital but there was no response.

I went to sleep again and, when I woke up, I think it was between 12.30am – 1.15am on 29 November 2006. As I was only wearing thin trousers and a t-shirt, and did not have any shoes or socks on, I asked if I could get my belongings from my cell. In addition, I had a bail hearing scheduled for that day, 29 November 2006, at Hutton Cross and was supposed to take all my belongings with me in case I was granted bail. However, the detention officers would not let me return to my cell because of the disturbance. I tried to say that, as I was a fellow detainee, the detainees would not hurt me and that it was safe for me to return to my cell. But, I was not allowed to go and so I stayed in the reception room for the remainder of that night.

G) [REDACTED]

Para. 7:

For example, on one occasion, I had a very painful back and could not move. I was lying on my bed like a corpse. I shared a cell with four other detainees at that time and they pressed the bell for help, but the detention officers did not arrive for a long time. When they finally came, the detention officers tried to move me to the clinic on site and said “Get up, get up, get up”. When I said that I could not get up, they told me that I had to. Eventually, when they saw that I could not move, they just left me lying there in pain. That night, a doctor brought me some tablets but, as I now realise, these were sleeping tablets rather than painkillers and so I was still in pain. That night, I woke up in pain and started crying. It was almost light by this point and my cellmates called the detention officers again and they came to my cell. The detention officers forced me up from the bed and threw me into a wheelchair. When I suggested that a stretcher would cause me less pain, they said, “No, it’s not a hospital here”. They were very rough with me. They took me to the clinic on site and just abandoned me there. There was no doctor and, when I asked

where the doctor was, the detention officers laughed at me and mocked me. One of them stepped on the hem of my trousers to make me fall over. He then started laughing and called me a “fucking negro”. I had to hold onto the wall as I made my way back to my cell. However, I felt that there was nobody that I could complain to about this bad treatment because the detention officers just used to tear things up, including papers from my lawyer. If you did speak out of turn, in order to challenge what the detention officers were saying, then they would take your arms behind your back and threaten to move you to a cell by yourself, where there was no television.

Paras 11 – 14:

Eventually, because it was so cold, some of the detainees started trying to get back into the accommodation block. They were pushing to get back in and the detention officers were pushing back the detainees to try to prevent them getting into the building. There were detainees in front of me, but during this struggle, I was punched on the upper cheek by a detention officer and was knocked to the ground. I had recently had a tooth removed and the wound had not yet healed so when I was hit by the detention officer, it was really painful. My mouth was full of blood, my nose was bleeding and, when I fell to the floor, I was trampled on by lots of people, which made my bad back even worse. The detention officers then started shutting everyone into cells on the ground floor and the first floor. I was locked into my cell with three other detainees - my cellmate and two others who did not normally stay there. I do not know what happened on the top floor but that is where the problems started. The detention officers then just seemed to disappear.

The whole situation became absolute mayhem. We could hear noises and things going off upstairs. It was at this point that a fire started upstairs. My friends and I could see and smell the smoke coming down the stairs. It was really difficult to breathe because of all the smoke in our cell but the detention officers did not come to let us out. Everyone on my floor started banging on their cell doors, asking to be let out. We were in the cells like this for a long time until eventually, some of the detainees from upstairs, who had not been locked in, came downstairs and forced the doors open. By this point, we had been locked in the smoky room for nearly three hours. When we came out, we saw that everything was broken - there were no lights; the toilets were broken; and the floors were flooded with about 10 centimetres of water that was coming from upstairs and which covered my feet.

From this point, throughout the whole night of Tuesday 28 November 2006 and the whole of Wednesday 29 November 2006 until the morning of Thursday 30 November 2006, we were forced to stay outside in the cold until the riot police transferred us to alternative immigration removal centres. We could not return to the accommodation block because of the fire and the smoke: the fire continued to burn the whole time we were outside. Also, there was water everywhere from broken sinks and toilets. The sprinklers were also spraying water in the corridors. The beds in the cells were low to the ground and the water from the corridor had come into the cells and soaked the bed sheets. If we had returned to the accommodation block, we would all have died. All the access doors between the wings were open. It was an absolute catastrophe, I have never seen anything like it in my life before.

Outside, there were no toilets and so we had to urinate on the floor. I drank some water out of a tap and had some food in my belongings which I had managed to take outside with me but otherwise, we were not given any food or any water during the whole time we were outside. In addition, it was absolutely freezing - I had no coat and so I had to wrap a blanket around me that I had taken from my bed. I saw that other detainees had also taken blankets from their beds because it was so cold. It was the water that made it so cold. My shoes were totally wet through from the water and my feet had gone white from the wet and the cold. In fact, three days after the disturbance my feet were still white, as if they had been eaten away by the water, and I had to tie something round my feet. Some of the detainees wrote messages on the ground and called, "Help! Help!" to the helicopters above us.

H) "LM"

Paras 14 – 20:

I woke up just before 8 a.m. on the 29 November 2006. I went into the corridor and it was very quiet. I used the bathroom though only a few toilets were working. I had to go to the bathroom down the corridor rather than the one opposite my cell. I could hear a strange noise like people walking on the roof of the accommodation block. Then, I saw a "Rapid Response" team with helmets, shields and batons through the window of the door, which separated the two sides of the L-shaped corridor and which I describe above. They were

dressed in black uniforms that said "HMP". Any references in my statement to "riot police" are to members of this Rapid Response team. I was afraid of being beaten up and walked very quickly to my cell and locked myself in by removing the door prop, even though I knew that I would not be able to open it again. I did this because the riot police are heavy handed and I did not want to be victimised. I did not even want to face them because of a previous bad experience. It made no difference however, as the riot police then started locking detainees into their cells in any case. I could hear screaming - I think that the riot police may have been beating detainees up or forcing them into their cells. I looked into the exercise yard and saw that there were no detainees there anymore.

I turned on the television in my cell and watched the Channel 4 News. The News team had helicopters over Harmondsworth IRC and were filming the disturbance. Although I was at the detention centre where the events were taking place, I felt like an outsider because nobody was keeping us informed as to what was going on. The detention officers had left the scene after the level of damage escalated. I was shocked and wondered about my predicament and how I was going to get out. I just did not know what was going to happen next.

The telephone extension in my cell rang and it was my wife. She was watching BBC News 24 and kept me up to date on what was happening. She even held the phone up to the television so that I could hear. I talked to my wife until about 11 a.m. - she did not want to hang up because she was so worried about me. At about 10.30 a.m., I told my wife to call my friends' extensions to check that they were ok. They told her that they had been locked into their cells. At about 11 a.m., my wife switched on Sky News where they were interviewing [REDACTED] a detainee who was currently at Harmondsworth IRC, live on television. However, the detention officers soon realised that detainees were communicating with the outside world and cut off the telephone system so we could no longer receive calls (the phones never allowed us to call out). I could not make any contact with the outside world and they could not contact me. I was not at all surprised that the detention officers would do this to us. I was very frightened and worried what my immediate family would be thinking. I felt that the situation had gotten to a point of no return. I wondered whether we detainees would get out in one piece.

After this, I tried to watch television, but I could not concentrate because I was so hungry and thirsty and needed to go to the toilet. The riot police were walking in the corridor outside my cell and I banged on my door, telling them that I was hungry, thirsty and needed to go to the toilet. They just told me to “Shut up! Shut up!”. At this point, I knew no help was coming. I was forced to urinate on the cell floor which made me feel undignified. The cell was now stinking as hell. In addition, water from the corridor had flooded into my cell and was about 3 centimetres deep. I could also see riot police in the exercise yard outside, coming and going, drinking coffee. That evening I slept on and off.

At about 4 or 5 p.m. on 29 November 2006, I could hear detainees talking and so I banged on my door to find out what was happening and to tell them that I needed to use the toilet. My friends, who my wife had called earlier, came to my door. They told me that some other detainees had broken down their doors and let them out. However, they could not break down my door as the riot police were nearby. Instead, they suggested that I should break down the partition walls between the cells, which were thin, like plasterboard, as some other detainees had done. But, I did not do this as I'm not a vandal. I was forced to stay in my cell. My friends kept coming and going. I could still hear talking at about 7 p.m. but by 9 p.m. it was quiet. Only the riot police were walking up and down the corridors. I fell asleep again.

At about 5 a.m. on 30 November 2006, I was woken up by a noise that sounded like people marching up and down as if for a parade. It was the riot police going up and down the corridor. After lying in bed for about 30 to 45 minutes, I got up and sat on a table in my cell, wondering what was happening. Suddenly, the door to my cell burst open and 10 to 15 riot police barged in. I jumped up from the table in shock. They must have mistaken this for threatening behaviour as they hit me on my right knee and hip with a baton and pinned me onto the bed with their shields. Their shields were pressing down on my chest, suffocating me. It all happened so quickly. I felt that they were restraining me without reason. I told them that I already had a knee injury and that it was very painful now. They searched me but I did not have anything on me. I was only dressed in shorts and a t-shirt and hurried to get some more clothes. They told me to be quick but I told them that it was cold and I put on some trousers and my shoes. When I reached for my jacket, they again mistook my actions as threatening, thinking I had a weapon concealed there, and were on my case again. I said that I needed to get my bag, which contained all my legal documents,

but they told me to forget it. I asked again and they told me that if I kept on talking I would be in trouble. They pushed me out into the corridor where there were more riot police. They took me to a room on my floor and when there were ten detainees, they took us all downstairs, into the exercise yard.

By the time I was taken outside, I had been locked into my cell from approximately 8 a.m. on 29 November until around 5.30 a.m. on 30 November. I had been locked into my cell with no food, no water and no access to a toilet for a total of 21 hours.

Paras. 22 – 23:

The worst thing was that we saw the staff having jugs of hot tea, water, sandwiches and snacks. But, we detainees were not given anything to eat or drink. By this point, the last time I had eaten was the evening meal at 6.30 p.m. on 28 November 2006. I had not had any food or drink for a total of more than 40 hours.

Eventually, after we had been outside for about 5 or 6 hours, members of a forensic team took mouth swabs and our photographs. We were also given sandwiches, a pack of biscuits, fruit, water and juice at this stage. It was almost 1 p.m. We then had to wait outside in an alleyway for about 15 minutes before a van came to transport us. The van driver told us that we were going to Manchester. However, once we arrived in Manchester, he said that we had to travel another 5 hours to Scotland. In Manchester, we stopped at a police station for about an hour where we were allowed to use the toilet, but were not given any food or drink. When the van from Scotland arrived, we were put into that van, switching over with detainees from Scotland who were being taken south. We told the detention officers in the new van that we were starving but they had no food left so we had to go another 5 hours without food. In total, we had travelled 9 to 10 hours on an empty stomach.

D) “V”

Paras 5 – 6:

The detainees were extremely angry about the conditions and rules at Harmondsworth IRC. The food was extremely poor. There was a lack of basic hygiene: for example, we are not even provided with nail clippers so all our fingernails are very long. It seemed as though only about 10-20% of detainees could attend education classes due to space constraints and

so there was usually nothing to do all day. If you did manage to attend an education class, the detention officers would always search you afterwards. The hot water was switched off at night; and the cable from the satellite television was unplugged each night. People who asked for medical or psychiatric treatment did not receive it. Detainees did not understand why they were detained, or why after months of detention no progress seemed to be made towards their removal from the UK.

The detention officers in particular were very rude, intimidating and unhelpful. For example, one detention officer refused a request for playing cards and another detainee's request for a copy of the Koran saying, "I'm busy", even though the items he had been asked to pass were next to his elbow. Although some of these matters may seem small, taken together they made detainees very angry and the atmosphere at Harmondsworth IRC was very tense and liable to explode.

Paras 13 - 16:

The bad feeling came to a climax and many people started to smash up the building. The situation really got out of control and they were breaking everything - toilets; washbasins; telephones; lights; offices; vending machines and water machines. I just walked around for some time. I was accidentally pushed from behind and fell down some steps. I injured myself as there was debris on the steps from the broken toilets and washbasins.

There was water everywhere: running down the walls, on the floors and running down the stairs like a river.

I think this flooding was due to the smashed plumbing. I did not participate in any criminal damage because I did not want to jeopardise my situation. Despite the bad feeling I have towards Harmondsworth IRC, I believed I was going to be deported in 3 to 4 days.

Paras 20 - 21:

I also tried to speak to some detention officers at this time about my injuries from falling down the steps. I could see them standing about 20 to 30 metres outside the gate, which is near A-Wing. I tried to show them my injuries but they ignored me and would not come to speak to me. I think that they were scared to open the gate in case we detainees tried to get out.

I then went back to B-Wing hoping to get some sleep in my cell because I was very tired and in pain from my wrist. It was the early hours of the morning but I am not sure of the time because by this point I had lost my pager, which had a clock on it. Nothing was broken in my cell, but there were 3 to 4 centimetres of water on the floor. The sprinkler system had not gone off in my cell and so this water must have come from broken washbasins and toilets elsewhere in B-Wing. I attempted to dry off my area as loose cables and broken electrical appliances were outside. I was frightened of being electrocuted due to the water and because I could hear crackling noises of electricity.

Paras 24 – 31:

The riot officers told me to return to my cell, which I did. They then began to lock everyone into their cells using the top lock. The doors to the cells have 2 locks, a bottom lock for which detainees have the keys and a top lock which can be used from the outside by detention officers. However, the top lock of my cell did not work. As nobody had tried to use the top lock to my cell before that night, I do not know for how long it had been broken. As a result, the riot officers told me to move into the cell directly opposite mine. I and two other detainees were put in this cell together. More people were then added into this cell by the riot officers. Soon there were 12 to 14 people in the cell in total. We spent the day in the cell together.

It was a small cell built for 2 people. The cell contained 2 single beds with a space of about one metre between them. It was maybe 3 to 4 metres long by 2 to 3 metres wide. The floor was flooded with water. There was no air coming into the cell because the air conditioning was not working, the window would not open and the water level meant that the gap below the door was sealed up. There were loose cables outside and we were all frightened of being electrocuted. There was no wash basin or toilet in the cell and we did not have any food or drinking water. We had to urinate in empty bottles or on the floor. I had not eaten anything except a chocolate bar since dinner the previous night, which is served between 17:45 and 18:45.

We were all sweating and it was difficult to breathe with so many people in such a small, airless cell. Because of my injuries and the stuffy air, I began to faint. I think that I blacked out for a few minutes and another detainee had to slap me on the cheek to wake me



up. Another detainee had some painkillers (Ibuprofen) which I took to try to relieve the pain in my wrist/ankle. When I woke up, it was to the sound of the other detainees in the cell smashing the interior walls. Some of the detainees had tried to break the windows but could not. We were increasingly desperate about being suffocated so, after about 4 to 5 hours locked in, some of the detainees had decided to try and break down the partition walls between the cells in order to try to get some fresh air into the cell and some water to drink. We also hoped to get as far away as possible from cells where there were electrical appliances.

The detainees began making holes in the walls using pieces of wood taken from the beds. The interior walls were thin, like plasterboard, and so we managed to break through about 3 or 4 walls into other cells. We were moving between the cells through the partition walls like rats. We then found a door open from one of these cells into the corridor.

The place stank of stagnant water, urine and faeces. We tried to find cigarettes and to go to the toilet but the toilets had been locked. I noticed a male detainee from my floor, whom I know to have severe mental health problems, going crazy. I do not know if this was because he did not have his medication or whether it was just the situation that was sending him out of control. However, his distress was clear and we could not do anything to help him.

After a couple of hours, riot officers came to the second floor from both sides, trapping detainees in the middle. We asked the officers for fresh air, water and for the toilets to be opened up but they just told us to “fuck off” and to “back up”. Detainees went back to their cells to sleep, though we could not be locked into the cells this time because the walls had been broken down. I had lost track of time but we were left in the cells for some considerable time and I slept from 29 to 30 November 2006. I think that the riot officers stayed there throughout the night of 29 November 2006.

When I woke up, I was wet from the damp air and sweating from the lack of fresh air, as were the other detainees. There were 2 other detainees in the cell with me. The partition walls had been broken down so detainees could move to other detention cells for more space. The police then grabbed and took some of us away. Some detainees were allowed to take their belongings with them but I was not. I still do not have all my possessions from

Harmondsworth IRC (including my clothes, my identity card, my documents from the Home Office and a small amount of money).

Paras 32 – 37:

I was kept alone in a police cell for several days until I was transferred to Colnbrook IRC.

At Colnbrook, I was placed into a Short Term Hold Facility (STHF). This involved me being removed from association and locked in my cell. I was not given any reasons for this. I was locked in at all times, except for 10 to 15 minutes of exercise twice each day. Meals were delivered to me in the cell. I felt like I was starting to go mad.

I was not able to make a phone call to family or friends because I did not have any money and at Colnbrook IRC, I was not given the £1 per day allowance I received at Harmondsworth IRC. I asked repeatedly for a free telephone call but was not given one. Every time, I asked for a telephone call or for a toothbrush for example, the detention officers just said “5 minutes, 5 minutes” and then disappeared which I found very frustrating.

There were bunk beds in the STHF cell and also a washbasin and one chair. The toilet and shower were also located in the cell but with absolutely no partition or screen so that I and my cellmate had to use the toilet and wash in front of each other. When we took a shower, the water flooded over the cell floor: it was like sleeping in a shower room. We tried to keep the cell clean but did not have the means to do so and it was dirty. I was not provided with a towel for days and had to dry myself with a t-shirt. We were only provided with single-use toothbrushes (that come with toothpaste on them already) but these were not provided every day. It was also difficult to get a razor for shaving and a pair of nail clippers.

Apart from a couple of days when I was moved out for some reason, I was kept in the STHF for about 9 days.

I never received have all my possessions and clothes from Harmondsworth IRC. At Colnbrook I was dressed only in a thin jumper, short trousers and indoor slippers. It took me 2 days to get a clean jumper but otherwise I had no change of clothes and no change of underwear.