

Ms SA, Bronzefield Prison. There's quite a few mums here but it's hard for us to talk with each other – you don't feel like sharing stuff about your kids because it's too painful to speak sometimes. And there's a language problem – for example I saw a lady the other day who couldn't stop crying – and one of the women who spoke French found out that she is from Gabon and had come here four weeks ago but her son had been taken off her because they said he wasn't her child and that she had brought him here illegally. So she's waiting for a DNA test but had no idea what was going on. Then Social Services said that a test wasn't necessary as he looked so much like her, but she is still having to wait – it's terrible.

And I'm stuck here too and my child is with social services and it's gonna be nearly two years we've been apart – he's getting sick all the time and is angry that he can't be with me – it's a torture – he's already estranged – it will be hard for us to bond again and we used to be so close. I curse these people for what they're doin to me and my child.

Ms GO, Holloway Prison

I am a victim of torture and abuse for refusing to be circumcised in Nigeria. I came to Britain five years ago and have been fighting ever since to get my right to asylum and for what happened to me to be recognised as persecution which would continue if I was sent back.

Altho I'm not a birth mum, I have looked after my sister's child ever since she died. I was criminalised for having money in a bank account which I accounted for but I was not believed. I served the sentence but instead of being allowed to return to my nephew, I was sent to Yarl's Wood.

It was this injustice which decided me to join with other women and go on hunger strike to get our cases resolved and get released. But instead of listening to our legitimate concerns, we were herded like cattle, and four of us were segregated from the others and thrown into prison. We were not charged with any offence, and although we have solicitors, I and two of the original hunger strikers have been in Holloway for almost five weeks now. Two more of us are in Bronzefield, getting more and more desperate.

There are many mums in here separated from their children and being driven mad with worry and anxiety. I found one woman who had been crying for hours yesterday. When I asked why, she said she had just been refused permission to call the hospital where her daughter had fallen ill had been taken. She can't speak with her own daughter – imagine that – the brutality of keeping a mum from consoling her daughter – imagine the pain that girl is going through. These people who keep us apart from our loved ones like this are evil beyond evil – they have no hearts. But they will never destroy our spirit. We are with you today despite the locks and bars.