



Ministry
of Justice



Home Office



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody

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**The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department**

10 June 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

Plans for immigration processing in Rwanda

I write on behalf of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody (IAPDC) to ask for formal clarification on how you and your government propose to meet your obligations to protect the lives of people detained in state custody in regard to new plans to process asylum seekers in Rwanda.

The role of the IAPDC, a non-departmental public body co-sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care, is to provide independent advice and expertise to the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody - with the central aim of preventing deaths, natural and self-inflicted, in custody.

In 2021 the IAPDC was pleased to produce, on request from the Home Office, [new guidelines on preventing suicide and self-harm in Immigration Removal Centres \(IRC\)](#). Your officials have confirmed that these are now being implemented across the immigration estate. We trust that these guidelines are proving useful to you, Ministerial colleagues, officials and operational staff in keeping people safe.

It would be helpful if your officials could set out the ways in which active steps will be taken to protect the lives of people who we believe will be detained initially in state custody in the UK. What provision will be made for holding people safely during the period from arrival and first detention, during transit and on arrival in Rwanda?

What provision will be made for assessing and responding to mental and physical health needs during this process? Will some form of assessment be used to determine which detainees are selected for processing in Rwanda and which in the UK? If so, will this assessment take account of health and vulnerability? Will people be screened for deteriorating serious physical and mental health conditions? Will risk of suicide and self-harm be assessed and what steps will be taken to mitigate this risk?

In most forms of state custody, contact with family has been shown to be a mitigating factor in reducing risk of suicide and self-harm. Will detainees have the opportunity to establish and maintain contact with their families?

We would be grateful if your officials could inform the panel as to who will be accountable for protecting the lives of detainees. Is it proposed that accountability for safety will be transferred from UK government to that of Rwanda? If so, at what stage during the period referred to as 'processing' will this occur and what steps will be taken to ensure that these important responsibilities continue to be carried and human rights obligations met?

Poor communication and lack of information-sharing has been cited by investigatory bodies and coroners as a contributory factor in deaths in custody. Please could your officials clarify the roles of the army, Immigration Enforcement and Border Force, commissioned providers and voluntary organisations in regard to proposed arrangements and safekeeping in the UK, in transit to, and on arrival in, Rwanda.

What specific arrangements for interpreters have been made, in the light of these new plans, to ensure that detainees have a full understanding of their circumstances? Uncertainty and lack of information are known to increase anxiety and risk. Has proper provision been made for access by independent monitors and scrutiny bodies and is there capacity for a prompt response to their reports and recommendations?

I look forward to your reply.

As ever

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Juliet Lyon'.

Juliet Lyon CBE, Chair of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody
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