

extremely basic. Our diet is very limited – the food we are given is always the same and fresh fruit and vegetables are in very short supply. We often have difficulty obtaining access to basic services like medical treatment, and now even our access to the telephone has been restricted. It is very hard for us to live like this for months on end, our movements restricted in this confined, over-crowded space, with little time spent in the open air.

Perhaps the hardest thing about our confinement, however, is that we are constantly subject to the authority of the soldiers. While we appreciate that they are responsible for our security and that they need to keep order in the centre, which is far from easy, we want you to understand that for us this life is extremely humiliating.

We have not committed any crime. We have always respected the law, and travelled illegally only because we had no choice. All of us have fled situations that made our lives unbearable. Since we arrived in Malta we have always co-operated with the authorities, and none of us have ever caused any trouble. There is no reason to believe that we would behave otherwise if we were to be allowed to have our freedom.

We believe that not only is it unnecessary to detain us, as we do not present any sort of danger or security threat, but also that we will not be able to survive like this for much longer. The uncertainty we have to live with and the conditions in which we are detained have left us feeling totally humiliated and devoid of any hope. Many among us, particularly the women, have succumbed to despair and depression and some of them had to be admitted to Mount Carmel to receive psychiatric treatment.

The procedures for the determination of our claims are taking very long. We appreciate that the resources available to the authorities dealing with our cases are very limited, and we ourselves understand that each case must be examined thoroughly in order to ensure that justice is done. Moreover, we understand that we may be required to bring evidence in support of our claims. However, in spite of the best efforts of all concerned, including our own, the procedure seems to be dragging on forever.

We are therefore requesting the authorities, on humanitarian grounds, not to deprive us of our liberty any longer while we wait for our claims to be decided.

Although we outlined our grievances in this letter to you, we would really be very grateful if you would accept our invitation to come and visit us. We are truly appreciative of the untiring work of Mons. P. Calleja on our behalf, but we would still like to see you in person.

Yours faithfully,