



Testimonies from the Latvian Migrant Health Project

November 2022

NOTES: these extracts are part of testimonies that have been collected by MSF staff working in Immigrant Detention Centres (IDC) in Latvia, in Mucenieki (close to the Latvian capital Riga) and Daugavpils (close to the Belarussian border), in October 2022.

All testimonies are anonymous to respect the privacy of the patients and they focus on the impact detention has on them.

TESTIMONIES EXTRACTS

Father detained with his family in an Immigrant Detention Centre

(...) The main reason for leaving Afghanistan was the Taliban taking over the country. As you know the Taliban do not allow for girls to be educated. To go to school or university. And I have young daughters and if I stayed in Afghanistan, they would have been uneducated. They limit their freedom. My wife is also educated. If I would have stayed there, my whole family would become uneducated.

(...) You know, most nights my children wake up and they wake up me and my wife and they tell us "Please, stay awake with us. We are scared". If you are a father, you will know how I feel about this and what is my condition, what is my situation. When I see this, I feel very bad. My request for you is to tell the government to not have upcoming refugees stay long here and give them freedom as soon as possible.

(...) This is absolutely not a good place for children. We feel that we are in a country like Afghanistan. In Afghanistan the girls could not go to school and it is the same here. But I am optimistic for their future. When we get out of this place, they will get access to schooling.

(...) My hope for the future is freedom/liberty for the whole of Afghanistan and specially for my daughters and to have them educated and to see them at their top level and to be serving their community.

Mother detained with his family in an Immigrant Detention Centre

(...) The first week was good, but after that it is not good. We get the same food every day. Wherever we go (eat, sleep, etc.), the door is locked shut behind us. I don't know why we are here. We fled our country to be free. But this is not the case. We did not do anything to be locked up.

(...) especially my children do not understand why they are here. My son asks me every day: Why are they being like this to us? Why do they lock the doors for us? And I do not know what to answer him.

(...) They told us we have to stay here for 2 months, which is really long, especially for the kids. My son asks every day: Mommy, when are we leaving? When can I go outside to play? I do not know what to tell him. A pregnant woman was held here 6 months. I am afraid that after the 2 months they will tell us that we will have to stay longer.



(...) We can go outside (in the fenced courtyard) for 15 minutes a day only, because every family should be able to go outside and we are not allowed to go out simultaneously. I also go work out daily, but that has to be demanded beforehand as well, as it is one person after another.

Young man detained in an Immigrant Detention Centre

(...) Please help me and come. Really, I tried to kill myself because I am in the detention centre without any reason. It is not the right thing. This country does not have human rights, people need to see what is happening in Latvia.

Young man detained in an Immigrant Detention Centre

(...) the last year has been one without liberty. I write this letter with a heart that is bleeding of pain and heartache. I bid all organisations to intervene, because this is no longer viable. Please help us in this situation. Some have tried to commit suicide because they have been locked up several months without any concrete reason and without being really heard by the administrative court.