

DETENTION UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

JRS visits people in immigration detention across Europe. We witness detention's negative impact on detainees and the effects of flawed migration systems. By exposing some of it, we hope to gain support in our call to end immigration detention. Stories are real. Names and other details were adapted for people's protection.

LACK OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Detention negatively impacts people's mental health. Uncertainty about the duration of detention, poor detention conditions, difficult relationships with both other detainees and police or centres' staff and fear of being returned are all sources of stress and worry.

Concern is growing in Spain about judges authorising detention without taking into account the mental health situation of the person concerned. This despite reports showing that **most detainees suffer internment-related mental health problems** and that the centre's medical service does not adequately deal with such issues.

In its 2014 report, the Spanish Ombudsman already recommended that the Detention Centres' medical service should cover psychological assistance. In 2022, the supervisory judges in Madrid also **asked the interior ministry to include mental health care within the centre's regular health service.**

THE STORY OF WALID

Walid was arrested and detained shortly after disembarking from the boat. He fainted twice in the first days of detention. He suffered from a manic depressive state, claustrophobia with panic attacks and brief loss of consciousness as a result of an accident that left him with neurological damage. Despite having medical reports from his country of origin, **the doctor did not acknowledge his symptoms and he was never referred to a specialist.** He did not receive any explanation about the sleeping pills he was regularly given at the detention centre.

He reported severe headaches, a lot of stress and the feeling of suffocation in closed spaces. He also confessed to the SJM about having suicidal thoughts and feeling desperate because of the lack of attention received.

After a month in the detention centre, **he harmed himself following an altercation with police officers.** He was then referred to the psychiatric department of a hospital. The following day, he was released and referred to humanitarian reception resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Jesuit Migrant Service in Spain (SJM) calls on the Directorate-General of the Police to **incorporate the judges' and Ombudsman's recommendations on improving medical-health service in detention centres.**

In particular, the portfolio of services provided should **explicitly include the provision of assistance for mental health problems**, including psychological assistance.

SJM also recommends that health care in detention center is provided by the **public health service and not outsourced to a private company.**



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