

Rt. Hon Jacqui Smith, MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Office  
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London SW1 4DF  
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Dear Home Secretary

I have made myself familiar with the case of **Elsa Temesgen Imbaye and her daughter Bethlehem**, from Eritrea HO ref: A1248575. She is currently detained in Yarl's Wood detention centre due to be forcibly removed from the UK **on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> of October** on a BMI flight BD913 @ 14:15hrs from London Heathrow Airport to Addis Ababa.

They were dawn raided on the early hours of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September by 10 Immigration officers. Elsa arrived in the UK with her daughter in December 2004 and has been living in Leeds ever since.

Elsa's case for asylum rests on the fact that she is Tigrinian (from Eritrea) but had been living in Ethiopia with her ex-husband (the father of Bethlehem) who is Ethiopian. Elsa separated from her husband because he was abusive towards her and she subsequently fled. Elsa had been living in Ethiopia before the civil war, which led to the creation of Eritrea. As a Tigrinian, Elsa is regarded as persona non grata in Ethiopia and would not be allowed to live or work there. Elsa would also be regarded as a persona non grata in Eritrea having continued to live in Ethiopia with her Ethiopian husband after the creation of Eritrea. Elsa believes that Ethiopian authorities will not allow her entry to Ethiopia and she fears that if she were deported to Eritrea she would be imprisoned as a traitor.

To complicate the situation further, Elsa's daughter, Bethlehem, was born in Ethiopia and Elsa believes, would not have any rights (including education or health) in Eritrea. Elsa fears that if they are deported to Ethiopia then Bethlehem would be allowed entry but she would not be. She particularly fears that her ex-husband's family would claim Bethlehem and that Elsa would not see her again.

The UK Borders and Immigration Agency insist that Elsa is Ethiopian and do not believe her when she says she is Tigrinian, hence the reason for deporting her and Bethlehem to Ethiopia and not Eritrea. Her case was refused in 2005 and her fresh representations were refused only this month. She was only notified of this as her home was raided at dawn on the 25th of September.

Elsa went to see Hillary Benn her local MP on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of September. At that stage, there was no immediate threat of detention or deportation. Hillary Benn said he would write to the Home Office about her. The concern now, of course, is that Elsa and Bethlehem will have been deported by the time the Home Office responds to Hillary Benn's letter.

The family has settled extremely well in Leeds and has become active members of the community and the Church. Elsa has enrolled for a course at Park Lane College in Leeds to gain a qualification in accountancy (she had been a professional accountant in Ethiopia before fleeing). She loves being an accountant and her hopes are that she will be able to practice as an accountant in the UK once she has the appropriate qualifications. Elsa is involved as a volunteer at Solace and helps run the Women's Group where she is in charge of the activities and also looks after the database. She is also an active member of the Beeston Hill United Free Church.

Elsa's daughter has just started at her new secondary school and that despite only being there for two or three weeks was already settling in and doing really well, especially in Maths, which she excels at. At her primary school, the teachers were really impressed by Bethlehem's ability and willingness to learn and that she was top of the class in Maths.

I ask you to exercise your powers of discretion; please do not remove this family from the UK where they now have a safe life. Removing them would be putting them in a position of risk where there is real fear for their safety.

Yours Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

City:

Postcode:

Country:

Date:

Email:

Phone: