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## Disabled Nigerian asylum seeker 'dragged around on a chain,' treated 'like a goat'

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A disabled woman who faces deportation to Nigeria by British immigration authorities has claimed she was treated “like a goat” and dragged around Heathrow Airport on a chain.

Lovelyn Edobor, a victim of trafficking and who has reduced mobility as she suffers from advanced osteoarthritis in both knees and chronic generalized arthritis, was on the brink of being removed on Saturday following several months in detention at Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Center in Bedfordshire.

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The 49-year-old said that although she was handed a wheelchair in detention, officials snatched it off her on the journey to the airport.

On arrival at the airport, Edobor claims she was told to put her hands against a wall before being circled with a restraint belt that she said went from her waist up to her breasts.

Attached to the belt was a long chain, which the woman claims was used by escorts to drag her around.

*"The belt was painful as it dug into my skin especially when they pulled me along and when I sat down,"* she said, according to the Guardian.

*"I began crying and complaining ... about the way I was being treated and the pain that I was in, but they continued to treat me in such a way."*

Although Edobor's removal was canceled on Saturday, the Home Office still sought to remove her on Tuesday evening via a charter flight to Nigeria.

It is understood, however, that her lawyers are conducting a fresh legal challenge at the High Court in order to prevent her removal.

Edobor said in a statement to her lawyers that she still felt "shocked" two days after the incident, and that the escorts treated her in an inhumane manner.

*"I felt like I was being dragged along like a goat without any consideration for my feelings or my health conditions."*

*"I felt like I was being punished and treated like a criminal, and this has made me very upset."*

The Home Office's own guidance on the use of restraint for the purposes of removal says that it should always be carried out in such a way that respects the "dignity" of the person.

While pointing out that restraint will seldom be necessary for people who already have restricted physical mobility, the guidance also warns that if it lacks an appropriate risk assessment, restraint could potentially breach the Human Rights Act.

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Emma Ginn, coordinator of the charity Medical Justice, has spoken out about the risks of restraint on people being detained.

She said that although this particular case is "shocking," it is nothing new.

*"Medical Justice has documented hundreds of cases of alleged assault by escorts since*

*Medical Justice has documented hundreds of cases of alleged assault by escorts since 2005," she said.*

*"We have raised concerns to the Home Office year after year about both individual cases and guidance on use of force issued to escorts, to little avail."*

She added that it is hard to understand how a proper risk assessment can legitimize the use of such restraint on a person with *"severe mobility issues."*

Edobor claimed the incident on Saturday has made her health condition *"much worse"* and that she has not been able to eat well since then.

After saying she was not allowed to dress properly while in her room, Edobor added: *"I'm feeling very cold. I would be better off dead than going back to Nigeria."*

Her lawyer, Hannah Baynes, from the law firm Duncan Lewis, said the way the Home Office officials treated her client on Saturday was *"deplorable."*

*"My client has severe mobility issues, and the way that Home Office officials denied her a wheelchair and used a belt and a chain to pull her along when maneuvering her around the airport is completely deplorable."*

The Home Office responded saying it does not comment on individual cases, but insisted the *"dignity and welfare"* of those being detained is of the *"utmost importance."*



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