

Testimony of a Detainee: Our Night of Pain, Dignity, and Unity

14–15 January 2026

I am one of the detainees.

This is **my story**, and it is the story of **my friends**.

On the night of **14–15 January 2026**, around **60 detainees at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre** and another **60 detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre**—all **asylum seekers who crossed the English Channel by boat**—took part in a **peaceful protest**.

More than **41,000 people** crossed the **English Channel** and are now living in **hotels across the UK**.

We are not among them.

We are the ones who were **randomly chosen** by the Home Office to be detained.

Not because we are criminals.

Not because we are dangerous.

But because of **bad luck**.

Inside detention, we are held together with people who have criminal records, even though we ourselves have none. That night, we wanted the world to know one simple truth:

We are not criminals.

Our Protest

Our protest was **completely peaceful**.

We did not shout.

We did not fight.

We did not damage anything.

After the **10:00 p.m. lock-in**, we **sat quietly in the corner of the hall, on chairs, doing nothing**.

We did not block doors.

We did not move toward officers.

We did not approach anyone.

We were simply **sitting together**, peacefully.

That was all.

On that night, around **15 people in each centre** had been given tickets to be sent to France. We know what usually happens. People are taken **by force**, dragged away like criminals.

We did not resist.

We only asked, peacefully:

“Please. Do not take us to France by force.”

The night remained **quiet, calm, and silent**.

Until the order came.

The Order

The order came from the **top**.

Divide them.

Lock them in.

The flight must go to France.

Whatever it takes.

The Arrival of the Forces

At **Harmondsworth**, more than **200 special forces** arrived.

They were fully armored.

Shields.

Batons.

Handcuffs.

Dogs.

Cameras.

Chemical spray that burns the eyes and skin.

They were prepared for violence.

We were **60 unarmed asylum seekers, sitting on chairs in the corner of the hall, doing nothing, fully peaceful.**

G Wing: The Moment Fear Arrived

When they entered **G Wing**, we did not move.

We remained **seated in our place**.

People were crying.

People were shaking.

People were holding each other.

We were not advancing.

We were not shouting.

We were not resisting.

We stayed **still**, just sitting in our corner.

Imagine the scene:

- 200 armored officers advancing down a long hall
- Dogs barking
- A commander shouting orders
- Heavy boots moving together

And at the end of the hall:

- 60 people sitting on chairs in the corner
- Hands raised
- Crying

- Doing nothing

Not one person attacked.

Not one person resisted.

Not one person stood up.

They moved closer.

Then they sprayed us.

The Burning

They sprayed our eyes.

They sprayed our faces.

They sprayed our bodies.

We were still **sitting on chairs**.

Our eyes burned like fire.

Our skin burned like fire.

We screamed from pain and fear.

Taken One by One

Still, while we were **sitting peacefully**, they took us **one by one**.

For each person:

- Four officers grabbed him
- Forced him violently onto the floor
- Dragged him along the ground
- Continued spraying his face and body
- Threw him into a cell

Two people per cell.

Inside the Cell

Inside the cell, we were blind.

We could not open our eyes.

We screamed.

We scratched our burning skin.

When we found the sink and used cold water, the pain became worse. The spray spread across the whole body.

Screaming came from every cell.

One man called God.

One called his mother.

One cried out for **Queen Elizabeth**, saying he did not understand how this country had changed

after her death, and how she could allow such scenes to happen.

The Real Mission

After locking us inside cells, they began taking the people with tickets.

Names.

Photos.

One by one, people were pulled from cells, handcuffed, and taken to the plane.

Morning

At **08:00 a.m.**, the doors were unlocked.

We walked out.

We saw blood on the walls.

We saw drops of blood on the floor.

We do not know whose blood it was.

We do not know what happened to those taken.

We do not know who gave the order.

What They Could Not Take

After everything, we looked at each other.

And we smiled.

Because we stayed peaceful.

Because we stayed human.

Because we stayed together.

We held hands like brothers.

We cried together.

We stayed together until the end.

They had power.

We had dignity.

Together we stood.

Together we suffered.

Together we stayed peaceful.

Together we stayed human.

Together until the end.

WIN TOGETHER.