

Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
3rd Floor  
Apollo House  
36 Wellesley Road  
Croydon CR9 3RR

4 April 2023

Dear Ms Braverman

**Re: Events at Heathrow IRC (March 2023)**

We write to raise serious concerns regarding events that have occurred at Heathrow IRC (Harmondsworth and Colnbrook IRCs) where we have received reports of the death of one person in custody and reports that a number of individuals have also attempted to take their lives while others have been self-harming. We write to ask that a public inquiry takes place as soon as possible in view of these events and to prevent further loss of life or very serious injury.

We have also received reports that problems persist despite the issues raised in a letter that we and Medical Justice (MJ) submitted to you on 8 November 2022 following events giving rise to the safety and well-being of persons held at Heathrow IRC.

We have learnt that in addition to at least one person passing away at Colnbrook IRC (our understanding is that he took his own life), there are a number of further concerns regarding the operation of Heathrow IRC:

1. There are long delays with people who need to be seen by the Health Centre and who require Rule 35 assessments and reports. These assessments and related reports must be considered by the Home Office when making decisions as to whether or not continued detention is appropriate. The reports are particularly relevant to assessing vulnerability and the harm that continued detention may cause to an individual, no matter how long they may have been held in detention.

We are concerned that delays or failures in some instances to make any Rule 35 reports is a factor that may contribute to cases of self-harm or to a person taking their own life. We are concerned that the failure to make a Rule 35 assessment may also be reason why the death that occurred a few days ago was not prevented.

2. In addition to the reported loss of a person's life at Heathrow IRC there are reports of self-harm with people cutting themselves. We also understand that at some point



during the week beginning 20 March a further one or more persons attempted to take their own life at Harmondsworth IRC. We understand that individuals attempted to hang themselves from floors where there was no netting, but thankfully one or more officers managed to prevent the attempt.

We are concerned that these events indicate that the situation at Heathrow IRC is out of control and that incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide indicate a deteriorating situation that may result in further similar cases.

The loss of a life, reports of attempted suicide and reports of self-harm are such as to require a public inquiry as they relate to the Right to Life (Article 2 ECHR) and the right to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment (Article 3 ECHR). As such and in order to help prevent similar events in the future we ask the Secretary of State to establish a public inquiry as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely



Pierre Makhlouf  
Legal Director  
Bail for Immigration Detainees

