



**Craig Whittaker MP**

**CALDER VALLEY**

[www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk](http://www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk)

### **Freedom from Torture: Update**

Thank you for contacting me again about asylum for torture survivors.

This country has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, and I can assure you this will continue under this Government. Asylum caseworkers carefully consider protection needs by assessing all available evidence, including medical reports relating to torture, in light of published country information to reach an informed decision. Flexibility in the policy allows for the asylum process to be suspended for medical evidence to be provided where appropriate but decisions cannot be delayed indefinitely and unnecessary delays must be avoided.

Caseworkers receive extensive training on considering asylum claims before making decisions, which specifically covers how to approach claims involving allegations of torture and assessing medical evidence of torture. As abhorrent as previous incidents of torture are, people claiming asylum must show there is a real risk of serious harm or ill treatment in the future if returned to their country of origin. Protection is normally granted when a claimant establishes a well-founded fear of persecution under the relevant conventions.

I should highlight that Freedom from Torture's report acknowledges that the UK has excellent policy guidance on considering medical evidence of torture in asylum claims, and caseworkers are expected to follow this policy. I do not accept that the report shows widespread evidence that caseworkers do not follow the policy in practice because it is based on a small and unrepresentative sample of cases. Caseworkers must follow published Home Office policy, and there is a robust quality audit process in place to check decisions.

The Home Office works closely with partners such as Freedom from Torture to improve the way it deals with asylum claims involving victims of torture, and I am aware that it has already improved its approach to safeguarding since the period covered in the report. It is also looking to ensure that medical evidence relevant to a decision on protection needs can be provided without undue delay and that medical reports focus on what caseworkers need to reach an informed decision.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP