

United Against Inhumanity in the UK

In loving memory of our dear friend and colleague, Mona Mahmood, who tragically passed away on 11 April 2020, a victim of COVID-19.

On 25 February 2020, UAI in the UK, in collaboration with Initiatives of Change, held an event “Where is Humanity? The human costs of detaining asylum-seekers”.

The event highlighted the inhumanities suffered by asylum-seekers detained indefinitely in the UK. It was organised by Mona Mahmood and Helia Lopez Zarzosa, founding members of UAI in the UK and of its Committee. They identified and contacted speakers and participants and publicised the event. Mona mobilised her family and friends to cater the dinner before the event.

On the day itself, she encouraged everybody with her enthusiastic advocacy for the detainees and those trying to help them.

This report and the materials posted with it are presented as a small tribute to Mona’s memory. All of us at UAI in the UK are committed to honouring Mona’s memory through our efforts to stamp out the inhumanities suffered by refugees, asylum-seekers and civilians in conflict.

Opening the event

The event began with the song **Gol e Gandom** performed by **Roshi** from Music in Detention www.musicindetention.org.uk

The historical background

Dr Helia Lopez Zarzosa sketched the history of efforts by governments to stop designated groups of migrants from arriving on their shores. In her paper “Immigration Detention Through Time”, Helia highlights the extraordinary expansion in the use of detention facilities in countries around the world in recent years. “The impact of immigration detention has been a gradual but violent stripping of the worth of human life”.

Detention at Gatwick Airport in the UK

Avril Loveless, from the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group described the inhumanities being suffered by detainees in Brook and Tinsley Houses the Immigration Detention Centres at Gatwick Airport. Many of the detainees have no idea when they will be released. Read UAI's interview with Avril [here](#)

Dr Claire Marshall of the University of East London described the consequences of prolonged and indefinite detention on the mental health of asylum-seekers.

Gulwali Passarlay, a young refugee, told the extraordinary story of his escape from Afghanistan and eventual arrival in the UK. His story is captured in his book, "The Lightless Sky" and in this presentation: <https://gulwalipassarlay.wordpress.com/2018/02/26/newly-arrived-to-the-uk-as-an-asylum-seeker/>

Lul Seyoum read "Sorry Son" a moving poem from a detainee **member of Music in Detention** to his son **while in immigration detention in the UK for nineteen months** and introduced a moment of reflection to remember all those who have lost their lives in search of safety and asylum.

Several audience members shared further stories of indefinite detention and the toll that this has exacted on the individuals and their families and friends.

UAI in the UK is using the materials from this event to support campaigns to eliminate indefinite detention, and is beginning work, in collaboration with the University of East London, to promote alternatives to detention during the processing of asylum claims.

To take part in UAI in the UK's work on detention, please write to uai.ukcontact@gmail.com

To send a message of condolence to Mona's family, please also write to uai.ukcontact@gmail.com, and we will make sure it reaches the family.

- The Committee of UAI in the UK -