



17th October 2024

For Attention:

Jonathan French, Director of HMP Bronzefield

Dear Jonathan French,

I am deeply concerned by the unfair treatment and restrictions being placed on Fatema Zainab Rajwani, who has been detained at HMP Bronzefield on remand for 2 months.

1. Unnecessary Intrusive Medical Tests

Fatema has been forced to submit to 5 "random" urine tests in 2 months. Why? The Prison Service Order 3601 states that 5% of the prison population should be randomly tested for drugs each month (your annual report states that 4.8% were tested last year), so each prisoner on average should be tested no more than once every 20 months. Fatema has been forced to submit to a drug test 50 times that frequency! Clearly this is not random. Other detainees have not been subjected to this. Why is she being targeted?

When one takes into account the degrading way these intimate tests are carried out, with loss of dignity and privacy, such frequent testing is clearly in breach of Article 3 of the Human Rights Act which stipulates "no one should be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

The last time she was forced to provide a urine sample, when she questioned it, they gave a new reason saying this time it was for a pregnancy test. Mandatory pregnancy tests in prison are illegal, they are a clear invasion of a women's right to privacy (Article 8, Human Right Act).

Our understanding is that each test has to signed off by the director of the prison. We would like an explanation of this violation of her human rights, and an undertaking to stop this abuse.

2. Not receiving mail

Some young children from her community painted pictures for her. We hand delivered them along with some postcards and letters on Monday 23 September. We were told to put the envelope in the red box in the waiting area which we were told gets emptied every day and she would promptly receive her paintings (colour photocopies of them at least). After several days, when she still hadn't received them, we phoned the prison. They double checked the box had been emptied and said they would chase up the mail room. A week passed, still nothing. Another phone call, another promise to fix the issue. Two weeks passed, time for our next visit, we had another bundle of postcards to hand deliver. To our dismay she still hadn't received the first lot of mail. We spoke to the lady at the visitor's reception, she was surprised and said she would personally chase it up with the mail room. That was nearly two weeks ago, and Fatema still hasn't received the first set of mail after nearly 4 weeks, let alone the later ones! At least 29 items of mail we have hand

delivered to the prison has not reached her, and this is just the tip as we are aware of many others who have sent letters and postcards, and they also have not reached her. Why is she being denied her mail?

The reason we chose to hand deliver the paintings was that we discovered horrendous delays in prison staff handing over books ordered from your approved booksellers.

We ordered two books, a journal and some drawing pens for Fatema from your approved bookseller Waterstone's. The tracking showed they arrived at HMP Bronzefield on 7th Sept. But she didn't receive the journal until 4 days later and the books and pens took 16 days! That seems unacceptably long.

3. Restrictions on books

She is only allowed to receive books purchased from a few approved booksellers who have very limited range, especially when it comes to religious books for minorities.

For example we wanted to gift a popular Muslim prayer book. None of the approved booksellers stocked it, but Waterstone's were willing to order it directly from the publishers (though it would take 3 weeks) so we bought it. Unfortunately when it arrived she discovered it only contains the English translation, not the original Arabic which is recited in prayers. Waterstone's cannot get hold of such a copy. Being a popular book we have several copies at home but we are not allowed to give one to her.

This impinges on her rights to practice her religion (Article 9, Human Rights Act) and goes against your policy of creating an inclusive environment where diverse people are treated with equality.

This also goes against government policy. The Ministry of Justice website under HM Prison & Probation Services clearly states that:

1.1 Sending and handing in of books directly by families and friend.

From 1 September 2015, families and friends will also be allowed to send or hand in books to prisoners irrespective of whether or not there are exceptional circumstances. Visitors will not be allowed to hand books directly to prisoners; they will need to be left with staff to process.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incentives-policy-framework/incentives-policy-framework-annex-f-sending-and-handing-in-of-books-to-prisoners>

We request that you please allow us to bring books for her which are not available from your approved sellers.

4. Respecting religious diversity

Fatema is a Muslim, she has a right to practice her religion (Article 9, Human Rights Act), part of that is wearing hijab. Can we request that male prison officers respect that? When entering her cell if they can please first knock to give her time to put her hijab on.

5. Restrictions on visits and activities

The prison is enforcing an arbitrary non-association order (NAO) barring Fatema and the other 5 remanded women, who were arrested at the same time as her, from any contact with each other. Why is this? There is

no legal justification for this. The 4 men arrested at the same time have no such restrictions imposed on them; they are free to associate with each other. What is the purpose of isolating the women?

This NAO is seriously infringing on her rights. It means she is not allowed visits during the same time slot as the other 5 women as they would have to share the same visiting hall, so effectively for every six visits she is entitled to, she only gets one visit. With only 2 visiting time slots a day, this is very restrictive. Combined with the non-delivery of mail it's as if you want to isolate her from her family, friends, and community in the outside world.

The NAO also severely restricts her life in prison. Fatema has been told she can't do any work or activities due to the NAO as she could be in the same area as one of the other 5 women. For example she would love a job in the library or the education wing, but isn't permitted.

Due to the NAO she is only permitted one hour in the gym per week, and that hour clashes with a visitation slot. So if she is lucky enough to get that slot for a family visit then it means she is deprived of any exercise in the gym for a whole week.

The only activity she is allowed to participate in is an Islamic session organised by the Chaplain. It's something she looks forward to every Wednesday afternoon as a way to occupy her mind and time. But even that is being undermined, as yesterday on a whim the prison officers, through no fault of hers, decided not to unlock her from her cell in time to attend. This was very upsetting for her.

My understanding is that, due to this NAO, she was not even allowed to attend her own court hearing as there were not enough video link rooms available for all 6 women, so 3 couldn't attend and had to be sent back to their cells not knowing what was being decided on their behalf - a serious breach of their right to a fair trial. In contrast 3 men, imprisoned at HMP Wormwood Scrubs could all attend by sharing one video link.

When you combine the external isolation imposed on her - by non-delivery of mail and severe restrictions on visitation - with the internal isolation of not being permitted to do any activity, it's as if you are trying to create a regime of solitary confinement.

She is a young person just turned 20 before her arrest, these restrictions are seriously undermining her mental health.

We would be grateful if you could please look in to lifting these arbitrary restrictions, thank you.

To end on something positive, I just want to say thank you to the wonderful lady at reception. At our last visit my daughter came in a hoodie not realising that was against the dress rules. The lady kindly found a suitable top so my daughter wouldn't miss her visit - please convey our deepest thanks.

Your sincerely,

Abbas Ali

Resistance Kitchen
www.ResistanceKitchen.uk