

OPUS2

The Cranston Inquiry

Day 14

March 26, 2025

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1 Wednesday, 26 March 2025
 2 (10.00 am)
 3 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, good morning, everyone.
 4 And good morning especially to the family and
 5 friends of the victims of this terrible tragedy. They
 6 are watching online or they are here with us in London.
 7 As you know, over the next day and a half we will
 8 receive evidence about those who died, from their loved
 9 ones and those closest to them.
 10 I said from the very outset and it continues to be
 11 the case that we have always sought to keep them at the
 12 centre of our work and give a direct voice to those
 13 affected by the tragedy. I now call on Rory Phillips,
 14 King's Counsel, who is counsel to the Inquiry, to tell
 15 us about the structure of the day.
 16 Introduction to family impact evidence by MR PHILLIPS KC
 17 MR PHILLIPS: Thank you, sir.

18 The structure of these days will be as follows: we
 19 will hear 27 accounts in total; 19 today and a further 8
 20 tomorrow.
 21 Each account has been recorded in the original
 22 language by, or on behalf of, the statement maker.
 23 The recordings will be followed in each case by
 24 a member of your Inquiry team reading an English
 25 language version of the relevant parts of the statement.

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1 And the recordings and readings will be accompanied
 2 by images on screen of those who died or remain missing.
 3 Two further introductory points, if I may.
 4 As I have said, in some cases, the original language
 5 recording has been made by someone other than the
 6 statement maker and on their behalf and, secondly, in
 7 some cases, more than one statement has been made in
 8 respect of an individual and where either of those
 9 circumstances applies, I will make that clear.
 10 Before the first recording is played, I should give
 11 a warning. What we are about to hear over the next
 12 two days may be distressing to those in the room or to
 13 those following on the livestream and if so, they should
 14 leave the room or look away, as the case may be.
 15 The first two recordings and statements you will
 16 hear are made by the brother and cousin of
 17 Halima Mohamed Shikh who was born in 1988. The original
 18 language you will hear is Somalian.

19 Statement of MR ABDULLAHI MOHAMUD HASSAN (in
 20 Somalian)
 21 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 22 MS LE FEVRE: I am Abdullahi Hassan, the brother of
 23 Halima Mohamed Shikh. Halima was my younger sister, she
 24 had three children. Before Halima left Somalia, she was
 25 spending her time looking after her children. She lived

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1 in Mogadishu with her children until she left Somalia
 2 some time in 2019. While Halima was still in Somalia,
 3 we used to spend a lot of time together with our
 4 children and other family members.
 5 Halima left Somalia because of the political
 6 instability and violence. I heard about the incident of
 7 23–24 November 2021 from my cousin Ali Areef. I cannot
 8 recall exactly when Ali called me to say that Halima had
 9 been in an accident and that she had died trying to
 10 cross the Channel from France to the UK, but it must
 11 have been around the last days of November 2021.

12 I recall that Ali said the bodies had not yet been
 13 formally identified, but that he was almost sure Halima
 14 had died in this tragedy.

15 After Ali told me this information, I called my
 16 mother to tell her what I had heard. I started looking
 17 on the news to see if there was anything about the
 18 incident. I watched some footage on the BBC and read
 19 about the incident. I learnt that many people had lost
 20 their lives.

21 At this time, the bodies had not been identified and
 22 there was no information about Halima. It was only on
 23 around 14 December 2021 that I received a photo of
 24 Halima's face from the morgue. Halima was my only full
 25 sibling and I loved her in a way that I have never loved

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1 anyone else. I find it so painful thinking about what
 2 happened to her. Every time I am asked about her or
 3 I try to remember specific details, I just start to cry
 4 uncontrollably and I cannot find the words to talk about
 5 her.

6 It is better for me not to think about it too much,
 7 as I feel overwhelmed by the emotions. My entire family
 8 are still grieving the loss of Halima. My mother is
 9 unable to speak about Halima without breaking down
 10 emotionally. Halima's children continue to suffer the
 11 loss of their mother, but we are doing everything we can
 12 as a family to support them and give them the love they
 13 need.

14 And we will next hear the recording and statement
 15 made by Halima's cousin.

16 Statement of MR ALI AREEF in Somalian
 17 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 18 MS LE FEVRE: I am Ali Areef, the first cousin of
 19 Halima Mohamed Shikh. I am originally from Somalia.
 20 However, I left Somalia in around 2008 and am now
 21 a Norwegian national. Halima is my paternal cousin.
 22 I had not seen Halima since she was five years old until
 23 I met her in Paris in early November 2021. I had known
 24 Halima and her family, including Abdullahi when I was
 25 a child.

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1 We spent a lot of time together when we were growing
 2 up in Somalia. I met her again in Paris in 2021 because
 3 I happened to be in Paris to visit some friends of mine,
 4 including my brother-in-law. I was in Paris for around
 5 a week between 4 and 11 November 2021. I saw Halima
 6 several times when I was there. During those days that
 7 we spent together we were mostly reminiscing with each
 8 other about our childhoods and catching up about our
 9 families.

10 Halima had three children who are now 13, 11 and
 11 nine. They are currently all still living in Somalia.

12 I remember that when we were together in Paris
 13 I felt worried about her. She seemed very low and
 14 worried all of the time.

15 I first heard that Halima might have lost her life
 16 around two or three days after the incident because
 17 a friend of Halima's contacted me. I had already seen
 18 in the UK news that many people had lost their lives in
 19 the Channel on 24 November 2021 and then I was told that
 20 it was possible this was the boat Halima was on.

21 I remember that I was completely shocked by this
 22 phone call. The entire thing seemed unbelievable.
 23 I had just seen Halima about 10 days before, having not
 24 seen her since she was five years old and suddenly I was
 25 told that she might have died.

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1 The woman who had informed some of mine and Halima's
 2 friends about the incident also explained that there was
 3 a Somali survivor from the incident who was in the
 4 hospital. I was given his number, but was told that he
 5 was in a critical condition and that it might be
 6 difficult for him to speak to me. I called him a few
 7 days later. Mr Issa Mohammed spoke to me on the phone
 8 and he explained to me what had happened.

9 I asked him if he could confirm whether Halima had
 10 been on that boat and if she had died. I sent a photo
 11 to Mr Mohammed of Halima and I in Paris the week before
 12 and he confirmed that she had died. He told me that he
 13 was with Halima until she died and that he had heard her
 14 last words before she died.

15 He heard her shouting, "Help me, I don't want to
 16 die" after the boat capsized and she was in the water.
 17 I now know that Halima was not able to swim.

18 I knew that I had to share this information about
 19 Halima's death with Halima's mother and the rest of her
 20 family in Somalia. I know that Halima's mother was
 21 completely broken by the loss of her daughter and that
 22 she continues to suffer every day.

23 Looking back now. There are many questions that
 24 I did not ask Halima about her life when we met in
 25 Paris, which I now wish I had. It had been a long time

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1 since we had seen each other and we were getting to know
 2 each other again. I was so shocked and confused when
 3 I first found out she had died.

4 I could not really understand it at first. I still
 5 fixate on this cruel coincidence. She had just come
 6 back into my life and we had reconnected and then
 7 suddenly she was gone.

8 It is painful to think about her three children
 9 losing their mother in such a tragic way. I do not know
 10 how much they really understand about what happened.
 11 When I spoke with her mother, she told me that Halima's
 12 youngest child still thinks that she might come back one
 13 day and that he will see his mother again.

14 Abdullahi has told me that he and the rest of the
 15 family in Somalia are grieving every day. His mother
 16 still cries every time that Halima is mentioned. It has
 17 been extremely hard for her and she is now the main
 18 carer for Halima's children.

19 Halima was a good person with a good character. She
 20 was loved by those around her and kind to everyone.
 21 Fate has taken her away. We must learn to accept it but
 22 it is very hard.

23 I will never take a ferry across the Channel again
 24 or go to Paris. This tragic incident is never far away
 25 from my mind and it makes me feel sick to think about

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1 crossing the Channel in a ferry where others including
 2 a member of my family lost their lives because there was
 3 no other way to cross.

4 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 5 Yassin, the father of Rezhwan Yassin Hassan. Rezhwan
 6 was born in 2002. You will hear two voices on the
 7 recording. First Yassin's and then that of his
 8 daughter, who has recorded the statement on his behalf.
 9 The original language you will hear is Sorani.

10 Statement of MR YASSIN HASSAN HAMAD (in Sorani)
 11 (Audio, read by daughter, played to the Inquiry)

12 MS ONABANJO: I am Yassin Hassan Hamad, the father of
 13 Rezhwan Yassin Hassan and the distant cousin to two of
 14 the other victims, Mohammed Qadar and Zanyar Mustafa.
 15 I live with my wife and our four remaining children.
 16 I have two daughters and two sons. Rezhwan was our
 17 second oldest child. He lived with us before he left
 18 Kurdistan. Rezhwan was 19 years old when he left
 19 Kurdistan. Rezhwan was a kind and clever young man, he
 20 loved spending time with people and he was always
 21 respectful.

22 Before leaving Iraq, Rezhwan was a student at
 23 school. He was one of the top students at his school
 24 and he really wanted to carry on learning anything he
 25 could. I remember he was good at everything at school,

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1 anyone who met him would immediately sense how
 2 intelligent he was.
 3 Rezhwan and I were very close. We were not simply
 4 father and son but also very close friends. Every
 5 evening we would come together and joke around about the
 6 events of the day. Without this, Rezhwan would not go
 7 to sleep. This is what we both looked forward to during
 8 the day.
 9 Rezhwan left Kurdistan on 20 October 2021. He had
 10 gone for about a month and four days when the incident
 11 happened. I was in contact with Rezhwan throughout his
 12 journey via WhatsApp. We would exchange messages and
 13 have calls. I spoke to him almost every day.
 14 My last contact with Rezhwan was around 8 pm
 15 Kurdistan time, 6 pm GMT on 23 November 2021. He was
 16 mostly calling me rather than his mother because
 17 whenever his mother heard his voice she would start
 18 crying. I was the last person from the family to have
 19 contact with my son.
 20 I first heard about the incident when I was watching
 21 the news on television at home in the late afternoon on
 22 24 November 2021. As soon as I saw the news, I had
 23 a bad feeling. About 10 days after the incident, an
 24 organisation contacted us about providing DNA samples to
 25 be sent to France. They contacted us to say they were

1 contacting all families who had loved ones missing to
 2 determine if their loved ones were victims from 23 to
 3 24 November 2021.
 4 It was another 10 days, 20 days after the incident,
 5 that we received confirmation as a result of the DNA
 6 match that Rezhwan was one of the victims. Rezhwan's
 7 body was repatriated to Kurdistan with the other bodies
 8 on around 26 December 2021. I remember that we went to
 9 the airport two or three times to meet his body, only to
 10 be told that there was some delay. I do not know why
 11 this happened.
 12 With brought Rezhwan's body back to Qadrawa and we
 13 had a burial ceremony for him at the mosque near our
 14 home in late December 2021. Rezhwan is buried next to
 15 Mohammed Qadar. Until very recently, I would go to
 16 visit Rezhwan's grave every day.
 17 I am currently suffering with some health issues
 18 which means I have very little energy and so I can only
 19 go every two days or so.
 20 The impact has been massive. I do not know where to
 21 start. I mostly isolate myself and I am suffering from
 22 poor health now. I do not have energy to go to work.
 23 My wife is also very tired because of the grief and we
 24 are both suffering. From the day that this happened,
 25 everything changed. My home used to have a different

1 lively atmosphere and now we do not socialise with
 2 people anymore.
 3 I barely have energy to do anything, not even work.
 4 My other children are going through similar feelings and
 5 when we heard about the incident, they stopped going to
 6 school because of the grief. We are all still
 7 suffering.
 8 It has almost been three years since his death and
 9 the pain is still there all the time. My wife feels
 10 that a part of her is dying every day. Nothing could
 11 ever replace him and the pain will never go away because
 12 nothing can resolve the pain of losing a child.
 13 He will be missed forever and we are changed forever
 14 as people and as a family.
 15 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 16 Ahmed, the father of Afrasia Ahmed Mohammed.
 17 Afrasia was born in 1994. You will hear two voices
 18 on the recording. First, Ahmed's and then that of his
 19 son, who has recorded the statement on his behalf. The
 20 original language you will hear is Sorani.
 21 Statement by MR AHMED MOHAMMED AHMED (in Sorani)
 22 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 23 MR BROWN: I am Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed, the father of
 24 Afrasia Ahmed Mohammed. My wife and I had nine children
 25 including Afrasia; four daughters and five sons. My

1 wife and I live with three of our sons. Afrasia was
 2 very smart. He graduated from high school in 2015. He
 3 applied to university, but he did not get accepted so he
 4 tried to find work instead. Life is very difficult
 5 here. He left Iraq on 26 October 2021.
 6 To identify the body, we were asked to send DNA
 7 samples to France and they confirmed that my son was
 8 dead. I cannot speak in detail about these events as
 9 it's very traumatic.
 10 For one month after my son's body was returned to
 11 us, all I could do was cry. I cried so much that it
 12 affected my vision. My family had to help me find the
 13 bathroom because I could not see. My wife fainted when
 14 she heard that Afrasia was dead and she fainted again
 15 when she saw the body in Erbil Airport.
 16 Every week, I go to his grave in the Rania Cemetery
 17 and I cry. All the happiness has been taken from our
 18 lives. My wife cannot cope with the grief. She cries
 19 every day for our son.
 20 We have suffered a terrible loss and we have
 21 suffered more in the three years since the incident,
 22 when it felt like the French — the UK and French
 23 authorities were not taking action. Nothing can take
 24 away the pain from the loss of our son.
 25 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by

1 the father of Zanyar Mustafa Mina, who was born in 2001.
 2 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 3 Statement of MR MUSTAFA MINA NABI (in Sorani)
 4 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 5 MS WOODS: I am Musafa Mina Nabi, the father of
 6 Zanyar Mustafa Mina. I live with my wife. We have
 7 five children together; three of them live with me in
 8 Kurdistan. Zanyar was the second eldest of my children;
 9 he was 20 years old when he left Iraq. Before he left
 10 Iraq, he had been very active and was healthy. He often
 11 played football and went swimming in the local lake with
 12 his friends. He was very energetic and smart and loved
 13 by his family and friends. He was a very kind person
 14 and he always wanted to help people. He had gone to
 15 school until he was 17, Year 12, but did not graduate.
 16 On 22 or 23 September 2021, he left Kurdistan. My
 17 last photo of us together is from Erbil Airport.
 18 My last contact with my son was a phone call on
 19 23 November 2021. Zanyar sent me a message at 8.34 pm
 20 Iraqi time saying, "I am leaving now". I never heard
 21 from him again.
 22 I tried to call Zanyar and Rezhwan during the night,
 23 but they did not answer. When we saw the news on TV
 24 that a boat had sunk and people had died, I was worried
 25 that I still had not heard from my son. I was able to

1 keep in control of my emotions because of my background
 2 in the military. I am used to witnessing horrible
 3 things and I have had to cope with very difficult
 4 situations, so I was able to stay calm.
 5 I tried to convince my wife that it could not have
 6 been the boat Zanyar was travelling on. For three days
 7 we tried to convince ourselves that Zanyar had been
 8 rescued and was detained by the British authorities.
 9 We kept on top of the news and we tried to call
 10 Zanyar. My wife still had doubts, but I held out hope
 11 that Zanyar would contact us.
 12 On 28 November 2021, two TV channels in Kurdistan
 13 broadcasted a report which talked about the boat and how
 14 most of the South Kurdistan victims were from our area.
 15 My wife had already been scared because we had not yet
 16 heard from Zanyar and she became more and more worried
 17 that our son had been on the boat.
 18 In early December 2021, we were asked to provide DNA
 19 samples for the French authorities identifying the
 20 bodies from the shipwreck.
 21 On 14 December, there was some kind of meeting with
 22 representatives from Lootka and the Kurdistan Regional
 23 Government in Paris, where they announced the list of
 24 names of the victims. Lootka published a list of the
 25 victims and Zanyar was on the list.

1 They gave the names of all of those they had
 2 identified and also those they believed were on the boat
 3 but had not yet been found. Zanyar was one of those
 4 classed as missing. Zanyar is still missing.
 5 We have never received any formal communications
 6 from the French or English authorities regarding efforts
 7 to locate Zanyar and the other missing victims and we do
 8 not know what the coastguard did to locate them at the
 9 time.
 10 I have been in contact with various organisations
 11 who have contacted us, including a European human rights
 12 organisation, but I do not remember the names. No one
 13 has been able to provide me more information about this.
 14 What happened was a big tragedy. Everyone loves
 15 their children, but I believe the pain for us is greater
 16 than those who have had the bodies of their loved ones
 17 returned, as at least they have been able to provide
 18 their loved ones with a resting place and are able to
 19 have some sort of closure. Not knowing what has
 20 happened to my son has been awful and no one has found
 21 his body, which makes it even worse.
 22 My wife keeps saying she wishes his body had been
 23 brought back. She would rather know for certain that he
 24 has died than not knowing anything at all. Whenever we
 25 visit Rezhwan's grave, my wife says there is an empty

1 space and that she wishes that she could visit Zanyar
 2 there.
 3 Sometimes my wife will get up in the middle of the
 4 night and start praying for Zanyar to be found. She has
 5 been traumatised by losing our son. She cries
 6 constantly and is always really sad.
 7 She has days where she is unable to do anything.
 8 I am probably doing better than most other family
 9 members because my experiences in the military mean
 10 I have been through a lot and seen a lot, which has made
 11 me more emotionally resilient to the trauma that we have
 12 all experienced.
 13 It has affected my other children a lot. My oldest
 14 child still in Kurdistan is 18, but he has a mental
 15 disability which means he thinks like a child. The loss
 16 has affected him enormously as he was very close to
 17 Zanyar. He does not really understand what happened.
 18 My youngest child keeps asking questions about
 19 Zanyar, where he is, and why my other son cannot get him
 20 from France. We try to distract him and change the
 21 subject, but he keeps asking questions.
 22 That line of questioning has been really hard for me
 23 and my wife to answer and deal with. My daughter keeps
 24 herself busy by helping to look after my youngest, but
 25 she often gets very upset. I am very upset that no one

1 has told us what they are doing to locate those still
 2 missing. In three years we have been given no
 3 information.
 4 I want to come to France and England to look for my
 5 son. Sometimes I still believe he could be in
 6 a hospital or prison somewhere.
 7 Not knowing is the worst part and my family and
 8 I hope that the Inquiry will investigate properly what
 9 happened to those still missing. We will not rest until
 10 we know what happened to Zanyar.
 11 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 12 the father of Mohammed Hussein Mohammedie, who was born
 13 in 2002. The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 14 Statement of MR HUSSEIN MOHAMMEDIE (in Sorani)
 15 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 16 MS LE FEVRE: I am Hussein Mohammedie, the father of
 17 Mohammed Hussein Mohammedie. I am an Iranian national
 18 born in 1968. I fled Iran in 1988 aged 20 and came to
 19 Kurdistan.
 20 We have suffered financial hardship as a result of
 21 being refugees. I live with my wife and my daughter.
 22 She is 23 years old. Mohammed was the middle child of
 23 three; he lived with us before leaving Kurdistan.
 24 Mohammed was 19 years old when he left Kurdistan.
 25 I received his body back on his 20th birthday. Mohammed

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1 was a special child. He was always listening and did
 2 what I asked him. I can remember he had a bicycle.
 3 Whenever I asked him to get or do something for me, he
 4 would cycle there right away.
 5 At school he was loved by everyone, especially the
 6 teachers. They would tell me that my children had
 7 a different upbringing to other youths, that they were
 8 so polite. All his teachers from Year 1 until Year 12
 9 came to our house after they heard about his death and
 10 told us how much they loved him and how sad they were to
 11 hear of the tragedy.
 12 Mohammed was often complaining that I had not been
 13 brave enough to leave Iraq. He wanted to be different,
 14 he wanted to be brave. He was a very good son and was
 15 very good to me and his mother. He never gave us any
 16 reason to be angry or upset with him.
 17 Mohammed was very close with his siblings and was
 18 always helping them out. We had a motorbike and
 19 Mohammed and I would take turns to bring his youngest
 20 sibling to school. Before leaving Iraq, Mohammed was
 21 helping me with the farm.
 22 He had completed his Grade 12 education and passed
 23 his exams with flying colours.
 24 Mohammed left Kurdistan on 18 August 2021. I recall
 25 every second of it. I was in regular contact with my

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1 son through WhatsApp calls throughout his journey. The
 2 evening of 23rd November 2021 he called me at 8.35 pm
 3 Iraqi time and told me they were travelling as a family.
 4 I know he was with Shakar, Harem and Twana. He spoke to
 5 every member of our family that night at 8.35 pm.
 6 We gathered around the phone to hear from him. His
 7 sister was crying because she missed him. I had no
 8 contact with Mohammed after he got on the boat. The
 9 8.35 pm call was the last time I spoke with my son.
 10 On the evening of 24 November 2021, we knew Mohammed
 11 was on the boat that capsized. There is a Kurdish
 12 journalist in Europe who works on issues to do with
 13 asylum seekers, so when the news broke, he had gone to
 14 see the bodies. We contact him during a live broadcast
 15 and sent him a photo of Mohammed and he confirmed that
 16 Mohammed was amongst the victims.
 17 I cannot describe how we felt. What can one do when
 18 hearing such news?
 19 We were asked to provide a DNA sample to France
 20 which we sent. We were never formally told anything
 21 about Mohammed, but after that, they issued the death
 22 certificate and the bodies were sent back to us.
 23 We were not contacted by anyone as an individual
 24 family. There was one person who worked on repatriating
 25 the bodies; this process took about a month. We buried

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1 Mohammed in Kurdistan.
 2 I spoke to the Kurdish survivor shortly after the
 3 incident happened. The survivor said that people in the
 4 water started taking the life –jackets off. Because of
 5 the cold and the pain, they wanted to sink and die, but
 6 not my son. He wanted to live.
 7 I was told by the survivor that my son was the last
 8 one alive before they rescued the survivor. He told me
 9 that if they had rescued them half an hour sooner, then
 10 my son would be alive.
 11 It has affected us in a way that we will never
 12 forget. Imagine your child gets into trouble in the
 13 water and you are not there and cannot help him.
 14 Imagine he stays in the water for 12 hours and no one
 15 comes to his rescue.
 16 This is what we are always thinking about.
 17 It always stays in the front of your mind, the
 18 effect is there always. It makes life more difficult.
 19 When you lose someone, you will always remember the
 20 grief, it hurts a lot.
 21 If what the survivor told me is right, had the
 22 coastguard arrived 30 minutes earlier my son would have
 23 lived. This I cannot bear and can never forgive.
 24 I will never forget the people in the water. They
 25 were there for 12 hours. Their organs stopped working

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1 because of the cold. Why were they not rescued?
 2 We have lost our loved one. Mohammed became
 3 a victim. I have no expectations from anyone anymore.
 4 MR PHILLIPS: Shall we have a break?
 5 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: A 10-minute break. Thank you very much.
 6 (11.02 am)
 7 (A short break)
 8 (11.16 am)
 9 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Mr Phillips.
 10 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, the next recording and statement is made
 11 by the father of Muslim Ismael Hamad who was born
 12 in 2002. The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 13 Statement of MR ISMAEL HAMAD KHUDHUR (in Sorani)
 14 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 15 MS LE FEVRE: I am Ismael Hamad Khudhur, the father of
 16 Muslim Ismael Hamad.
 17 I was born and raised in Soran and have lived here
 18 all my life. I presently live with my wife and our
 19 five younger children. My son Muslim Ismael Hamad
 20 Muslim, born on 14 January 2002, was the second oldest
 21 of the seven children I share with my wife Asmar.
 22 Muslim was an Iraqi national and prior to his
 23 departure from Kurdistan in October 2021, he lived in
 24 our family home in Soran with my wife and the rest of
 25 our younger children.

1 Muslim was a beautiful boy. He was an active child,
 2 he played sports from a young age and was a good
 3 swimmer.
 4 Muslim and I were very close. We shared a special
 5 bond from when he was a young boy. As a child, Muslim
 6 was energetic and full of dreams. He loved to play
 7 outside with his friends. He loved school. He would
 8 always tell me that he wished to be a doctor or
 9 an engineer. He was extremely good at his studies.
 10 My wife and I were very proud of him.
 11 Muslim was a remarkably kind and caring boy. From
 12 when he was a young child, Muslim was very protective of
 13 his younger sisters and brothers and took care of them
 14 in any way he could.
 15 He felt similarly protective of his mother and would
 16 always help her around the house and look after her when
 17 she was tired or unwell.
 18 As he grew older, he began to recognise the
 19 financial problems that our family struggled with. He
 20 made the difficult decision to drop out of school after
 21 completing Year 11 when he was around 17 years old to
 22 help me with my work trading ceramic tiles in the
 23 market.
 24 I remember when he made the decision. He told me
 25 that it was impossible to work and study at the same

1 time and that he would rather put his dreams on hold so
 2 that he could contribute to our family's income.
 3 His aim was to help provide for us all and in
 4 particular, for his siblings.
 5 When Muslim started working with me, we spent almost
 6 every day together. Our relationship, which was always
 7 close, evolved into a sort of friendship. Muslim and
 8 I shouldered the difficulties of providing for our
 9 family together and I felt as if I had a partner to help
 10 me through my worries and my troubles.
 11 I remember him telling me that he wanted his younger
 12 siblings to have a better life, to go to school and be
 13 educated and to not be reliant on the help of others.
 14 We would get up every morning at about 7 am, walk to
 15 the market in Soran and spend the whole day working
 16 together.
 17 In September of 2021, Muslim sat me down and told me
 18 that there was something he wanted to discuss with me.
 19 He told me that he wished to travel to the UK. On
 20 31 October 2021, Muslim boarded a flight from
 21 Erbil Airport. Our entire family, including my wife and
 22 all of Muslim's siblings, went to Erbil Airport to see
 23 him off.
 24 It was an emotional event. He had never left home
 25 before and we did not know when we would see him again.

1 We took photos and videos and said tearful goodbyes to
 2 him.
 3 Muslim would video call me almost every day, to
 4 update me on where and how he was. I spoke with Muslim
 5 at around 2 pm GMT on the afternoon of 23 November 2021.
 6 That was the last time I spoke with Muslim.
 7 I tried to call him again a few hours later, but his
 8 phone seemed to be switched off.
 9 At approximately midnight on 24 November, Kurdistan
 10 time, I was at my friend's house in Soran and his TV was
 11 showing Rudaw, the main news channel here in Kurdistan.
 12 It was reported that a boat had sunk in the English
 13 Channel.
 14 I had a bad feeling. But I hoped that Muslim had
 15 not been on that boat and that he had made it safely to
 16 the UK.
 17 In the days and weeks that followed, I kept holding
 18 out hope that Muslim had arrived safely in the UK and
 19 that he would contact me. I would tell myself that
 20 Muslim had just been unable to get hold of a phone and
 21 that he would call me any second now. I remember always
 22 keeping my phone close to me. I felt unable to put it
 23 down and was checking it constantly.
 24 As the days went on I continued to call Muslim's
 25 phone repeatedly, but my calls went unanswered.

1 A few days after the incident, I attended the
 2 mourning of Maryam Noori Ameen, held by her father who
 3 is my friend. I knew from Noori that Maryam was one of
 4 the first people identified as having been on the boat
 5 which had sunk trying to cross the Channel.

6 After that, my wife and I travelled to a hospital in
 7 Suleymaniyah, where my wife gave a DNA sample for
 8 testing.

9 There was no news for a number of weeks after that.
 10 During that time, I kept telling myself, my wife and
 11 other children that Muslim was merely finding it
 12 difficult to get a phone in the UK and that at any
 13 moment I would get a call from him and everything would
 14 be all right.

15 One evening a few weeks later, my family and I were
 16 at home. We were watching Rudaw. They interrupted
 17 their broadcast to announce that the French authorities
 18 had finished testing DNA samples, provided by a number
 19 of families in Kurdistan, against the bodies recovered
 20 in the English Channel on 24 November 2021.

21 They began to announce the names of the people whose
 22 bodies had been identified. When they announced
 23 Muslim's name, I remember that we all broke down. My
 24 wife and children were crying and I felt stunned and in
 25 disbelief.

25

1 I do not remember much about the hours and days
 2 which followed, except that I still could not believe
 3 that my son was dead.

4 Shortly after the announcement on Rudaw, I received
 5 a letter from the Kurdistan Regional Government with
 6 instructions as to how and when I could go to the
 7 airport in Erbil to collect Muslim's body. I travelled
 8 to the airport with one of Muslim's friends and we
 9 waited at the airport for over 24 hours for the bodies
 10 to arrive.

11 All the other families and I were taken to a large
 12 hall in which there were a number of boxes labelled with
 13 names. One of the boxes had Muslim's name on it. It
 14 was at that point that I realised my son was gone and
 15 that he was never going to return.

16 Muslim is buried close to our home in Soran where he
 17 spent his life. Muslim touched many hearts in his short
 18 life and there was not one day during the mourning
 19 period that our home was not filled with people who came
 20 to mourn him.

21 The pain which losing Muslim has caused to me and my
 22 family is indescribable. It feels as if we are broken
 23 and that we will never be whole again.

24 Muslim lives on in our memory and he will never be
 25 forgotten. We visit his grave as a family every

26

1 Thursday and we pray for him.

2 My children have been severely affected by Muslim's
 3 death, my 12-year-old son was recently diagnosed with
 4 diabetes and the doctor examining him came to me after
 5 the appointment and told me that something was seriously
 6 affecting my son's mental health. I know that it is the
 7 loss of his older brother.

8 My youngest children, who are three and eight years
 9 old respectively, are too young to understand exactly
 10 what happened, but my 8-year-old in particular will
 11 often ask after Muslim, which breaks my heart.

12 My wife has been devastated by this loss. She looks
 13 at photographs and videos of Muslim constantly and tells
 14 me that one day he will return to us. Muslim's bedroom
 15 has been untouched since the day he left Kurdistan and
 16 his things are exactly as he last left them. The door
 17 is locked and she allows no one to enter or even to
 18 touch the doorknob. My wife is suffering profoundly.
 19 She tells me that every corner of our home is filled
 20 with memories of Muslim's life; the chair on which he
 21 used to sit, the kitchen which he would insist she leave
 22 so he could do the washing-up, and the spot where he
 23 would hug her goodnight every evening. My wife has
 24 begged me to find us a new home and I am doing
 25 everything in my power to ensure this.

27

1 We cannot continue to live in the home where Muslim
 2 was raised as it is much too painful for us all.

3 For my own part, I feel as if I have lost not just
 4 my son but also my best friend and the only person with
 5 whom I could share my troubles and my burdens. Muslim
 6 was a really special person. Like any parent, his
 7 dreams were my dreams and I wished for him to achieve
 8 everything that his heart desired. It pains me deeply
 9 that he was unable to do so.

10 Muslim's dreams, as well as mine, died with him that
 11 night in the Channel.

12 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 13 Qadar, the father of Mohammed Qadar Awla, who the
 14 Inquiry believes was 18 years old when he died.

15 You will hear two voices on the recording, first,
 16 Qadar's and then that of his son who has recorded the
 17 statement on his behalf. The original language you will
 18 hear is Sorani.

19 Statement of MR QADAR AWLA (in Sorani)
 20 (Audio, read by son, played to the Inquiry)

21 MS LE FEVRE: I am Qadar Awla, the father of
 22 Mohammed Qadar Awla.

23 I am getting older and I have been struggling with
 24 my memory.

25 The death of my son and the events of 23 and

28

1 24 November 2021 have caused me a great deal of trauma
2 and I struggle to talk or think about it.

3 I live on a small farm in rural Kurdistan. My wife
4 and I had five sons, Mohammed was the second youngest.
5 At the time of Mohammed's departure from Kurdistan, he
6 also lived in the family home with me, my wife and his
7 youngest brother.

8 Mohammed was 18 years old when he left Kurdistan.
9 Mohammed had lots of friends and he was popular as
10 a person. People liked to be around him. He wanted
11 a good future and he wanted to look after us, his
12 family. Those were his ambitions. He was a very kind
13 person.

14 Mohammed attended school up until the final year of
15 high school. He loved school and he was a really good
16 student. Mohammed worked alongside attending school.
17 He would often help my wife and me at the farm after
18 school. I do not remember the exact date that Mohammed
19 left Kurdistan. I think it was in late September or
20 early October 2021; it was around two months before he
21 died.

22 Whenever he had a chance, he would call. This would
23 sometimes be multiple times a day and sometimes once
24 a day at night. On the night of the crossing, Mohammed
25 called me whilst he was on the boat. That was the last

1 time I spoke to my son. He left one voice message
2 during the journey that he was okay and that he was
3 almost there. He said he would hopefully call me later.

4 I do not remember the exact time that message was
5 sent, but it was very late at night.

6 The next day, I woke up and had not heard anything
7 further from my son. I spent the whole day worrying.
8 That evening, I saw on social media that a boat had
9 sunk. The uncertainty was horrible. I kept having
10 terrible dreams for the weeks following this, until
11 I discovered what had happened. I still suffer from
12 nightmares.

13 As more time passed, my wife and I had a really bad
14 feeling. We knew something was wrong because we had not
15 heard from Mohammed for weeks but we only had
16 confirmation that Mohammed was dead one month after the
17 attempted crossing.

18 My wife was asked to send a DNA sample to France in
19 order to identify whether Mohammed's body had been
20 found. It was a match and it confirmed the body was our
21 son's.

22 When it was confirmed that Mohammed was among the
23 dead, it was the most difficult thing I have ever had to
24 come to terms with in my life. I was devastated. The
25 French consulate arranged for the bodies to be

1 repatriated. It was an extremely difficult time. On
2 three occasions we were told that the bodies would be
3 arriving. We travelled to Erbil Airport, only to be
4 told there was some delay and Mohammed was not there.

5 It was only on the fourth attempt we were able to
6 travel to collect Mohammed's body. Mohammed was buried
7 in Qadrawa. The memorial service was 12 days long. We
8 were surrounded by family that whole time. He had so
9 many friends who wanted to mourn him.

10 When you lose a loved one, the pain never goes away.
11 We are still suffering today and my family are not doing
12 well. The incident and the length of time we have had
13 to wait for justice has had a terrible impact on us. My
14 wife has not been the same since Mohammed died. She is
15 always sad and cries a lot. She can only think of our
16 son.

17 The sorrow in my heart will be with me for the rest
18 of my life until my dying day. Nothing can bring
19 Mohammed back or take away the pain. No matter what
20 they do, my son is irreplaceable. Not all the wealth in
21 the world could fix this. He did not deserve this fate
22 and my family and I will love, mourn and miss him
23 forever.

24 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
25 Mohammed, the father of Hasan Mohammed Ali. Hasan was

1 born in 1984. You will hear two voices on the
2 recording; first, Mohammed's and then that of his son,
3 who has recorded the statement on his behalf. The
4 original language you will hear is Sorani.
5 Statement of MR MOHAMMED ALI ISMAIL ALI (in Sorani)
6 (Audio, read by son, played to the Inquiry)

7 MR DAVIES: I am Mohammed Ali Ismail Ali, the father of
8 Hasan Mohammed Ali. I live in a town called Qaladiza,
9 which is near Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan region of
10 Iraq. I am retired now. I live with my wife, Khaj.
11 Together we have had 13 children; 12 sons, including
12 Hasan, and one daughter.

13 Hasan lived with us before he left Kurdistan. Hasan
14 was unmarried and did not have any children. Before he
15 left Iraq, he was working in the Peshmerga like I had.
16 He had been in the military for 20 years. He worked
17 often with his brother who was also in the Peshmerga.
18 In his spare time, Hasan spent time with his family at
19 home or with friends. He had a lot of people who loved
20 him and liked spending time with him.

21 Hasan was a lovely man. He was very gentle and
22 kind-spirited. He spent a lot of time with me and we
23 used to work together before I retired. He had a strong
24 bond with his siblings and his mother. His siblings
25 thought he was very brave and strong. He was always

1 respectful towards other people and wanted to help
 2 people where he could.
 3 We miss him very much. Before he left Iraq in 2021,
 4 Hasan tried to leave Kurdistan once before, in
 5 summer 2019. I do not know exactly what happened or
 6 where he went, but I believe he returned voluntarily
 7 because his mother had been really upset and was
 8 suffering without him.
 9 She had fainted three times out of fear and worry
 10 for him. When he returned, Hasan remained in Kurdistan
 11 for two years. I believe he had wanted to give
 12 Kurdistan another chance.
 13 My wife and I were very upset that Hasan decided to
 14 leave. He was a very good son and we were extremely
 15 close. I wanted him to stay.
 16 He was so lovely to me and his mother and we were
 17 sad not to have him close. We did have faith he would
 18 be going somewhere safe where he would be protected. We
 19 thought he would still be in communication even if only
 20 by phone or video. Nothing could have prepared us for
 21 losing our son.
 22 Hasan left Kurdistan on 12 October 2021. I spoke
 23 with Hasan only a few times on his brother's phone
 24 whilst he was on his journey, but he was in relevant
 25 contact with his brothers. He spoke with them on the

1 phone and they messaged frequently. On
 2 23 November 2021, my wife and I received a phone call
 3 from Hasan in the late afternoon.
 4 This phone call was the last contact I had with my
 5 son. At no point during the night of 23 to
 6 24 November 2021 was I aware that Hasan's boat was
 7 sinking or that he was in danger. I was not aware that
 8 anything had happened until I saw the news the next day.
 9 I saw on Facebook that a boat had sunk attempting to
 10 cross the Channel. I had not heard from Hasan, so I was
 11 very worried. My family and I felt helpless. We did
 12 not know what to do being so far away. Shortly after
 13 the incident, an organisation called Lootka got in touch
 14 with us. They asked us to give them DNA samples. A few
 15 weeks later, they told us they had identified Hasan's
 16 body. Up until this point, we had been hopeful Hasan
 17 was alive. We were distraught I have struggled to speak
 18 about how I felt receiving the news; it is too painful.
 19 The pain of losing my son has been too much to bear.
 20 Just thinking about losing Hasan makes me cry.
 21 The whole family went into shock hearing what had
 22 happened to Hasan. I cannot explain in words the impact
 23 on our family. We are still in mourning three years on.
 24 I do not think we will ever recover from this loss. No
 25 parent should lose a child, no matter their age.

1 Everyone has been so upset and I do not think the grief
 2 will ever leave us.
 3 Hasan's mother still cries all the time. I try to
 4 be strong for the family, but I am an old man and
 5 I cannot bear to think what my son went through. Going
 6 on living without him is a struggle every day, the
 7 sadness is overwhelming.
 8 The world is less bright without Hasan. I do not
 9 feel my family has lost a relative — just a relative,
 10 we have all lost a true friend and caretaker.
 11 We miss him every day. I miss laughing and talking
 12 with him in the family home and watching him interact
 13 with his mother and siblings. He had lived with us for
 14 his whole life and his loss is felt deeply.
 15 Hasan's body has been brought back from France.
 16 I think the Kurdistan Regional Government paid for this
 17 and we are so grateful for this.
 18 We have been able to give Hasan a proper burial and
 19 have a grave where we can go when we wish to be near
 20 him, but nothing will ever bring my son back. I am so
 21 devastated that this was able to happen and no-one came
 22 to rescue my son and the others who were in the boat
 23 with him.
 24 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 25 Karim, the brother of Bryar Hamad Abdulrahman.

1 Bryar was born in 1998. You will hear two voices on
 2 the recording; first, Karim's and then that of the
 3 reader who has recorded the statement on his behalf.
 4 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 5 Statement of MR KARIM HAMAD ABDULRAHMAN (in Sorani)
 6 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 7 MR BROWN: I am Karim Hamad Abdulrahman, brother of
 8 Bryar Hamad Abdulrahman.
 9 Bryar was one of eight siblings; six brothers and
 10 two sisters. I am the eldest sibling and Bryar was the
 11 second eldest. Bryar was a very kind and happy person
 12 who got along well with his family. Bryar attended
 13 school until he was 14 years old in Year 8.
 14 He really enjoyed school but he was not able to
 15 continue because of financial difficulties. My father
 16 and I funded his education. We told him that we would
 17 work and pay for him so he could continue going to
 18 school.
 19 However, in Year 8, Bryar told us that he understood
 20 that it was too expensive and that we could not afford
 21 it. My family did not have to pay school fees for
 22 Bryar, but the costs of going to school, such as buying
 23 clothes, books and paying for transport, were difficult
 24 to afford.
 25 My family could not afford to pay the bus fair to

1 school and so Bryar had to walk an hour each way. Life
 2 is difficult here because of poverty. Bryar left
 3 Kurdistan on 12 July 2021.
 4 He mostly spoke to my mother on his journey across
 5 Europe and he called her almost every day. I would
 6 speak to him two or three times a week.
 7 I last spoke to my brother on 23 November 2021. He
 8 spoke to everyone in the family shortly before he got in
 9 the boat. It was a video call. He told me he missed
 10 everyone. My youngest brother and my son were asleep.
 11 He asked us to wake them up because he wanted to speak
 12 to everyone.
 13 We were not aware at that time that the boat was in
 14 difficulties. The next night, Bryar's uncle came to
 15 visit us. He informed us that he had heard that a boat
 16 had sunk between France and the UK. We waited to see
 17 whether we would hear from Bryar and we were very, very
 18 worried.
 19 After two or three days, I knew something was wrong.
 20 When we called Bryar, his phone was off.
 21 We then called Bryar's friends who told us that they
 22 had not heard from him either. We came to believe that
 23 Bryar was among the victims from news reports. Before
 24 we received the DNA test results back, we knew that it
 25 was likely that Bryar had died.

1 As a family, before the DNA results came back we
 2 decided to keep what we heard from the news from my
 3 mother. We kept the news from her for about 10 days as
 4 we were concerned about protecting her health. She was
 5 already in a poor state because she was very worried.
 6 Since losing Bryar, my mother says she wishes she
 7 was dead. She has been destroyed. If it was not for my
 8 wife, my mother would not be able to look after her
 9 other children. The whole family has been destroyed by
 10 this as we have lost an enormous part of our lives. We
 11 are all saddened. My family has been suffering since
 12 the loss of my brother.
 13 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, that completes the evidence for this
 14 morning.
 15 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, shall we break until 1.15 pm. So,
 16 thank you very much.
 17 (12.12 pm)
 18 (The Lunch Break)
 19 (1.14 pm)
 20 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Mr Phillips.
 21 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, before the first --before the first of
 22 this afternoon's recordings is played, I should repeat
 23 the following warning: what we are about to hear may be
 24 distressing to those in the room or those following on
 25 the livestream and if so, they should leave the room or

1 look away, as the case may be.
 2 The next recording and statement is made by Rasul,
 3 the father of Pshtiwan Rasul Farkha Hussein. Pshtiwan
 4 was born in 2003. You will hear two voices on the
 5 recording; first Rasul's and then that of his son who
 6 has recorded the statement on his behalf.
 7 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 8 Statement of MR RASUL FARKHA HUSSEIN (in Sorani)
 9 (Audio, read by son, played to the Inquiry)
 10 MR DAVIES: I am Rasul Farkha Hussein, the father of
 11 Pshtiwan Rasul Farkha. I live with my wife and four of
 12 my children. My wife and I have four daughters four
 13 sons in total including Pshtiwan.
 14 My youngest daughter lives with us because she is
 15 ill. She was born with a heart defect and she needs
 16 surgery to correct this. However, this surgery is very
 17 expensive.
 18 My daughter's heart condition requires someone to be
 19 available all the time to look after her.
 20 Pshtiwan went to school from the age of six to
 21 nine years old. He did not like school. From a very
 22 young age he was thinking about finding a good job and
 23 earning money. He wanted to help support our family and
 24 to take care of his sister.
 25 When his teachers found out that Pshtiwan wanted to

1 leave school to earn money, they did not force him to
 2 stay because they knew about his sister.
 3 Pshtiwan left school at nine years old to find work.
 4 He started working as an assistant in a vegetable
 5 shop. He had several jobs like this from the ages of
 6 nine to 15. He learnt how to buy and sell vegetables.
 7 Eventually when he was 15, he started a small vegetable
 8 selling business himself.
 9 He helped to support our family with his income.
 10 Pshtiwan was so caring in the way he wanted to help
 11 support us. He liked helping others too, which he did
 12 quietly and without wanting praise.
 13 If a young family was struggling, he would bring
 14 them milk or fruit to help them. It brought him peace
 15 to help others.
 16 It was this attitude that made him want to leave
 17 Kurdistan for the UK, to make a better life for us as
 18 a family and for his sister, in particular, to get the
 19 medical treatment she needs.
 20 However, sometimes I wish we had all died from
 21 hunger rather than let Pshtiwan leave.
 22 On 14 September 2021, Pshtiwan travelled alone by
 23 plane from Kurdistan. After he left, we spoke daily
 24 usually via Facebook Messenger. Sometimes we would talk
 25 in the morning, sometimes at night. We would speak on

1 the phone, but also send voice notes and text messages.
 2 He would not just talk to me, but also his mother,
 3 his sisters and his brother.
 4 On 23 November 2021, Pshtiwan spoke to me once from
 5 the boat by video call. When I did not hear from
 6 Pshtiwan again, I spent the next five days trying to
 7 find out what had happened and whether he was safe.
 8 After five days, I found out that the boat had sunk.
 9 When we heard that the boat had sunk we were very
 10 distressed. My wife collapsed in shock and damaged her
 11 back. She still suffers with chronic pain from this
 12 fall. My wife can only think of Pshtiwan and whether he
 13 is safe in the UK. There is no happiness in our lives.
 14 We can only wait for Pshtiwan to come back.
 15 Pshtiwan's body was — has never been found and it
 16 is the only thing I can think about. I am certain he is
 17 alive. I believe that he will be found and brought back
 18 to me. I have to hope or else I will not survive.
 19 He was in cold water surrounded by dead people for
 20 so long, it may be the case that he has lost his mind
 21 and does not know that he should call his parents. If
 22 someone finds him and he contacts us, our lives would be
 23 saved and filled with joy.
 24 Lootka confirmed that my son was not among the dead
 25 bodies they recovered. Later the same day in the

1 evening, the deceased names were published on the news
 2 and Pshtiwan was still not among them. I was thrilled
 3 and relieved. We still had hope.
 4 Before that moment, we had heard all the people on
 5 the boat had died.
 6 It's hard being so far away from where the incident
 7 happened. We feel like we cannot do anything from here.
 8 I have one thing to say to the person hearing this: if
 9 you were in my shoes for 30 minutes, you would probably
 10 understand what feeling we have as a family. We do not
 11 know where our son is. It has been three years and we
 12 are still just waiting.
 13 Me, my wife and our children we are all praying that
 14 we will reunite with Pshtiwan. I am hoping the Cranston
 15 Inquiry will find Pshtiwan because I know he is alive
 16 somewhere. Only when we hear his voice again will we
 17 find peace.
 18 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 19 Rizghar Hussein, husband of Kazhal Ahmed
 20 Khidir Al—Jammor, who was born in 1975, and father of
 21 Hadiya, Mubin, and Hasti Rizghar Hussain, who were
 22 aged 22, 16 and seven when they died.
 23 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 24 Statement of MR RIZGHAR HUSSEIN (in Sorani)
 25 (Audio played to the Inquiry)

1 MS LE FEVRE: I am Rizghar Hussein Mohammed, father of three
 2 of the victims of the 2021 tragedy, Hadiya, Mubin and
 3 Hasti Hussain, and husband of Kazhal Ahmed
 4 Khidir Al—Jammor, who was also a victim of the tragedy.
 5 I lost my wife and children in this tragedy. My
 6 first wife, Kazhal, was 46; my youngest child, Hasti,
 7 was seven; my son, Mubin, was 16; and my oldest child,
 8 Hadiya, was 22 years old when they died in
 9 November 2021.
 10 My wife was a housewife before she left to make the
 11 journey to Europe. My children had all been educated in
 12 Darbandikhan. Mubin and Hadiya spoke perfect English
 13 and wanted to follow their dreams in another country.
 14 My daughter Hadiya dreamed of continuing her studies
 15 in the UK and becoming a doctor. All I ever wanted for
 16 my family was for them to be happy.
 17 My family left Kurdistan in August 2021. I spoke to
 18 them on the phone almost every night of their journey.
 19 We usually called through video so that I could see
 20 their faces. I still have some of the photos of them on
 21 their journey and a few voice messages. I have kept
 22 these because they are the last memories I have of them.
 23 The last conversation that I had was with my eldest
 24 child, Hadiya, at around 10.00 pm in Kurdistan on
 25 23 November 2021; 8 pm GMT.

1 She called me from the boat to tell me that they had
 2 just started the journey. She asked me to pray for
 3 them. On 24 November 2021, I heard the news about
 4 a shipwreck on NRT news.
 5 The news did not say anything about the identities
 6 of the victims, but that a boat had sank in the Channel
 7 carrying 30 people. I had a terrible feeling.
 8 I had not heard anything from my family since
 9 10.00 pm the night before. I started making phone calls
 10 to see if I could find out any information.
 11 I felt sure that my family had been part of the
 12 shipwreck I had seen on the news and that they were
 13 among the victims. They used our DNA to properly
 14 identify the bodies that were recovered on
 15 24 November 2021.
 16 This is how we confirmed that Kazhal, Hasti, Hadiya
 17 and Mubin were among the victims.
 18 It was very hard for me when my family left
 19 Kurdistan because I missed them so much every day.
 20 I stayed behind on my own, hoping that they would find
 21 happiness.
 22 It's not possible to describe the impact that the
 23 tragedy of the 23 and 24 November 2021 has had on my
 24 life. I miss my family every day. Wherever I look,
 25 I see them. I miss them to the point that I cannot

1 really do anything else. I cannot make decisions or
 2 plans in my life. For 22 years I was looking after my
 3 children with my wife. I would do anything for them.
 4 I would wake up in the middle of the night just to
 5 make sure that they had a blanket. I wanted to make
 6 sure they were safe in life. I miss my wife and
 7 children in all parts of my life. Every week I go to
 8 their graves to speak with them. I am a completely
 9 different person since this tragedy happened.
 10 Sadness has taken over my life. I cannot see any
 11 happiness anymore and I am just learning to accept that
 12 I will probably feel like this until I die. After
 13 I lost my family, my world ended. My life has been
 14 destroyed. I have had to start again from zero, both
 15 financially and emotionally. I often think that I wish
 16 I had died the day I found out about the news about my
 17 family.
 18 I wish I had died rather than having to go through
 19 this. However, for some reason God has kept me alive in
 20 order to be sad and so this is what I must do.
 21 Otherwise, I really wish I were dead. Losing one
 22 person is hard enough, but I lost the four people in the
 23 world that I cared most about. Over the last
 24 three years, I have tried to build myself back up, but
 25 I cannot.

1 It has ruined me.
 2 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 3 the brother of Shakar Ali Pirot, who was born in 1991.
 4 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 5 Statement of MR SHAMAL ALI PIROT (in Sorani)
 6 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 7 MS ONABANJO: I am Shamal Ali Pirot, the brother of
 8 Shakar Ali Pirot. I live with my wife and our
 9 three year old. I have three brothers and two sisters.
 10 Shakar was my third brother and was born on
 11 29 August 1991.
 12 Shakar was 30 when he left Kurdistan. Before he
 13 left, he was living with my parents and two of our
 14 siblings. Shakar was very calm. He was a good listener
 15 and a good person. He had a very good relationship with
 16 his siblings and he always listened to our parents.
 17 He never complained and was not demanding and did
 18 not create any problems for our parents.
 19 Shakar spent most of his time at home with our
 20 family and would also spend time with other relatives
 21 such as our cousins. He was not extroverted person. He
 22 did not have a lot of friends and preferred staying at
 23 home.
 24 He liked technology and was always busy on different
 25 apps on his phone. He was interested in video games and

1 played PlayStation.
 2 Shakar studied at school in our city and was a good
 3 student. After finishing school, Shakar went to the
 4 University of Sulaimani, where he studied geology. He
 5 graduated from university in 2014.
 6 After graduating, Shakar spent four or five years
 7 trying to get the sort of jobs that he really wanted.
 8 He tried to find a job in his field, such as working as
 9 a geologist at an oil company, exploring for gas.
 10 However, in Iraq, these jobs are only really for people
 11 with influence and no matter how hard he tried, he was
 12 not successful.
 13 I could see in Shakar's face that after years
 14 struggling to find employment, he felt he was getting
 15 older, but had not achieved anything for himself.
 16 As time went on this became worse and he appeared
 17 depressed. I think he felt that there was nothing for
 18 him in Iraq.
 19 Shakar left Kurdistan on or around 15 September or
 20 16 September 2021. I cannot remember the exact date.
 21 We were mostly talking through phone calls, via Facebook
 22 Messenger and WhatsApp during his journey. This gave
 23 our family an opportunity to find out what Shakar was
 24 doing and where he was.
 25 He mostly spoke directly to me, but would sometimes

1 speak to other members of the family. I would sometimes
 2 leave him voice notes to check that he was okay. We
 3 spoke once every two to three days.
 4 The last time I spoke to Shakar was
 5 21 November 2021. On the night of the 23 November 2021,
 6 Shakar was in communication with Sirwan's father and
 7 sent him a voice note. It was 13 seconds long and in
 8 the recording Shakar says, "If you do not hear from us,
 9 then we have arrived in UK."
 10 On the morning of 24 November 2021, I saw a Facebook
 11 post that there had been an — attempted crossings
 12 overnight and one boat had sunk. News started to spread
 13 on social media that there were many victims. Despite
 14 hearing about a boat sinking, we were waiting for good
 15 news and hoping that Shakar had successfully crossed the
 16 Channel.
 17 After around five days, I was contacted by an
 18 organisation called Lootka. They asked if Shakar was my
 19 brother. I confirmed he was and they said that he was
 20 one of the people who had died when the boat had sunk.
 21 When they informed me of this, I was shocked and
 22 devastated. But I was not quite sure if it was true as
 23 we had heard different stories, including that seven
 24 people survived and were in a hospital in Calais.
 25 Because of this, we could not be 100% sure who was

1 alive and who had died. So I did not tell my family
 2 that Shakar was definitely a victim.
 3 Things stayed like this for around one month and we
 4 did not have any new information. Then each of the
 5 victims' mothers were asked to provide DNA, as some
 6 bodies could not be identified .
 7 After we sent a DNA sample for my mother to France,
 8 we waited for almost a week and then one night on TV
 9 they stated that all -- they stated all the names of the
 10 victims. Shakar was included in the list .
 11 This was before we had been formally told anything.
 12 That was the moment when my family found out that
 13 Shakar was definitely a victim. The news of the tragedy
 14 felt very sudden at this moment and we were devastated.
 15 Even though we had heard what happened, that Shakar was
 16 a victim, we did not want to believe it .
 17 From 25 December 2021 we were awaiting the return of
 18 Shakar's body, but there were various technical
 19 difficulties which caused a delay in us receiving his
 20 body. After waiting for seven days, we finally received
 21 Shakar's body. We went to Erbil to collect his body at
 22 the airport with the families of the other victims. We
 23 all checked the bodies carefully in order to identify
 24 each victim.
 25 It was a really difficult experience. We collected

1 the bodies at 3.00 am Iraqi time and then dedicated
 2 ambulances took the bodies to their respective home
 3 towns. We arrived home in the early hours of the
 4 morning and many people came to our street to show
 5 sympathy.
 6 We had a funeral for two days and many people
 7 attended both the cemetery and our family home.
 8 This tragedy has impacted my family significantly.
 9 We miss Shakar. He was loved so much by our family and
 10 relatives . At dinner times my mum will always ask,
 11 "Where is Shakar?" We then struggle to finish our food.
 12 My father has had a lot of health issues since my
 13 brother died. My mother has struggled mentally and has
 14 developed health conditions such as Alzheimer's.
 15 Even though time has passed, you can see the impact
 16 which the tragedy has had. We are sad because if Shakar
 17 saw a future here in Kurdistan, he would not have left.
 18 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 19 the brother of Serkawt Pirot Mohammed, affectionately
 20 known as Harem, who was born in 1992.
 21 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 22 Statement of MR SARHAD PIROT MOHAMMED (in Sorani)
 23 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 24 MR DAVIES: I am Sarhad Pirot Mohammed, the brother of
 25 Serkawt Pirot Mohammed. Harem is the name we all called

1 him from when he was young. My mother chose it as a pet
 2 name.
 3 I live with my parents and my younger sisters.
 4 I have two other sisters and an older brother. Harem
 5 was the third oldest child. Before leaving Kurdistan,
 6 Harem lived in our family house.
 7 Harem had very good relationships with my parents
 8 and his siblings , he was like a friend to us all .
 9 Harem was very kind and helped my parents a lot. If
 10 something needed mending around the house, he would
 11 always offer to assist and never expected anything in
 12 return.
 13 He had many interests and was intelligent. He was
 14 also very sporty and played a lot of football with his
 15 friends. Harem looked after his family and friends. He
 16 always supported his family, whether emotionally,
 17 financially or with any other favour.
 18 When my sisters or I were sad or down, he was
 19 a shoulder to cry on.
 20 Harem discussed his plan to leave the country with
 21 our family around one year before he left. We were all
 22 very worried when he told us, especially about his plan
 23 to cross the Aegean Sea as we knew how long and
 24 dangerous this journey was likely to be.
 25 Harem left Kurdistan on 17 September 2021. I last

1 spoke to my brother around 10.30 pm GMT on the night he
 2 and the others died. I received a call from him and he
 3 said that he was getting onto a boat to go to the UK,
 4 and asked me to pray for them to arrive safely. I did
 5 not speak with Harem after the boat got into trouble.
 6 At around 8 pm the next day, I saw the news on
 7 social media that a boat had capsized in the Channel and
 8 that most of those on board were Kurds. We tried
 9 calling my brother, but the phone did not ring.
 10 Two or three days later, we were told that it was
 11 our loved ones in the water. My family and I were
 12 devastated. It came as a shock to us even though we had
 13 not heard from Harem for several days. We had initially
 14 thought that Harem was successfully made for the journey
 15 to the UK, which made the news all the more painful and
 16 shocking.
 17 My brother's body was recovered from the sea. We
 18 had to send a DNA sample to Lootka and they sent it to
 19 France in order to identify him as one of the dead.
 20 We received confirmation, through this organisation,
 21 that Harem was among the dead around four to six weeks
 22 after the incident. They confirmed this by sending
 23 a message to a WhatsApp group which the families of the
 24 victims were in.
 25 Harem's body was repatriated to Kurdistan to be

1 buried. After the bodies were returned, we had
 2 a funeral for Harem. Each body was returned to the
 3 victim's place of birth. Harem was buried beside his
 4 friend Shakar. Harem's friends and family attended the
 5 funeral and people visited us in the days afterwards to
 6 express their sorrow.
 7 The news has completely devastated our family.
 8 Harem was a huge part of all of our lives. A number
 9 of the victims were from Ranya, so our whole community
 10 was completely shocked. My brother's death is a loss
 11 that we will never forget. It is the saddest thing that
 12 has ever happened to me. It is always on my mind.
 13 I still find it hard to believe that he lost his
 14 life in such tragic circumstances. My siblings and
 15 I are all devastated, but we try to remain calm and
 16 composed to protect my parents. My parents are still
 17 grieving and are suffering from illness because of the
 18 sorrow. My mother has high blood pressure and diabetes,
 19 which has worsened because of the emotional toll of
 20 losing Harem. My father is also struggling with
 21 depression following the incident. He isolates himself
 22 more and does not leave the house often.
 23 The last three years have affected our family
 24 enormously. It breaks our hearts that Harem was not
 25 able to achieve his dream and be happy. The news of

1 losing him was very difficult and we are still suffering
 2 from the sorrow.
 3 We miss him all the time. The cemetery where Harem
 4 is buried is about an hour away from our house and our
 5 mother still visits his grave every single evening.
 6 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 7 Zana, the brother of Twana Mamand Mohammed who was born
 8 in 2003. The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 9 Statement of MR ZANA MAMAND MOHAMMED (in Sorani)
 10 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 11 MR BROWN: I am Zana Mamand Mohammed, brother of
 12 Twana Mamand Mohammed. I live in a house that is around
 13 500 metres away from my parents' home. My brother Twana
 14 was living in my parents' home before he left Kurdistan.
 15 I am the oldest sibling in our family and Twana was the
 16 second youngest.
 17 Twana was born on 30 March 2003. He was 18 years
 18 and seven months old on 23 November 2021.
 19 He was a slim and tall young man. He was very
 20 energetic and spent most of his time exercising. He
 21 loved playing football, going to the gym, and practising
 22 Taekwondo. He was a black belt in Taekwondo and the
 23 best performer in Hajiawa.
 24 Twana was still going to school in Hajiawa before he
 25 left Kurdistan on 10 August 2021. He had just completed

1 10th Grade and he would have been starting 11th Grade
 2 in September 2021. Twana was very intelligent. He
 3 wanted to become a football player or Taekwondo
 4 practitioner.
 5 Twana was 14 years younger than me, but we were
 6 still extremely close as brothers and friends. As
 7 I live very near my parents' house, I would go over
 8 regularly to see him. I was excited for what Twana was
 9 going to do with his life because he was such
 10 a motivated and energetic young person. I felt
 11 protective over him as his older brother and I wanted
 12 him to have the best life possible. Twana would often
 13 come to me when he was a young teenager asking me to
 14 help him speak to our father about taking trips around
 15 the country to play football.
 16 Our father wanted Twana to focus on his studies, but
 17 Twana was devoted to sport.
 18 I would go and speak with my father to explain that
 19 Twana was dedicated to improving his skills and this
 20 helped my father to understand. I believe that Twana
 21 and I supported each other a lot. He always listened to
 22 me and he was a very respectful brother. I felt like we
 23 communicated openly and we didn't have any barriers
 24 between us.
 25 It was an incredible relationship and one which

1 meant so much to me.
 2 I was very anxious when Twana explained to me that
 3 he had made his decision to leave Kurdistan. I told him
 4 that he could only go on one condition: he had to stay
 5 in contact with me every step of the journey, so that
 6 I knew he was safe and so I could keep my parents
 7 informed.
 8 I understood that he was determined to leave, but
 9 I have always been very protective of him. At the same
 10 time, I believed that the more I knew about each step of
 11 his journey, the safer he would be. I now know that
 12 I did not really have any control over the situation,
 13 but it felt like the only way I could help and keep
 14 looking after him.
 15 Twana's friend called me at 02:05 Kurdistan time on
 16 24 November 2021 and we spoke briefly on the phone.
 17 I also spoke with Twana during this call. Twana
 18 told me there were no problems, that I should go to
 19 sleep because it was late in Kurdistan.
 20 At 02:40 GMT, Twana's friend sent my sister
 21 a message saying they were in British waters and that
 22 they should not worry. My sister told me that she and
 23 my brother—in-law tried calling back 10 minutes later,
 24 but they couldn't get through and they didn't hear from
 25 Twana again.

1 On 24 November 2021, I was initially told that the
 2 boat had crossed safely. In the late afternoon when
 3 I was in my parents' home, I received another call and
 4 I was told there had been a GPS tracker on the boat and
 5 that they had traced it. The GPS tracker showed that
 6 the boat was in the UK. My mother was listening to me
 7 on the phone and she asked me to tell her what was
 8 happening.
 9 I explained that it sounded as though Twana had
 10 crossed safely. She said we should celebrate and so we
 11 sat down together for some food.
 12 I left my parents' home that evening — sorry, that
 13 afternoon feeling pleased, but my worries had not gone
 14 away because I knew that their boat had been in trouble
 15 that night. I started to receive many text messages and
 16 phone calls from friends. People were seeing reports of
 17 a boat sinking in the Channel on the news.
 18 I drove back to my parents' home and we watched the
 19 news together at around 19:00 Kurdistan time. The days
 20 following 24 November 2021 were extremely difficult
 21 because we didn't have any certainty about what had
 22 happened to Twana or anyone else on the boat.
 23 I made a WhatsApp group for all family members who
 24 were missing someone and who were worried that their
 25 loved ones had been in the incident.

1 On 14 December 2021, one of the doctors from the
 2 French hospital contacted my sister to tell her that
 3 Twana's body was not there. Very soon after my sister
 4 received this information, the organisation Lootka
 5 released a list of names identifying the bodies of
 6 Kurdish victims from 23 November 2021, which included
 7 Twana's name because he was listed as a missing person,
 8 meaning his body had not been found.
 9 I was already in contact with two organisations in
 10 Calais and Dunkirk called Utopia 56 and Care4Calais.
 11 They had been very helpful in terms of offering their
 12 support after we had heard about the incident and so
 13 I asked them if they could assist with finding my
 14 brother as his body was missing.
 15 But I don't think they were able to work on this.
 16 Someone from the Red Cross in Kurdistan visited us
 17 about assisting with finding Twana's body, but this also
 18 did not come to anything.
 19 Neither the British nor the French authorities ever
 20 contacted me about finding Twana's body and I do not
 21 think they ever carried out a further search to look for
 22 my brother.
 23 Losing Twana has been indescribably painful for my
 24 whole family. We all miss him every day and we continue
 25 to struggle with a slight hope that he might still be

1 alive somewhere because his body has not been found. My
 2 mother is holding on intensely to this hope. She
 3 believes that he must be alive somewhere out there.
 4 Every day she thinks that she might suddenly receive
 5 a message from him or hear something from a distant
 6 friend that would confirm Twana is alive.
 7 It's been three years since the incident and I carry
 8 around this anxiety with me every day. I do not
 9 rationally have hope that he's still alive somewhere,
 10 but it plays on my mind and it wears me down. Because
 11 there is a tiny chance that he's alive somewhere, this
 12 stops me from truly having closure or being able to
 13 grieve properly for my brother. I do not carry any hope
 14 anymore, but I feel that I need to see his body back in
 15 Kurdistan in order to start the process of recovery.
 16 I desperately wish there were a way of finding
 17 Twana's body. This would at least bring some peace to
 18 my mother, my father, my siblings and myself after this
 19 tragedy.
 20 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, would that be a convenient moment?
 21 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Yes, shall we have 15 minutes?
 22 MR PHILLIPS: Yes.
 23 (2.21 pm)
 24 (A short break)
 25 (2.36 pm)

1 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Mr Phillips.
 2 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, the next recording and statement is made
 3 by the brother of Sirwan Alipour, who was born in 1998.
 4 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 5 Statement of MR SAMAN ALIPOUR (in Sorani)
 6 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 7 MS LE FEVRE: I am Saman Alipour, the brother of
 8 Sirwan Alipour. I am providing this statement on my
 9 family's behalf because of my parents' mental health.
 10 My parents would still be unable to cope emotionally
 11 with providing a statement and have agreed that I should
 12 provide a statement instead.
 13 I grew up in Sardasht, Iran and lived with my
 14 brother and parents. Sirwan was my younger brother. He
 15 was younger by one year and nine months. Because of the
 16 small age gap, we played together a lot as children and
 17 whilst growing up.
 18 We got along very well and our relationship was
 19 always close. He was taller than me, so everyone always
 20 thought that he was the older brother.
 21 Sirwan loved football as a child. When we group up
 22 and I decided that I wanted to study, he continued
 23 wanting to play football. Sirwan studied until he was
 24 17 years old and then left education.
 25 Sirwan always achieved good grades and was a strong

1 student. I think he was bright enough to have continued
 2 in education if that was what he wanted, but he decided
 3 to focus on getting a job instead.
 4 Sirwan was living with my parents until he left
 5 Iran.
 6 He was a very good-looking man. As a person, Sirwan
 7 was very easygoing. Through his job as a mechanic, he
 8 made connections with many people in our town. Everyone
 9 in the town knew him. He was very funny, always making
 10 jokes and he had a lot of friends. He often played
 11 football with friends after work.
 12 Sirwan had been thinking about going to the UK for
 13 some time. My father managed to stop him for a few
 14 years, but in the end he decided to go. Sirwan left
 15 Iran on 11 September 2021, when he was 22 years old.
 16 Sirwan and I had a group chat on WhatsApp with
 17 a close family friend so we could stay in touch while he
 18 was on his journey. My father was in touch with another
 19 member of Sirwan's group, a man called Hasan. Hasan was
 20 older than the others, so my father asked him to look
 21 after Sirwan and treat him like a younger brother.
 22 On 23 November 2021, I was at university as I had an
 23 exam the next day. This meant I was unable to stay
 24 online with Sirwan throughout his journey. The family
 25 friend who was in the group chat with me and Sirwan

1 agreed to stay online. My father was also in contact
 2 with him separately via WhatsApp.
 3 On 24 November 2021, we tried to contact Sirwan's
 4 WhatsApp, but the phone was offline.
 5 I was sending messages in our group chat throughout
 6 the day, but we received no response from Sirwan. My
 7 father said he had not heard from Sirwan either.
 8 Initially, I still thought we would hear from my
 9 brother. Then at 18:32 GMT on 24 November 2021, I saw
 10 the news that a boat had sunk in the Channel. That
 11 night I could not sleep and I received a call from my
 12 father.
 13 He asked if I had any information, as a friend of
 14 his had called him and said there had been an incident
 15 in the Channel. He was worried too, and wanted to check
 16 if I had any updates.
 17 On 26 November 2021, we had still not received any
 18 news about Sirwan. I was very worried. I was in
 19 university in Ahvaz and I was alone and away from my
 20 family. I decided to go back to Sardasht and visit my
 21 parents and took the coach. Around 18:30 GMT, while
 22 I was still on the coach, I learnt through Instagram
 23 that there were only two survivors. One was being
 24 interviewed on Rudaw TV, a Kurdish news channel. He was
 25 talking about the time he started his journey and when

1 the incident happened.
 2 From this, I felt certain that my brother had been
 3 on the same boat and was among the victims.
 4 I can only describe this as the worst time in my
 5 life. Some time later, my mother and father provided
 6 DNA samples, which were sent to France to formally
 7 identify the body. Sirwan's body was then returned to
 8 Iran. The funeral took place 27 days after the incident
 9 and on 20 December 2021, Sirwan was buried at Sardasht
 10 graveyard.
 11 Losing Sirwan was very — was extremely unexpected
 12 and this has all been a big shock for my family.
 13 I believed he would come back to Iran again one day.
 14 On the boat to Italy, he was travelling on the water for
 15 six days and we were very worried. But then they
 16 arrived safely and we thought they had gone through the
 17 most difficult part of the journey.
 18 This is partly why what happened in the Channel is
 19 so hard to deal with.
 20 For me and my family, just like all the families
 21 affected, losing a loved one is extremely difficult. It
 22 does not matter how you lose them, it is always very
 23 hard. It is impossible to explain how this incident has
 24 affected my family, but it has definitely impacted us
 25 all, mentally and emotionally.

1 For my parents, I think it was even more difficult
 2 as I was not with them at the time. I was at university
 3 living 18 hours away. They needed someone, but I could
 4 not always be near them to offer my support. After the
 5 incident I felt guilty and somehow I blame myself for
 6 not stopping him from leaving Iran.
 7 It has been three years now and I still feel the
 8 same. I still feel guilty.
 9 Finally, I want to say that when you lose a loved
 10 one in a family, nothing can bring them back and nothing
 11 can replace them. Nothing we can do will bring my
 12 brother back. But what I can do now is ask people to
 13 look at migrants seeking a better life as humans. They
 14 risk their lives to move and it is not just because they
 15 are happy to do it or because they just want to; they do
 16 it because they have to.
 17 All we can ask is that you help those migrants
 18 instead of making things difficult for them. We ask you
 19 help them out so that a tragedy like this never happens
 20 again.
 21 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 22 Bayan, the mother of Mhabad Ali Ahmed, who was born
 23 in 1989. You will hear two voices on the recording,
 24 first, Bayan's and then that of her son who has recorded
 25 the statement on her behalf.

1 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 2 Statement of MS BAYAN HEMEDEMIN SALEH AHMED (in Sorani)
 3 (Audio, read by son, played to the Inquiry)
 4 MS ONABANJO: I am Bayan Hemedemin Saleh Ahmed, the mother
 5 of Mhabad Ali Ahmed.
 6 My daughter, Mhabad Ahmed Ali, born on
 7 21 November 1989, was the second youngest of the eight
 8 children I shared with my late husband.
 9 Before she left Erbil in 2021, she lived with me in
 10 my home in Erbil, along with her two small children who,
 11 as of November 2024, are five and eight years old.
 12 Ever since she was a little girl, Mhabad made an
 13 impression on everyone she met. She was warm and
 14 open-hearted and cared deeply about everyone around her.
 15 As an adult, Mhabad was a wonderful person; kind,
 16 patient, loving and extremely beautiful.
 17 People who met her would always comment on her calm,
 18 serene presence. As the youngest daughter, Mhabad was
 19 the baby of our family. She was adored by her older
 20 siblings who would take care of her and protect her.
 21 She was very close to her younger brother and growing
 22 up, the two of them were inseparable. I have sought
 23 long and hard to find the right words to describe
 24 Mhabad, but it is impossible to articulate who she was
 25 and the impact she had on those around her.

1 She was the heart of our family and we have never
 2 been the same since we lost her. Mhabad was married to
 3 her husband in 2014. When he asked her for her hand in
 4 marriage, Mhabad was overjoyed. I was happy for her as
 5 she told me she loved him and that he loved her.
 6 However, part of me was very sad because I thought that
 7 once they were married, Mhabad might leave to be united
 8 with her husband in the UK and I could not bear the
 9 thought of my precious daughter being so far from me.
 10 Despite my fears, Mhabad lived with me for almost
 11 seven years after her marriage, raising their children
 12 with my help in Erbil.
 13 In the seven years during which Mhabad lived with me
 14 following her marriage to her husband, we became closer
 15 than ever. Until the day she left, we spent every day
 16 together at home, cooking for the family, cleaning the
 17 house and spending time with her children.
 18 Mhabad was a wonderful mother and was attentive to
 19 her children's every need. Her children adored her and
 20 could not bear to spend a moment away from her. Mhabad
 21 was a caring daughter and was keen to take as much
 22 pressure off me as possible.
 23 She would always say to me, "Mum, just sit down, let
 24 me take care of it".
 25 We would sit together in the kitchen for hours

1 talking about everything imaginable. We were
 2 inseparable in those years and did everything together.
 3 Mhabad was my best friend and my closest companion.
 4 Mhabad left Erbil in either late October or
 5 early November in 2021. As she was leaving, I was busy
 6 with her daughter and could not say goodbye to her
 7 properly. We spoke almost every day.
 8 What I recall is that Mhabad's focus, in each of
 9 those conversations, was her children. My last
 10 conversation with Mhabad was over WhatsApp video call at
 11 about 2 pm Kurdistan time on 23 November 2021.
 12 During the night of 23 to 24 November 2021, Mhabad
 13 sent me a photograph of herself on the boat. I did not
 14 see this photograph until later on in the day on
 15 24 November. This was the first time I became aware
 16 that Mhabad had left France for the UK.
 17 I now understand that by the time I saw the
 18 photograph, Mhabad was likely already dead.
 19 I understand that Mhabad's husband and brothers
 20 discovered from the news that a boat had sunk in the
 21 Channel and that Mhabad was likely to have been on that
 22 boat. I know now that they feared the worst, but did
 23 not wish to worry me until they were certain one way or
 24 the other. On Friday 26 November 2021, I was told by my
 25 son that the boat Mhabad had been travelling in had sunk

1 in the Channel.
 2 I was devastated, but I held on to hope that Mhabad
 3 had survived. I don't remember much about the weeks
 4 that followed. I recall going with my son to a hospital
 5 here in Erbil to give a DNA sample to an organisation
 6 called Lootka. I understand that that sample was sent
 7 to France, where it was compared against DNA taken from
 8 the bodies retrieved by the French Government.
 9 A few weeks later — a few weeks after I gave the
 10 DNA sample, I received a letter in the post which told
 11 me that Mhabad was among the victims of the incident.
 12 Mhabad's body was brought back to Erbil shortly after
 13 I received the letter. We brought her back to our home
 14 so she could be buried here in Erbil.
 15 After Mhabad's burial, we had a three-day memorial
 16 for her. The number of people who came from all around
 17 Erbil and even from other cities and towns in Kurdistan
 18 to express their grief and their sympathies are
 19 testament to Mhabad's warmth and kindness and the
 20 profound impact she had on those around her.
 21 All those who came to her memorial spoke about her
 22 character and shared their shock at her death. Her
 23 death was something everyone seems to struggle to
 24 understand. She was such a special person and her death
 25 was so violent and sudden.

1 The impact of losing Mhabad has had on our family is
2 too immense to put into words. Mhabad's children lived
3 with me for approximately nine months after Mhabad's
4 death until about midway through 2022.

5 At the time of her death, Mhabad's daughter was old
6 enough that she could understand that her mother had
7 left us and that she would not come back. I think her
8 mother's death has had a profound impact on her mental
9 health. I remember in the aftermath of Mhabad's death
10 her daughter was always talking about her mother and
11 would tell people, even those she just met, that her
12 mother had left and would never come back.

13 Her son was just a toddler when Mhabad died and he
14 was not old enough to understand what happened. It
15 breaks my heart to think of his confusion and the
16 questions he will inevitably have as he grows older. It
17 causes me immeasurable pain to think of Mhabad's two
18 children living in Kurdistan with no mother or father to
19 look after them.

20 Mhabad's death altered their lives irrevocably and
21 robbed them of a mother who loved them more than
22 anything else. Mhabad's siblings have been shattered by
23 her loss. She was the youngest girl in our family and
24 was loved and cherished by us all. All her siblings,
25 like the rest of our family, remain in shock and find it

1 very hard to accept that someone as wonderful as Mhabad
2 lost her life in such a terrible way.

3 I cannot express the pain which Mhabad's loss has
4 caused me. I am not a stranger to loss. My husband was
5 murdered in 2015 and my other daughter died in a fire in
6 2012 at the age of 23. However, Mhabad's death has
7 absolutely devastated me. In the weeks that followed,
8 I would listen to old voice notes Mhabad September over
9 and over again just so I could hear her voice. I would
10 cry all the time. Things got so bad that my son took my
11 phone and deleted all my conversations with Mhabad
12 because he felt that what I was doing was not good for
13 my well-being.

14 Not a day goes by where I do not think of Mhabad's
15 beautiful face, of her sweet voice, of her kindness and
16 generosity.

17 I feel as if part of myself has been ripped out, and
18 as if the wound will never heal. More than anything
19 else, it breaks my heart that her children will grow up
20 without their mother and that they have lost the
21 opportunity to experience her love and her care.

22 I think constantly of the last time I saw Mhabad in
23 person and the request she made for me to look after her
24 children until she could take care of them again. My
25 mind is consumed with thoughts of what her final moments

1 must have been like and how afraid she must have been.

2 It breaks my heart to think of her alone and
3 frightened waiting in ice-cold water for help which
4 would never come.

5 I am consumed by the thought that my precious
6 daughter waited for help for so long that her organs
7 stopped working because of the cold. I think about how
8 her life could have been saved and how her children
9 could have grown up with their mother.

10 I am grateful to the Cranston Inquiry for
11 investigating the events of that night and specifically
12 why no rescue boat was sent to help Mhabad and the other
13 passengers on the boat. It is my hope that the Inquiry
14 finds some answers which can ensure that no other parent
15 has to lose their child in the way that I lost my
16 precious daughter.

17 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
18 the father of Bilind Shakir Baker, who was born in 2001.

19 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
20 Statement of MR SHAKIR BAKER BRINDAR ZEWKI (in Sorani)
21 (Audio played to the Inquiry)

22 MS WOODS: I am Shakir Baker Brindar Zewki, the father of
23 Bilind Shakir Baker.

24 My first wife sadly passed away in 2005. We had
25 eight children together; six sons and two daughters,

1 including Bilind.

2 In 2006, I remarried. We have five children
3 together; one son, and four daughters, who are all
4 living at home with us.

5 My son, Bilind, was born on 1 January 2001. He was
6 a very quiet and kind child. He was always well behaved
7 and never caused any problems for me or anyone else.
8 Bilind had a strong relationship with his siblings and
9 was always very good with them. He was especially
10 loving and caring towards his siblings in the years
11 after his mother passed away.

12 Despite being young, he was always there for them.
13 This shows the kind of person Bilind was. He was so
14 loving and because of this, everyone else loved him.

15 Bilind did not like school very much and so he only
16 went to elementary school. He left education around
17 Grade 6 when he was 11 years old. After this, he spent
18 most of his time socialising with friends and relatives.
19 Bilind loved to swim. There is a river that goes
20 through Zakho and a famous bridge that crosses it.
21 Bilind would go there every day to swim with his friends
22 during summer and spent as much time in the water as
23 possible.

24 He would sometimes swim at indoor pools, but always
25 preferred to swim outside.

1 Bilind never swam competitively, but he was a strong
 2 swimmer. In fact, when I heard that there were two
 3 survivors of the shipwreck in November 2021, I was
 4 initially telling myself that Bilind would be one of
 5 them, as he could swim so well. Sadly, this was not his
 6 fate.

7 When Bilind's mother died, I do not think he fully
 8 understood what was happening because he was so young.
 9 As he grew up, it was difficult for him to remember his
 10 mother properly, but losing a parent was still very hard
 11 for him. After remarrying, my second wife became
 12 a mother to my eight children, including Bilind, and she
 13 loved them very much.

14 Life is hard here in Kurdistan. There is often
 15 conflict going on and as Kurds, we are not truly free.
 16 After the death of my first wife, I felt like I had to
 17 be Bilind's mother as well as his father. This was
 18 incredibly hard and I think it made his decision to
 19 leave even more difficult to deal with.

20 I begged Bilind not to go and I did everything
 21 I could to try and make him stay. However, he insisted
 22 and insisted, and on 24 October 2021, Bilind left
 23 Kurdistan.

24 While Bilind was on his journey, we would speak
 25 regularly on phone calls via WhatsApp. On

1 23 November 2021, I spoke to Bilind several times. At
 2 around 2100 hours GMT on 23 November 2021, I had my
 3 final phone call with my son.

4 I did not speak to Bilind again after this. Then,
 5 at around 2000 hours GMT on 24 November 2021, I heard,
 6 on Rudaw TV, a Kurdish channel, that a boat had sunk
 7 whilst trying to reach the UK.

8 I checked other TV channels which confirmed what had
 9 happened. At this point, I did not know whether Bilind
 10 was alive or not, but I was telling myself that he must
 11 have made it.

12 This was the most difficult time for me and my
 13 relatives. I can honestly say it was the hardest period
 14 of my life.

15 It felt like everything in our lives stopped. Time
 16 froze, and we were just waiting to find out what
 17 happened to our loved one.

18 Around one month after the incident, I travelled to
 19 Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, where the DNA samples were being
 20 taken. Some time after sending the DNA samples we
 21 finally learned that Bilind was one of the victims, when
 22 we saw it confirmed on a Rudaw TV broadcast.

23 Then we had to wait for his body to be returned.

24 I remember going to Erbil Airport several days in
 25 a row to receive his body, but each day we would find

1 out that the flight was delayed. This made the
 2 experience even harder and prolonged the pain of waiting
 3 to see Bilind's body.

4 It is hard to describe the impact of this tragedy on
 5 our family. It has affected us a lot emotionally and
 6 mentally. Imagine losing someone, a loved one who has
 7 passed away. You would typically be able to start
 8 mourning as soon as it happens and begin making
 9 arrangements for a funeral. Although it is still
 10 extremely difficult, I think in this situation, you can
 11 start to accept what has happened.

12 After the tragedy in 2021, we had an awful period of
 13 uncertainty where we did not know whether Bilind was
 14 alive or not. We did not know what to do and we could
 15 not stop thinking about it day and night.

16 Then after finally learning that Bilind was
 17 a victim, we had to wait again to get his body back.
 18 The uncertainty and delays at every stage made the
 19 experience even more painful.

20 If I am honest, there were times when I wished I was
 21 dead. I would have preferred to have died than go
 22 through what we went through.

23 After we received Bilind's body, it was initially
 24 difficult to find somewhere for mourners to come and
 25 express their condolences because of Covid. In the end,

1 we managed to find a warehouse and we set up between
 2 200 and 300 chairs. Over two days, there were so many
 3 people that came. And then for many days afterwards, we
 4 were still receiving visitors at our home. This period
 5 was incredibly hard.

6 I remember that on the morning we buried Bilind, it
 7 was so cold that the ground was almost frozen.
 8 I vividly remember how cold it was.

9 We still miss Bilind every single minute of our
 10 lives. Every night, every day, we are always thinking
 11 about him and missing him. Every member of our family
 12 still has a picture of Bilind as the background on their
 13 phones so that we can see him every day.

14 My son has also named a son after Bilind. Whenever
 15 I hear a story on TV about a boat sinking and people
 16 drowning, it takes me back to what happened. Every few
 17 days, I will go on a map and look at the Channel where
 18 Bilind died and the area that he was staying in before
 19 he made that last journey. As I do this, I live through
 20 it all again.

21 I think about how I wish that I could travel there,
 22 to where he was before he died. Some people say that
 23 when someone passes away their spirit remains where they
 24 passed. I know it would be extremely difficult to go to
 25 a place where your son spent their final moments, but

1 I would like to go.
 2 I hope that the tragedy of November 2021 is the last
 3 tragedy like this. I hope no other people become
 4 victims in the way that my son did.
 5 MR PHILLIPS: The next recording and statement is made by
 6 the father of Maryam Noori Mohammedameen, who was born
 7 in 1997.
 8 The original language you will hear is Sorani.
 9 Statement of MR NOORI MOHAMMEDAMEEN HASSAN (in Sorani)
 10 (Audio played to the Inquiry)
 11 MS ONABANJO: I am Noori Mohammedameen Hassan, the father of
 12 Maryam Noori Mohammedameen. I live with my wife and we
 13 have six children together; five daughters and one son,
 14 including Maryam.
 15 Maryam was born on 21 March 1997. She was 24 years
 16 old when she left Kurdistan.
 17 Maryam was incredibly kind and used to take care of
 18 everyone. She was a very good girl and everyone from
 19 our family would agree with this. She was remarkably
 20 caring towards her mother and looked after her in any
 21 way that she could.
 22 Maryam was -- also had a great relationship with her
 23 siblings and was very much loved by the whole family.
 24 She was such a lovable person. Maryam was smart and
 25 completed her high school education. After finishing

1 school, Maryam spent much of her time with her mother.
 2 She would help around the house in any way that she
 3 could. Maryam also loved spending time with her
 4 cousins; they would visit each other all the time and
 5 enjoyed hanging out together.
 6 In 2021, Maryam met and then got engaged to her
 7 fiancé. After their engagement, Maryam planned to
 8 travel to the UK so she could live with her fiancé. On
 9 1 November 2021, Maryam flew from Erbil. We were in
 10 regular contact with Maryam throughout her journey from
 11 Kurdistan to France. Our family was in contact with
 12 Maryam every day and night.
 13 She spoke to me, as well as her mother, sisters and
 14 brothers. However, around one and a half days before
 15 taking her final journey, Maryam completely stopped
 16 communicating with us. The last time I spoke to her was
 17 on 22 November 2021. When I then tried to call Maryam
 18 later, on 22 November and then 23 November 2021, her
 19 phone was switched off and we were unable to speak with
 20 her.
 21 As we had not heard from Maryam since
 22 22 November 2021, we had no idea that she had attempted
 23 to cross the Channel. Then on 24 November 2021, we saw
 24 in the news that a boat had sunk while attempting to
 25 reach the UK.

1 In the days after this tragedy, Maryam was then
 2 named as a victim on the news. This was the darkest
 3 moment of my life and the saddest day of all our lives.
 4 It is difficult to describe how hard it was. Firstly,
 5 hearing the news, but then also not being there, where
 6 it had happened.
 7 At that point, I thought we would never see her body
 8 again which made the experience even more painful.
 9 Nothing is worse than losing a loved one, especially
 10 one's child. It is a huge loss. I do not know what
 11 I can really say about this or how I can explain it.
 12 The tragedy in 2021 has had an enormous impact on our
 13 family.
 14 Since losing Maryam, my wife has suffered very badly
 15 with mental health issues and she has also started
 16 suffering from epilepsy. We cannot leave her alone and
 17 either I or my son must be around to look after her
 18 either.
 19 As soon as my wife heard the news about Maryam being
 20 named as a victim, she passed out because of the shock
 21 and we had to take her to hospital.
 22 It is now three years later and my wife still has
 23 a photograph of Maryam on her phone which she looks at
 24 constantly; this continually makes her cry.
 25 For me, whenever I talk about Maryam, it all comes

1 back to me. In these moments, it feels like I am
 2 burning inside, but then I think: what can I do? We are
 3 all so devastated by what happened, but what can we do?
 4 We just hope the Inquiry can do something positive.
 5 The victims of the tragedy are gone, but there are
 6 people, friends and family, who have suffered mentally
 7 and emotionally since then.
 8 I hope that the Inquiry can help those people in
 9 some way.
 10 MR PHILLIPS: Sir, that concludes the evidence for today.
 11 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, thank you very much. It has been
 12 a very moving day for all of us. I want to thank you
 13 everyone for their respectful attention. We meet
 14 tomorrow at 10 o'clock. Thank you.

15 (3.40 pm)

16 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00,
17 on Thursday, 27 March 2025)

1 I N D E X

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3 Introduction to family1
 impact evidence by

4 MR PHILLIPS KC
 Statement of2

5 MR ABDULLAHI MOHAMUD HASSAN
 (in Somalian)

6 Statement of4
 MR ALI AREEF in Somalian

7 Statement of8
 MR YASSIN HASSAN HAMAD (in

8 Sorani)
 Statement by11

9 MR AHMED MOHAMMED AHMED (in
 Sorani)

10 Statement of13
 MR MUSTAFA MINA NABI (in

11 Sorani)
 Statement of17

12 MR HUSSEIN MOHAMMEDIE (in
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13 Statement of21
 MR ISMAEL HAMAD KHUDHUR (in

14 Sorani)
 Statement of28

15 MR QADAR AWLA (in Sorani)
 Statement of32

16 MR MOHAMMED ALI ISMAIL ALI (in
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17 Statement of36
 MR KARIM HAMAD ABDULRAHMAN (in

18 Sorani)
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19 MR RASUL FARKHA HUSSEIN (in
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20 Statement of42
 MR RIZGHAR HUSSEIN (in Sorani)

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22 Sorani)
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23 MR SARHAD PIROT MOHAMMED (in
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4 (in Sorani)
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5 MR NOORI MOHAMMEDAMEEN HASSAN
 (in Sorani)

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