

Liam Byrne MP
Minister for State for Nationality, Citizenship & Immigration
Home Office
3rd Floor
Peel Building
2 Marsham St
London
SW1P 4DF



Baby Milk Action is a non-profit organisation which aims to save lives and protect infant and young child health through independent controls on babyfood marketing.

We are a member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a network of over 200 citizens groups in more than 100 countries.

www.babymilkaction.org

www.ibfan.org

Saturday, May 19, 2007

Dear Liam Byrne

Ms Maseko

I am writing about a case that has been brought to my attention. It concerns Ms Maseko, a young breastfeeding mother of a three-week-old son and one-year old daughter who is detained in Yarl's Wood and has been separated from her children. Aside from getting her immediately released and reunited with her children, she needs to maintain her breastmilk supply and ensure that her son is breastfed. She is also suffering great breast pain.

Last year we wrote to you about two cases involving mothers from Vietnam and Turkey where immigration officials failed to follow the correct procedures regarding the treatment of families and separated breastfeeding mothers from their babies. (see the case of **MRS TRANG TUYET THI NGUYEN HO Ref N1081177**) The mothers were released following letters from Lord Avebury and Baby Milk Action and you assured us that the Vietnamese case was an isolated incident and that *"It is clear that the case was not satisfactorily handled. Prechecks had failed to reveal that Mrs N was part of a family unit."*

I find it very shocking that the officials in charge of this case seem to be showing no regard for or understanding of the needs and rights of the child or the mother and that Home Office Guidance continues to be ignored.

Baby Milk Action is the UK member the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) a network of over 200 citizens groups in over 100 countries and together the world's health community we work to ensure that the critical value of breastfeeding and the importance of keeping mothers and babies together is recognised. Apart from its psychological importance, breastfeeding reduces the incidence of infectious diseases, chronic diseases and auto-immune diseases, offers optimal development and growth, cognitive and visual development and evidence suggests that it decreases the risk of obesity. The seven-year study carried out by the WHO shows that babies exclusively breastfed for six months are healthier and leaner than artificially fed babies.¹ The benefits of breastfeeding extend throughout the whole life cycle. In the global context, breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding help fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and have the potential to reduce under-5 mortality by 19%.²

¹ The WHO Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS) : rationale, Planning and Implementation, Food and Nutrition Bulletin, Volume 25, Number 1, March 2005?

² Jones G et al. (2003) How many child deaths can we prevent this year? The Lancet, no 362, 65-71.

The decision to separate Ms Maseko from her baby flies in the face of a number of UN Resolutions and conventions, including the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and the 12 subsequent WHA resolutions, the *Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding*, UNICEF's *Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative* and the *Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding*, which all stress the critical importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with nutritionally adequate and safe complementary feeding alongside continued breastfeeding up to the age of two years and beyond. Article 24 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* also recognizes the contribution breastfeeding makes to the fulfilment of the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health.

I respectfully urge you to re-look at this case and release Ms Maseko immediately so that she can be reunited with her baby without any further delay.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patti Rundall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patti Rundall, OBE
Policy Director

Cc

Victoria Jones, Director Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre

John Randall, MP for Uxbridge

Dugald Millar, Quality Standards Manager, London Borough of Hillingdon