



House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State for the Home  
Department  
Home Office  
Direct Communications Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

23 September 2019

Our Ref: ZA16387

Dear The Rt Hon Patel,

I write in my capacity as Chair of the APPG on Immigration Detention. As you will be aware, the APPG consists of 35 parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, all of whom share concerns about immigration detention in the UK.

My colleagues and I were extremely concerned to hear of the death of Mr Oscar Lucky Okwurime on the 12<sup>th</sup> September at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, the second death in this facility in under twelve months.

We welcome the High Court judgement which blocked three potential witnesses to Mr Okwurime's death from being deported. It is of the utmost importance that the chain of events leading to Mr Okwurime's death are transparently investigated, and I urge you to do so in a prompt and thorough fashion.

In previous cases where detainees have died in custody, there has been evidence of substandard practices in the investigation process. A report by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman on the death of a man at Harmondsworth in 2011 highlighted that a key witness was removed from the country before the PPO could interview him. I'm sure you will agree that errors like this must not be repeated in Mr Okwurime's case.

The facts surrounding Mr Okwurime's case have yet to be clarified, but there are worrying suggestions that, despite requests, he was unable to access prompt medical care at the centre. It is essential that people under the care of the immigration system can access medical care when needed. This of course extends to those who bore witness to the traumatic events on the 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**Alison Thewliss MP**

Glasgow Central Constituency Office, 33 London Road, Glasgow G1 5NW  
Telephone: 0141 552 7117 | Email: [alison.thewliss.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alison.thewliss.mp@parliament.uk)

I have been told by detention NGOs that in the past week they have been receiving calls from detainees at Harmondsworth, who are highly distressed by what has happened. Yet the NGOs say they are not aware of any counselling or bereavement support being offered to detainees. It is imperative that the Home Office provides such services to detainees as a matter of urgency.

I would take this opportunity to extend an invitation to you to discuss these matters in more detail. I would also ask that you consider meeting with the APPG when Parliament returns to discuss the wider changes required to ensure that the welfare and well-being of detainees across the immigration detention estate is upheld at all times.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Thewliss', written in a cursive style.

**Alison Thewliss MP**