

## THE BROOK HOUSE INQUIRY

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF [D2158] (D2158)

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1. I [D2158] am a recognised refugee from Iran. I make this statement to assist the Brook House Inquiry. I will focus on the time that I was detained at Brook House, but I also cover other events which are relevant to the circumstances in which I was detained there. Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions, I have prepared this statement with my solicitor over the course of several meetings which have taken place via Zoom and telephone and with the help of a Farsi interpreter.
2. I was detained at Brook House over 4 years ago, between 10 April and 15 May 2017 for a total of 35 days. I found my time there difficult and distressing and for a long time I tried to forget what had happened to me there in order to cope with it. I have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following my release from Brook House and have been more recently assessed by a psychiatrist, Dr Paula Murphy, who considers that my detention at Brook House exacerbated my pre-existing PTSD. I still find it painful to remember some of the events there and struggle to place the things that happened to me and that I witnessed on a specific timeline. However, I have tried to describe these to the best of my knowledge in this statement to assist the Inquiry. My solicitor has also shown me relevant documents produced by the Home Office and G4S, although I understand that there are some documents which have not been disclosed to us. I refer to some of the available documents in this statement. I would like to have the opportunity to look at any additional documents that may be disclosed and to be able to comment on them to the extent that they are relevant to my experience and situation at Brook House.

#### **My background**

3. I was born in Iran on [DPA] I grew up in Iran. I was physically and sexually abused by my Imam as a child and find it very difficult to speak about that. In 2016 I was

forced to flee Iran after I [Sensitive/Irrelevant] I had been detained and tortured by the police because of my religion. I was also attacked and stabbed in the streets on a separate occasion for wearing a cross. After this attack, I had to receive urgent medical attention and sustained serious injuries especially on my abdomen. Not long before I fled Iran, I also underwent surgery to my stomach where I had been stabbed and I still have visible scars on my abdomen from this.

4. After leaving Iran, I went through several countries, including Greece and Germany, before I reached the UK. I arrived in the UK late on 1 September 2016. I was encountered by the police on the day I entered the country. I was [DPA] just about to turn [DPA] years old, at the time of my arrival. I claimed asylum on 2 September 2016 and had an interview with the Home Office. I suffered from heart palpitations at the time, and I have now seen that this was recorded in my Home Office notes in an entry dated 2 September 2016. After the interview, I was released on temporary admission. I was not asked to report at that time.
5. In November 2016, I received a letter from the Home Office saying that the UK had asked Germany to take responsibility for my asylum claim. The letter is in English. I believe I asked for a friend's help to understand what it said, but its meaning remained unclear to me as it stated: *"I have today made a request to Germany to take over responsibility for consideration of your asylum claim"* and referred to the "Dublin III Regulation". Until that point, I did not even know that I had claimed asylum in Germany. During my journey from Iran, I had been acting under the instructions of an agent who had taken me and other asylum seekers across Europe. My solicitor has now explained the relevance of the Dublin III Regulation to my case and the meaning of the UK's request to Germany.
6. In or around February 2017, I was asked to start reporting to the Home Office every two weeks. I reported regularly at the reporting centre in Solihull until I was detained on 10 April 2017.

## **My detention at Brook House**

### My initial detention and arrival at Brook House

7. When I went to report at the reporting centre in Solihull on 10 April 2017, I was detained. My English was limited, but I understood that I was being told that I was not allowed to leave the reporting centre. I remember that two officers in black uniforms brought me into a room, where I had a short interview with one of the officers and a Farsi interpreter who was present over the telephone. The other officer waited outside the room for the duration of the interview. I have difficulties remembering this interview. I was confused and scared. I felt overwhelmed and did not understand what was being said to me. The officers took my phone away and I did not have it back until the day I was released from detention on 15 May 2017.
8. After the interview, I was handcuffed and taken to a white van. I remember that there were at least three officers present as this happened: one of them handcuffed me and then he and the other two officers escorted me to the van. I do not know why I was being handcuffed and could not communicate with the officers because my English was not good enough.
9. There were other people who had been detained in the van with me. I think there were five of them. Two or three officers also came in the van. I believe there was a window on one side of the van but I could not see outside. Once we were in the van the officers removed the handcuffs they had put on me. No one told me where we were going, but I knew something bad was happening. I was really frightened. I was scared that they would take me to an airport and remove me to Iran.
10. The van first took us to a building near what looked like an airport. The other detainees and I were then made to wait in a room. We were allowed to use the toilet in the building. After some time, we were then taken back to the van by the officers. Once in the van, we drove for what felt like several hours. The officers were talking between themselves and sometimes to us but I did not understand what they were saying and there was no interpreter. I did not know where we were going. We arrived at the place I now know to be Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) late into the night.

11. At first I did not know what the place was but when I saw the layout of the centre, the doors, which were like those of a prison, and that there were people of different nationalities there, I realised that I must have been taken to a detention centre. I still did not know where I was, what was happening and why I had been taken there.
12. When we arrived at Brook House, I and the other detainees were led to a waiting room. They took my photograph and I believe my fingerprints too. I believe I was given some forms or paperwork, but they were in English. No one translated these forms or explained the contents of them to me in Farsi. My solicitor has told me that the Home Office has disclosed some forms about my initial detention, including a form authorising my detention dated 10 April 2017 (HOM014740) and a form called 'Notice of Removal' dated 20 March 2017. These forms are in English. I note that my date of birth on the Notice of Removal is incorrect as it states [DPA] while I was born on [DPA] [DPA] I also now know that the Notice of Removal said that I was liable to be removed to Germany, but not when I would be removed. As I said, I may have been given these forms as part of the paperwork I received, but no one translated them or explained the content of them to me in English.
13. By the time we arrived at Brook House, it was dark and late. I felt tired. I was still really frightened. I wanted to say to the officers 'please do not send me back', but my English was very limited so I think all I managed to say was 'no back'. I and other detainees waited in a waiting room for what felt like a long time. I fell asleep on a chair. I was then seen by a person who I now know was a Healthcare Assistant.
14. I was tired, disoriented and confused when the appointment with the Healthcare Assistant started. I did not understand many of the questions that I was being asked because there was no interpreter at the appointment. I only had enough knowledge of English to understand a few things the Healthcare Assistant said. Even on the questions I understood, I did not feel I was able to give proper answers because there was no interpreter and I did not feel I could explain myself. I do remember being asked whether I had been tortured and I said yes. I had been tortured in Iran.
15. My solicitor has now read to me an extract from document IS.91RA Part A: Risk Factors Sheet (HOM014697) dated 10 April 2017, in which it is recorded that I stated that I had

had a stomach operation in Iran one year previously and that I was suffering from stomach pain. I did have a procedure in Iran as a direct result of being stabbed because of my religion, as I explained above, and continued to suffer from related stomach pains at the time. Although I would have wanted help with it, I had not been able to see a doctor or receive medication for this since my arrival in the UK.

16. I have also had sight of an entry dated 11 April 2017 in my IRC Medical Records, in which the Healthcare Assistant who conducted my first appointment incorrectly recorded that the operation had happened ten years prior in Iran. The operation actually happened not long before I fled Iran, as I stated above. I do not remember being asked any further questions about the operation or about my torture, or at least none that I understood. As I mentioned, my English was not good enough to understand and explain myself properly. I was also in a state of shock at having been detained and did not feel like myself at all.

#### The conditions at Brook House and the deterioration in my health

17. After the appointment with the Healthcare Assistant, I was led to another room. I was initially placed on what I believe was the 'induction wing', or B wing. I understand that this is where new arrivals were taken. The walls on that wing were painted in light green. I was placed in a room on my own. It felt more like a cell than a room. I was locked into the cell. I would soon find out that every day in the evening we were locked in the cell by officers and remained locked in until about 9am the following morning. I found this really hard to cope with. Often I felt claustrophobic, but I felt there was nothing I could do once I was locked in and that I could not ask for help. I was afraid that something worse than being locked in the cell would happen to me if I asked to be let out because more than once, when I was locked in, I had heard officers taking other detainees out of their cells and the detainees sounding like they were in distress.
18. I was in my cell on my own for one or two nights, and then another detainee was put in the cell to share it with me. The cell was small and the toilet was inside it. There were two walls on either side of the toilet but there was a gap between them and no door to close that gap. So if I was in the cell, even sitting or lying on the bed, and the person I shared the cell with was on the toilet I could see him and vice versa. It was just

humiliating for both of us. I still find it very difficult to think about the cells I lived in at Brook House.

19. The conditions generally at Brook House were unhygienic and unsanitary. The shower rooms in particular were always dirty. I remember that I once went into the showers and, soon after I turned on the water, what looked like dirty toilet water started coming out of the shower drain. It was awful and smelled badly. I had been in detention for some time and I didn't report this to anyone because by then I just knew that these were the conditions we were forced to live in and I thought nothing would happen if I did report it.
20. During the first two or three days at Brook House I felt very anxious and found it difficult to eat and go to the bathroom. This was made even more difficult and embarrassing when I started sharing a cell with another man.
21. I felt scared and lost. I also started having palpitations at night. I had suffered from these before but in detention they became worse. Often at night I also felt like someone was putting their hands around my throat and I struggled to breathe. I started having nightmares but while I was not fully asleep. They were very vivid. I had never felt like that before and it frightened me. I could not stop them from happening. I also started suffering from headaches almost every day.
22. On 17 April 2017 (I only know the exact date from the documents I have seen), I complained to a nurse that I was having palpitations and tried to explain that I felt like someone was putting their hands around my throat. This was 7 days into my detention at Brook House. There was no interpreter available in Healthcare so I had to ask another Iranian detainee who spoke better English than me to attend Healthcare with me so that he could help me to communicate with the nurse. I do not remember that detainee's name but I remember that he was around the same age as I was at the time. He was already detained at Brook House when I arrived.
23. I had my first appointment with a doctor at Brook House after more than two weeks there. My solicitors have now told me that I should have been seen by a doctor within 24 hours of being at Brook House. I did not know this. No one told me anything about what I should expect in detention or what rights I had. I also now know from the Healthcare

records that the doctor's appointment was on 26 April 2017. I could not remember the exact date otherwise as it was so long ago and I try not to think about that time in my life. I did not know the doctor's name but the Healthcare records say that the doctor was called Dr. Oozeerally.

24. I do not feel like the doctor examined me in detail at the appointment and I struggled to explain myself because there was no interpreter present in the room. There was someone who spoke in Farsi on the phone who assisted with the appointment, but I found it difficult to properly communicate with the doctor through the interpreter on the telephone. I am not sure whether the interpreter was a native Farsi speaker, but they did not sound fluent and I struggled to understand them and felt that they struggled to understand me. I cannot remember whether or not I told the doctor that I could not understand the interpreter.
25. The doctor asked me questions about what happened to me in the past. I tried to explain that I had been detained by the police in Iran and that I had been tortured during that time. I explained that officers had tied me to a chair, handcuffed me, put a cloth soaked in oil in my mouth and broken my nails. I also told the doctor that I had been stabbed with a knife in a separate attack in Iran and told him about my scars and the surgery I had after being stabbed. I remember the doctor saw the scars on my abdomen. This was the first time I told anyone about what happened to me in Iran since I had fled. It was difficult to talk about it – especially through an interpreter who I felt did not understand me and who I could not see. It was made even harder because I also did not know why I was being asked questions about it and I felt that the doctor was not really listening to me or did not care. I felt as if he didn't really *see* me. The purpose of the appointment with the doctor was not explained to me and I did not understand at the time what he would do with the information I was providing. I did not know what a Rule 35 report was. My solicitors have since explained the Rule 35 process to me and I now have an understanding of that process.
26. I still haven't seen a copy of the Rule 35(3) report that Dr Oozeerally prepared, as the Home Office has not disclosed this to me or my solicitors. I have however seen and discussed with my solicitors the entry that Dr Oozeerally made in my medical records on

26 April 2017 and the Home Office's document dated 2 May 2017 (HOM014757) which appears to respond to a Rule 35(3) report dated 27 April 2017.

27. The entry in my medical records states "*no scars declared or observed*", but later records "*small scars on the abdomen noted on the left side*". I am confused by this as it appears to be clearly contradictory. I also find the Home Office's response to the report confusing as it first says that the doctor "*has noted that you have small scars on the left side of your abdomen*" but then states that "*in their final assessment the doctor has noted that while you have visibly poor dentition you have no other scars or mental health issues which explicitly suggest torture*". Moreover, I now know that the entry in the medical records states that I was suffering from palpitations at night and the Home Office's response says that, according to the doctor, this suggested that I suffered from anxiety. Again confusingly, however, the entry in the medical records states that I had "*never had any mental health issues*". The doctor did not ask me anything about my mental health. As I said, I have not seen the Rule 35(3) report, but having reviewed the medical records and the Home Office's response I do not feel that I was listened to or assessed properly.
28. The day after my appointment with Dr Oozeerally, a nurse told me that I had to sign something. I tried to explain that I could not sign because I did not understand what the form they were asking me to sign said. I did not sign the form. I still don't know what it was that I was asked to sign. I was not given a copy of this form. There were rarely interpreters available at Brook House and I remember that other Iranian detainees also struggled to understand what was being said to them and communicate with staff.
29. Throughout my detention, I continued to feel really anxious and have palpitations, especially at night. I went to Healthcare several times to ask for help because of this, but more than once I was told that there was no doctor who could see me.
30. I also had really severe toothache and bleeding from my gums while I was at Brook House and reported this to Healthcare several times since my first week in detention. However, I was just given some painkillers and was not seen by a dentist for several weeks. The pain and bleeding made it difficult for me to eat and drink properly. It also made it hard for me to sleep and I felt anxious.



31. After I finally saw the dentist, I was given antibiotics. I felt frustrated by this and that no one cared. I felt as though the healthcare professionals at Brook House were not treating the medical issues that I raised seriously. I felt uncomfortable about the way they treated me. I did not trust them fully because it seemed as though they were not listening to me or providing me with the treatment that was minimally required for my symptoms.
32. I have now seen my medical records from Healthcare at Brook House and been told by my solicitors about the entries dated 11 April 2017, 27 April 2017 and 5 May 2017 stating that I did not attend appointments at the 'Arrivals Clinic', at the dentist clinic and with a mental health nurse respectively on those dates. I was never made aware of these appointments and did not know that I had missed them. The records do not say how I was informed about the appointments. I do not remember being told about them. I was desperate to get medical help, I was in pain and I was scared. If I had known about the appointments, I would have attended them. I was asking for help, I wanted the appointments and there was no reason for me not to attend had I known about them.

Violence and mistreatment by staff at Brook House

33. As I mentioned, I was initially placed on a wing which I believe was the 'induction wing'. After 6 or 7 days, I was taken to a different wing. I am not sure which wing this was, although my solicitor has told me that an entry in my medical records indicates that on 5 May 2017 my cell was on C wing. My cellmate on C wing was a Ghanaian man who looked like he was in his twenties. I cannot remember his name.
34. After I moved from B to C wing, things became much worse. I was already very anxious. In the new wing, I and other detainees were treated badly and often bullied by the officers. They did not treat us like humans.
35. I would like to say at the outset that I understand that providing the name of the officers who mistreated me or who I witnessed mistreating other detainees is important, but it is really difficult for me to do so, as the officers did not normally introduce themselves to us or tell us their names. When something happened at Brook House, including the assaults and incidents I describe below, I was always too scared to ask any questions and, even if I had wanted to ask, I would not have been able to as my English was too limited

and most of the time there were no interpreters available. I will however try to describe the officers involved in each incident to the best of my ability.

36. I felt like the officers at Brook House, and particularly the ones in the C wing where I was moved to, often treated us more like animals than human beings. I remember two episodes when officers kicked me completely without justification.
37. The first time I was in the corridor with other detainees and we were all about to go into our cells for the night lock-up. I believe I was staying in the cell on C wing at the time. I do not remember the exact date of this incident but I remember that it occurred after I had been moved off the induction wing. I was entering my cell on my own, because my cellmate was not there, when an officer approached me from behind. At first, I did not think anything of it because I knew he was there to lock my room. However, he then kicked the bottom of one of my feet pushing me further into the cell. I was shocked when the officer kicked me. I did not expect it and I stumbled forward. I was wearing flip flops and he was wearing boots so it hurt the sole of my foot. The officer said something in a low voice which I could not understand. He then left and locked the door to my cell. There were other detainees standing outside in the corridor at the time but I do not know if they saw what had happened. I do not know the officer's name. He was white and of medium to large build and had short hair. He looked like he was in his mid-thirties at the time. I felt too scared to react when I was kicked, so I did not say anything at the time. In fact, I was scared all the time of what the officers could do to me. I had previously (not on the same day) heard other detainees screaming when my cell door was locked at night and it sounded like they were being physically assaulted by officers. I could not see them but they sounded like they were in pain. I was scared that something like that would happen to me. So I never put in a complaint about this incident.
38. I did not know how to do it, but even if I had known, I would not have done it. I was too scared of something being done to me if I complained. I also did not know about the complaints system in the centre nor of any organisations that I could speak to about complaints. No one ever told me that a complaints system existed or how to access it. I do remember mentioning this incident to someone I trusted at Brook House, I believe it was another detainee, but I cannot recall who I spoke to.

39. The second time an officer kicked me, I was coming back to C wing from the outdoor yard. This incident took place towards the end of my detention. I was going through the first door which led onto a corridor. There was then a second door at the end of the corridor through which you accessed the main building. There was an officer standing near the first door and when I entered he just kicked the back of my knees with his boots. The kick hurt, especially because the officer was wearing boots, and I stumbled forward. The officer also said something to me which I did not understand. There were no other detainees or members of staff present at the time. When I went back to my cell, I saw that my trousers had been stamped with the dirt from his boot. It was just humiliating. I don't know why he did that. I didn't know the officer, had not spoken to him before so far as I can remember, and I hadn't said anything to him when I was in the outdoor yard. I did not understand what reason he would have to treat me like that. I don't know the officer's name, but I remember that he had short hair and was wearing a dark navy shirt with the G4S logo on it. It was not the same officer who had kicked me in the first incident that I mentioned above.
40. At the time, I was sharing my cell with the same Ghanaian man and we also had another cellmate – an Indian man who was known to me as **DX** I believe I mentioned this incident to my cellmates and tried to explain to them in English what had happened. As my English was very limited and I did not share a language with my roommates, I found it difficult to communicate with them.
41. There were also other ways in which the officers mistreated us. For example, I once accidentally dropped the plastic spoon I had been given with my meal in the bin by mistake and had no cutlery to eat as a result. I was held on C wing at the time. I asked the other Iranian detainee who had interpreted for me before to tell me how to ask for cutlery in English. I tried, as best as I could, to ask an officer for a spoon or a fork to eat and explain that I had dropped my spoon in the bin by accident. The officer just shook his head at me and said no. The other Iranian detainee then came over and asked the officer for cutlery on my behalf. The officer did not give us any cutlery and gestured towards one of the bins. The Iranian detainee who had come to help me then translated the officer's response for me, which was that I would just have to take the spoon out of the bin, wash it and use it. I was eventually able to get a clean fork from another detainee,

but it just felt humiliating and unnecessary. I don't remember having any dealings with this officer in the past and I don't understand why it would have been a problem to give me a clean fork or spoon. It felt like he was trying to make me feel like I was not a human being. The officer involved in this incident was a young man who looked like he was in his twenties. I did not make a complaint about this incident for the same reasons I have described above.

42. After I was moved to C wing, I also witnessed people self-harming and getting no proper help. It was horrible. I find remembering these events particularly difficult. On one occasion, I was coming back from the outdoor yard with other detainees and I heard people shouting that a man had cut himself. I went towards the place where I thought the shouting was coming from. There were several detainees crowding at the door of the cell of another Iranian detainee. I cannot remember his name, but I remember he was from Southern Iran. He was young. He could not speak English. I entered the cell and saw that he had blood on one of his wrists and on his hand. He had cut himself with a razor. I started talking to him in Farsi, just trying to reassure him that he would be OK. There were other people watching from the doorway, including the Iranian detainee who had previously interpreted for me. Not long after I entered the cell, a G4S officer entered. He just grabbed me and pushed me out of the cell. He said something I could not understand. This officer was a white male of large build. I recall him having very big feet and a shaved head. He appeared to be in his forties. As I was pushed out of the cell, I saw that there was also another officer present, just outside the room, near the door. I did not sustain any injuries as a result of the push but I was shocked that the officer had grabbed me and forced me out of the cell when I was just trying to help the other detainee. I have been asked whether I was given any form to fill out after this incident happened. I didn't know that there was a procedure whereby I may be asked to give my account of what I saw. I was not given any form to fill out. I don't know what happened to the young man in the cell after the incident, but I know that when I left Brook House he was still detained there.
43. I also witnessed a second incident where someone cut his wrists with a razor while we were in the area where we normally ate. I did not know that detainee. It was horrible, there was blood everywhere. I was not closely involved, but I saw it. Officers came and took him away from the area.

44. There is a third incident that I witnessed during my time at Brook House. I was watching television in the indoor recreation area when suddenly I heard a loud noise; it sounded like people shouting. I went towards where the noise was coming from in the eating area, opposite where I was, and there were already other detainees gathered around the table where we normally ate. We were on the ground floor of the building and the noise was coming from the floor above ours. You could see the landing of that floor if you stood on top of the table as the central area was open and there was no ceiling there dividing it from the floor above. When I got onto the table, I saw that on the floor above ours, there was a detainee who had wrapped what I believe was the wire of an electric shaver around his neck and was trying to either strangle or hang himself with it. He was standing in the doorway of a cell. I am not sure whether his feet were fully on the floor. I did not know the detainee, but I remember he was a black man. I could not see well from where I was standing where the wire went, but I believe that he had tried to tie it to the doorframe. I could see the wire wrapped around his neck. There was another detainee shouting and calling for help. The man with the wire around his neck looked like he was suffocating. It was distressing to watch. Two officers arrived and took him away. I do not remember Healthcare arriving. I do not know what happened to him.

The attempt to remove me and my decision to refuse food

45. On 9 May 2017 (I also know this date from the records that I have seen), an officer came to my cell telling me that I was going to be removed to Germany. There was no interpreter but I understood that they wanted to take me to the airport from their body language and the few English words they were saying that I could understand. I was brought to an office where two other officers were waiting. I remember one of these officers, who was middle aged and had grey hair. I refused to leave by shaking my head and saying no. I was very scared and my hands were shaking. I think at least one of the officers was trying to calm me down. After some time, I was brought back to my cell on C wing. My solicitor has since read document HOM015060 to me, which states that my removal was cancelled "*due to the fact [I] was disruptive*". I was not disruptive during the exchange with the officers. I was very anxious and tried to communicate that I did not want to be removed but I was not behaving in a disruptive manner. My solicitor has informed me that the

records note that the attempt to remove me was captured on a body worn camera. I have not seen this footage, as it has not been disclosed to me or my solicitors.

46. After that day, I felt even more scared and anxious that I would be removed and I stopped eating. I cannot remember whether I stopped drinking entirely but I think I did for some time. I did this because I was struggling to cope with detention and felt I needed something to happen. I couldn't take it anymore. I cannot remember exactly how many days I went without eating, but I think it was three or four days. I was checked by Healthcare during this time but their checks just consisted of asking me whether I had eaten and I think ticking a box when I said that I had not. It looked like they did this on a form, but I was never given a copy of one. I don't believe that they took any observations. I remember once during this period, a male member of staff asked me why I was not eating or drinking and I just said "no" and shook my head. He did not ask me any further questions. There was no interpreter present during this exchange or any of the other checks from officers about my food and drink refusal.
47. My solicitor has read document CJS001288 out to me with the assistance of an interpreter. This contains an extract from the shift handover notes from 11 May 2017, which state that I would not eat and that I last ate a dinner on 9 May 2017. This is accurate to the best of my knowledge. However, the record also notes that I ate a custard cream on 11 May 2017, which I do not remember doing. I was not eating during that time and I don't know how staff came to record that. I do remember that sometimes staff would ask detainees to check whether the other detainees had collected their meals and to keep a record of this. I was never asked to do this myself, but I saw other detainees doing it. At meal times, the detainee who had been asked to do this would be given sheet with a list of names, I believe of the detainees on the wing, and would sit next to the place where we went to collect our food. There was normally a queue and when you went forward and collected the meal you would say your name. At that point, the detainee I think put a tick next to your name to confirm that you had collected your food. Of course neither the detainee nor any staff reviewing this list would have known whether or not you actually ate your food after collecting it.
48. On 12 May 2017, I had an appointment with a nurse. I struggle to remember exactly what happened at the appointment as I was going through a very difficult time, I was not eating

and felt weak. I only know the date of the appointment as my solicitor has shown me my medical records where the date is recorded. I remember that there was another woman with the nurse who said she was from the Chaplaincy and could speak Farsi. She spoke with an accent that was not Iranian, but I could understand her well enough.

49. At the beginning of the appointment, I remember I just had my head down and did not want to speak. I remember saying that I wanted to leave Brook House. I felt depressed and just did not want to be there. The woman who could speak Farsi asked me to please try and speak to them as they may be able to help me. I did speak to them for some time although I don't remember what was discussed exactly. However, after a while I felt trapped and claustrophobic in the room, like I was in a cage, and asked to leave it, which they allowed me to do.

#### **My release from Brook House and the impact on me**

50. I was released from Brook House on 15 May 2017. My solicitor has told me that my release was in fact authorised on 11 May 2017. As I mentioned above, I had at the time recently stopped eating and I felt really unwell. I believe I started to eat again approximately two days before I was released. Even when I was finally released I was not told of the reason why the Home Office had decided to release me. I do not know why I was not told that my release had been authorised and the reasons for this. I have now been told by my solicitor that the decision was made because I could no longer be removed to Germany. I find it difficult to understand why the Home Office did not tell me this and left me without any knowledge that I would be released, especially when it was such a distressing time for me.
51. After being released from Brook House I had my substantive asylum interview on 28 May 2017. My asylum claim was refused on 25 August 2017, but I appealed. My appeal was allowed on 17 November 2017 and I was granted refugee status.
52. Shortly after I was released from detention, during the summer of 2017, I moved in with a couple from my [Sensitive/Irrelevant] [Name Irrelevant]. I have since had sight of document HOM015042, which contains a letter from [Name Irrelevant] to the Home Office in support of my asylum appeal. I remember telling either [Name Irrelevant] or [Name Irrelevant] about my time at Brook House but I cannot remember if I told both of them. I

gave them a limited account of my experiences at Brook House. I did not tell them in detail everything that had happened to me while I was in detention because I knew it would be shocking to them and I did not want to upset them. I was also relieved to be released and didn't want to be reminded of what happened to me there.

53. As I mentioned, I find talking about my detention at Brook House really difficult and thinking about what happened to me there makes me anxious. Since being released, I have struggled to sleep properly and have had nightmares and flashbacks to my treatment in Iran and to my time at Brook House and the things I witnessed there. I also still suffer from heart palpitations. In December 2017, my GP diagnosed me with PTSD. As I mentioned above, I was also more recently, in June 2021, assessed by a psychiatrist, Dr Paula Murphy, who prepared a report for me. I understand that her report has been provided to the Inquiry. I have discussed the report with my solicitors and know that Dr Murphy also diagnosed me with PTSD and that, in her opinion, this was made worse by my detention at Brook House. I also know that she considers that I would likely experience distress in giving live evidence to the Inquiry for this reason.
54. I want to assist the Inquiry with any further evidence I may be able to provide, but I am worried that I would become distressed and feel overwhelmed if I gave oral evidence at the hearings. I would therefore be happy to answer any further questions about my time at Brook House but would feel safer if I could do this in writing through my solicitors.
55. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth. This statement was translated and read to me in Farsi by a professional interpreter, Name Irrelevant on 13 January 2022.

Signed: **Signature**

Dated: **13 January 2022**