
WITNESS STATEMENT OF QADAR AWLA

I, Qadar Awla, father of Mohammed Qadar Abdullahi Awla, of **Personal Data** **Personal Data** will say as follows:

1. I am the father of one of the victims of the November 2021 tragedy, Mohammed Qadar Abdullahi Awla (“**Mohammed**”). I have provided this information in consultation with my wife, Gelawej Hassan Hamed, Mohammed’s mother, and other family members where appropriate.
2. I make this statement in order to provide relevant information, based on my knowledge and understanding of the circumstances leading up to and during the events under scrutiny.
3. The matters set out in this statement are within my knowledge unless otherwise stated. I acknowledge that the information that I received from my son during his journey may not always have been complete and/or accurate.
4. I am getting older and I have been struggling with my memory, specifically with remembering exact dates. The passage of nearly three years since the events the Inquiry is examining may also have impacted my ability to recall all events and conversations fully and/or accurately. The death of my son and the events of 23/24 November 2021 has also caused me a great deal of trauma and I struggle to talk or think about it.
5. This statement was prepared with the assistance of my legal representatives at Duncan Lewis solicitors.

Background

6. I am an Iraqi national. I was born on **Personal Data** and I have lived in Kurdistan all my life.
7. I live on a small farm in rural Kurdistan in the village of **PD** where I grow fruit in my very small orchard. The farm is my main income. On my land we grow figs, pomegranates, and grapes. We have a vineyard. We pick the fruits when they are ready. People then come to the farm to buy the fruit and take them to the market. My wife and one of my sons who lives in the village help with this work. When Mohammed was here he would help me as well.

8. Currently, I am doing ok financially. The farm is doing ok. Recently I have also found an additional job where I attend an office to undertake some administrative tasks. The additional income from the extra job helps. At the time when Mohammed was still here, our finances were more difficult.
9. My wife and I had five sons: Azhwan, Zhelwan, Salman, Mohammed and Heryad. Mohammed was the second youngest. I do not know the exact dates of births of my sons.
10. Heryad lives with me and my wife at home. Azhwan lives in Qadrawa too. He works with me sometimes at the farm but he also works for the Peshmerga, the Kurdish armed forces. Zhelwan and Salman live abroad in the UK. At the time of Mohammed's departure from Kurdistan, Mohammed also lived at the family home with me, my wife and Heryad.
11. Mohammed was 18 years old when he left Kurdistan. Mohammed had lots of friends, and he was popular as a person. People liked to be around him. He wanted a good future, and he wanted to look after us, his family. Those were his ambitions. He was a very kind person.
12. Mohammed was a young man of slim build, around 170-180cm tall. As far as I was aware, he was in good health. He was not married and did not have any children.
13. Mohammed attended school up until the final year of high school. He loved school and he was a really good student. But in his final year, his friends began leaving Kurdistan. It was then that he decided he would go to the UK. Once he made the decision to leave Kurdistan, he stopped attending school. This was about one or two months before he left the country.
14. Mohammed worked alongside attending school. He would often help my wife and me at the farm after school. He also managed to get a part-time job working at a garage, unloading trucks. This was not a reliable source of income, and he had to work long shifts which lasted 5-6 hours. He had to be available whenever a truck arrived at the garage and needed to be unloaded. This could be at 8pm, midnight or at 5am, before he then had to go to school. It was a very difficult job, but he felt like he had no choice. Each shift he would earn 10,000-15,000 Iraqi Dinar, which was about 7-12 USD. It was not enough income to support himself, let alone the family.
15. Mohammed made the decision to work because he wanted to be independent. We did not expect him to support us financially, but it is difficult to live in Kurdistan, and Mohammed could see this. He did not want to have to rely on anyone else. Even with the job at the garage and helping us on the farm, Mohammed would also look for additional work as a general labourer, but this was infrequent and unreliable. Mohammed worked right up until he left Iraq.

16. Mohammed told me he wanted to leave Kurdistan because he did not have any hope for a good life here. He did not believe there was any hope or opportunities for him in Kurdistan. He was scared about his future here. He felt it was impossible to live here. My understanding is that Mohammed felt totally helpless; I think this based on comments he would make to me. He told me he wanted to be independent and help support our family. But it wasn't possible.
17. Life in Kurdistan is painful and difficult. If you do not have work, you do not have anything. He wanted to go to the UK to build a life for himself. He spoke about the UK a lot. Mohammed spoke very good English, he studied it at school and thought it would help him in the UK. He believed the UK was a good country and that he could have rights and protections there which he did not have in Kurdistan.

Journey from Kurdistan to France:

18. I do not remember the exact date that Mohammed left Kurdistan. I think it was in late September or early October 2021. It was around two months before he died. He left on his own.
19. Mohammed initially travelled to Turkey on a visa. He had to apply for a visa twice at the Turkish consulate in Erbil. The first application was refused, and this delayed his departure from Iraq. I do not know why it was refused. The second application was accepted, and he left the country a few days later. I believe he applied for a tourist visa but I cannot confirm this. He flew from Erbil to Istanbul. I took him to Erbil airport where I said goodbye. That was the last time I saw him.
20. Mohammed stayed in Turkey for a few weeks whilst he was making arrangements with a smuggler. In Turkey he stayed in hotels where he met some other Kurdish people. They became a group and he travelled with them to France. I do not know their names. During his time in Turkey, he and I spoke every day. Whenever he had a chance he would call. This would sometimes be multiple times a day and sometimes once a day at night.
21. From Turkey, Mohammed travelled by boat to Greece. During this time, I lost contact with him. My wife and I were worried. I could not rest or relax because I did not know if he was okay. He finally called me when he got to land and explained why he had been uncontactable. He said the journey had taken around seven days. He called from someone else's phone as he said his had been damaged during the journey from Turkey. I do not know the name of the person whose phone he used. He later told me there was not enough food on the boat and people were starving.
22. I do not know much about his journey through Europe. I believe he travelled from Greece

to Germany and then from Germany to France. Whenever he arrived in a new place he would use various friends' phones to call me via WhatsApp Messenger. He would let me know where he was and that he was okay. Mohammed did not give more detail than that. He did not tell me about any problems in any of the countries he travelled through before getting to France. Our communication was through phone calls, so I do not have a written record of where he was. I have also been through a lot of difficulty losing my son and find it hard to remember the precise details.

Northern France:

23. I do not know the exact date he arrived to the coast of northern French, but I think it was on 20 or 21 November 2021. I no longer have the phone which I used at the time, so I cannot check.
24. There was a small group of boys who had decided to leave Kurdistan around the same time as Mohammed. The boys were Zanyar Mustafa Mina ("Zanyar") and Rezhwan Yassin Hassan ("Rezhwan"). Zanyar is the son of my brother-in-law Mustafa Mina ("Mustafa"). Rezhwan is my second cousin; his father is my father's cousin. The boys did not leave Kurdistan together, but Mohammed found Zanyar and Rezhwan in the Jungle in Dunkirk. I think they took a different route to get to France. Mohammed told me he thought they had been there for around a month when he arrived. The three boys ultimately attempted the final crossing to the UK together. Zanyar is still missing and Rezhwan's body was amongst those found.
25. Mohammed, Zanyar and Rezhwan stayed together in the camp in Dunkirk. Mohammed told me that his experience in the camp was very bad. They were staying in a tent and lived in very hard conditions. The weather was terrible. It was raining a lot, and it was very windy. They had no security and no money.
26. Mohammed called me from one of his friend's phones every day that he was in Dunkirk. He told me once that he felt very unsafe.
27. Mohammed told me that the French police raided the camp the first night he arrived and he and the others had to run away and hide. He told me that he was afraid that if they were caught by the police they would be detained, so they hid in the forest and only returned when the police were gone.
28. Mohammed was only in Dunkirk for a few nights before the 23 November 2021 crossing. Mohammed did not attempt to cross the Channel before this.

Crossing the Channel

29. The night the boat sank was Mohammed's first attempt at crossing the Channel to the UK. He told me that it had been difficult to arrange an attempt to cross the Channel. This was partly because they did not know how to find a smuggler to help them, and partly because he could not afford the fare.
30. I have no information about the smugglers or which smuggler arranged Mohammed's crossing. Mohammed did mention a smuggler called Bashdar. Around a year after the incident, I saw a photo of a smuggler with that name online stating that he had been arrested in Iraq. Apart from that I do not know anything. I had no contact with any smugglers.
31. On the day they crossed the Channel, the three boys managed to meet a smuggler and come to an arrangement with him. Mohammed called me from his friend's phone earlier that day at around 5/6pm Kurdish time to let me know. I told him to get a life jacket so he would be safe and asked him to let me know when he was on his way.
32. On the night of the crossing, Mohammed called me whilst he was on the boat. I cannot recall the exact time. I think it was around 9pm Kurdish time. He mentioned they were about 15 minutes into the journey. We were only on the phone for a few minutes, and he provided a brief update about what was going on. He told me that when they got to the beach there were four smugglers, armed with firearms and knives. He said that they were 30-40 people on the boat, and that some of the passengers had complained this was too many. They tried to reason with the smugglers that they would need two boats. However, the smugglers would not listen and forced them all into the boat. I do not know anything about the boat, other than that it was too small, and overcrowded. He told me that they were now on board the vessel. I could hear lots of voices in the background, including what sounded like some children.
33. That was the last time I spoke to my son. He told me all would be well and that he would call me again from the UK. He said he was not scared, and that he was confident that they would make it. He said there were too many people and that they were not comfortable but that they would be fine. My wife and I told him to send his location, but we did not receive anything. He said his friend had to put the phone away into a plastic bag to keep it dry, so he could not keep talking.
34. He left one voice message during the journey that he was okay, and that he was almost there. He said he would hopefully call me later. I do not remember the exact time that message was sent, but it was very late at night. I no longer have that phone so I do not have the message anymore.

35. The next day I woke up and had not heard anything further from my son. I spent the whole day worrying. That evening I saw on social media that a boat had sunk. I spoke to Mustafa, and he said he would try to find out what was going on. He managed to contact the smuggler by telephone, who told him that the boat made it to the UK successfully and that the boys were safe. But I still had not heard from Mohammed and felt very concerned.
36. The uncertainty was horrible. I kept having terrible dreams for the weeks following this until I discovered what had happened. I still suffer from nightmares.
37. As more time passed, my wife and I had a really bad feeling. We knew something was wrong because we had not heard from Mohammed for weeks, but we only had confirmation that Mohammed was dead one month after the attempted crossing.
38. My wife was asked to send a DNA sample to France in order to identify whether Mohammed's body had been found. It was a match and it confirmed the body was our son's. My wife's brother works as an interpreter at the French consulate in Erbil, and he was able to pass on that information to us.
39. When it was confirmed that Mohammed was among the dead, it was the most difficult thing that I have ever had to come to terms with in my life. I was devastated.
40. The French consulate arranged for the bodies to be repatriated. It was an extremely difficult time. On three occasions we were told that the bodies would be arriving. We travelled to Erbil airport only to be told there was some delay and Mohammed was not there. It was only on the fourth attempt we were able to travel to collect Mohammed's body.
41. Mohammed was buried in PD The memorial service was 12 days long. We were surrounded by family that whole time. He had so many friends who wanted to mourn him.

Conclusion

42. When you lose a loved one the pain never goes away. We are still suffering today, and my family are not doing well.
43. The incident and the length of time we have had to wait for justice has had a terrible impact on us. My wife has not been the same since Mohammed died. She is always sad and cries a lot. She can only think of our son. The sorrow in my heart will be with me for the rest of my life until my dying day.

44. I do not believe Mohammed was aware of the risks involved in crossing the Channel on a small boat. I know that he would have never taken that risk if he knew he could lose his life. He knew how to swim but not in a rough sea like the Channel. He had no experience swimming in dangerous conditions.

45. Nothing can bring Mohammed back or take away the pain. No matter what they do, my son is irreplaceable. Not all the wealth in the world could fix this. But what we want is justice. If anyone was responsible for or could have prevented my son's death, I want them to face justice for it. I would like to know what the UK and France have done to stop this from happening to other families and other young men like Mohammed. He did not deserve this fate and my family and I will love, mourn and miss him forever.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

Date:

Name:



9. من و خیزانهکهم پینج کورمان ههبووه: ئەژوان و ژیلوان و سەلمان و مەحمەد و هەریاد. مەحمەد دوو هەمی بچوو کترین بوو. من بەرواری لەدایکبوونی کورەکانم بە وردی نازانم.
10. هەریاد لەگەڵ من و خیزانهکهم لە مائەوێ دەژی. ئەژوانیش لە قادر او دەژی. لەگەڵ من هەندیک جار لە کێلگەکاندا کار دەکات بەلام لەگەڵ پێشمەرگە هیزی چەکداری کوردیش کار دەکات. ژیلوان و سەلمان لە دەروەیی و لات لە بەریتانیا دەژین. لە کاتی رویشتنی مەحمەد لە کوردستان لەگەڵ من و خیزانهکهم و هەریاد لە مائی خانەوێکاندا دەژیا.
11. مەحمەد ئەمەنی 18 سالی بوو کاتیک کوردستانی بەجێهێشت، و هاوڕێی زۆری هەبوو، وەک کەسیکیش بەناوبانگ بوو. خەڵک حەزیان دەکرد لە دەورووبەری بن. ئەو نایندەبەکی باشی دەوێست، هەروەها دەبووێست چاودێری ئێمەیی خیزانهکەیی بکات. ئەوانە بەرزە ئاواتەکانی ئەو بوون. کەسیکی زۆر میهرەبان بوو.
12. مەحمەد گەنجیکی جەستە باریک بوو، بەلای نزیکەیی 170-180 سم بوو. ئەو مەندەیی من ئاگادار بووم، تەندروستی باش بوو. خیزاندار نەبوو و هیچ مندالێکی نەبوو.
13. مەحمەد تا سالی کۆتایی ئامادەیی لە قوتابخانە خویندوویەتی. قوتابخانەیی خوشدەوێست و بەراستی خویندکاریکی باش بوو. بەلام لە سالی کۆتاییدا هاوڕێکانی دەستیان کرد بە جێهێشتنی کوردستان. هەر لەو کاتدا بوو کە بیریاریدا بچێتە بەریتانیا. کاتیک بیریاری جێهێشتنی کوردستانی دا، وازی لە خویندن هینا. ئەمەش نزیکەیی یەک دوو مانگ پێش ئەو هەمی و لات بەجێهێنایت.
14. مەحمەد شانەبەشانی چوونە قوتابخانە کاری دەکرد. زۆر جار لە دوای خویندن لە کێلگەکاندا پارمەتی من و خیزانهکەمی دەدا. هەروەها توانی کاریکی نیوێکانی بەدەستبێهێنیت کە لە گەر اجیکدا کاری دەکردو بار هەلگرەکانی دادەبەزانند. ئەو سەرچاوەیەکی متمانەپێکراوی داهاات نەبوو، و دەبوو لە شەفتی درێژ کار بکات کە 5-6 کاتژمێری دەخایەند. هەر کاتیک بار هەلگرێک دەگەشتە گەر اجەکە و پێوێستی بە دابەزانندی هەبوو، دەبوو ئامادە بێت. ئەمەش دەکرێ کاتژمێر 8 ی شەو، نیوێ شەو یان کاتژمێر 5 ی بەیانی بێت، پێش ئەو هەمی دواتر ناچار بێت بچێتە قوتابخانە. کاریکی زۆر قورس بوو، بەلام هەستی دەکرد هیچ بژار دەبەکی نییە. هەر شەفتیک 10 هەزار - 15 هەزار دیناری عێراقی بەدەست دەهینا کە نزیکەیی 7-12 دۆلاری ئەمریکی بوو. داهااتی ئەو مەندە نەبوو کە بتوانی بژێوی ژیانی خۆی پەیدا بکات، چ جایی خانەوادەکە.
15. مەحمەد بیریاری دا کار بکات، چونکە دەبووێست سەر بەخۆ بێت. چاومرێی ئەو مان نەدەکرد لە پرووی داراییەو پالپشتیمان بکات، بەلام ژیاان لە کوردستان قورسە، مەحمەدیش توانی ئەمە ببینی. نەیدەوێست ناچار بێت پشت بە کەسی تر ببەستێت. تەنانەت بەو کارەیی لە گەر اج و یارمەتیدانی ئێمە لە کێلگەکاندا، مەحمەدیش وەک کریکاریکی گشتی بەدوای کاریکی زیادهدا دەگەرا، بەلام ئەمە زۆر کەم بوو و جێی متمانە نەبوو. مەحمەد تا عێراقی بەجێهێشت کاری دەکرد.
16. مەحمەد پێی گوتم کە دەبووێت کوردستان بەجێهێنایت، چونکە هیچ ئومێدێکی بو ژیاانیکی خوش لێرە نەبوو. باومرێ نەدەکرد لە کوردستان هیچ هیواو دەر فەتیک بوی هەبێت. لێرەدا لە داهااتووی خۆی دەترسا. هەستی دەکرد مەحاله لێرە بژی. تیگەشتنی من ئەو هەمی کە مەحمەد هەستی بە بێدەسەلاتی تەواو دەکرد؛ پێم وایە ئەمە لەسەر بنەمای ئەو سەر نجانەیی کە بوی دەکردم. پێی گوتم کە دەبووێت سەر بەخۆ بێت و هاوکار بێت لە بەخێوکردنی خانەوێکەمان. بەلام نەکر.



17. ژيان له كوردستان به نازارو سهخته. نهگه نيشت نهبيت هچت نيبه. نهو ويستويهتي بچينه بهرنيانیا بو نهوهی ژيانیک بو خوی بنیات بنیت. زور باسی بهرنيانیاي دهکرد. مههمه زور باش زمانی ئینگلیزی دزمانی، له قوتابخانه خویندبوویته و پئی وابوو له بهرنيانیا یارمهتیدهری دهبيت. نهو پئی وابوو بهرنيانیا ولاتیکی باشه دهتوانیت لهوئ ماف و پاریزگاری ههبيت که له کوردستاندا نيبه.

گهشت له کوردستانهوه بو فهره نسا

18. به وردی نهو بهروارهی مههمه کوردستانی بهجیهت، لهیادم نيبه. پیم وایه کۆتایی مانگی نهیلول یان سه مهتای مانگی تشرینی یهکهمی 2021 بووه، نزیکهی دوو مانگ پيش مردنی بووه. بهتهنیا رویشت.

19. مههمه سه مهتا به فیزه گهشتی توركياي کرد. ناچار بوو دووچار له کونسولخانهی توركيا له ههولیر داوای فیزه بکات. یهکهم داواکاری رهتکرایهوه و نهمش وایکرد رویشتی له عیراق دوابهویت. نازانم بوچی رهتکرایهوه. داواکاری دووم قبول کر، داوی چهند روژیک ولاتی بهجیهت. من باومرم وایه داوای فیزه گهشتیاری کرد بهلام ناتوانم نهه پشتر است بکهمهوه. له ههولیرموه بهرمو نیستهنبول فری. بردم بو فرۆکهخانهی ههولیر و لهوئ مائناواییم لیکرد. نهو دواچار بوو که بینیم.

20. مههمه چهند ههفتهیهک له توركيا مایهوه نهو ماوهی که لهگهڵ قاچاخچییهک ریکهوتنی دهکرد. له توركيا له هۆتیهکاندا دهماوهو چهند کهسیکی تری کوردی ناسیوه. نهوان بوون به گروپ و نهویش لهگهڵیان سهفهری فهره نسا کرد. ناویان نازانم. له ماوهی مانهوهی له توركيا، من و نهو ههموو روژیک قسهمان دهکرد. ههركاتیک دهرفتهی بو رمخسابا تهلهفونی دهکرد، وهنديک جار له روژیکدا چهند جاریک و ههنديک جار شهوانه جاریک له روژیکدا.

21. له توركياوه مههمه به بهلم گهشتی کرد بو یونان. له ماوهیهدا پهيوه نديم لهگهڵیدا لهدهستدا. من و خیزانهکهم پهريشان بووین. نهمهتوانی پشوو بدهم یان بهسیمهوه چونکه نهدهزانی چاکه یان نا. دواچار کاتیک گهيشته وشکانی تهلهفونی بو کردم و روونی کردوه که بوچی نهمان دهتوانی پهيوه ندى پئ بکهین. نامازهی بهوشکردوه، گهستهکه نزیکههی حهوت روژی خایاند. له تهلهفونی کهسیکی تروه پهيوه ندى کرد چونکه گوئی له کاتی گهستهکهیدا له توركياوه تهلهفونهکی زیانی بهرکهوت. ناوی نهو کهسه نازانم که موبایلهکهی بهکار هینا. دواتر پئی گوتم خواردنی پئویست له بهلمهکهدا نيبه و خهلك برسی بوون.

22. من زور شت لهبارهی گهستهکهیهوه بهناو نهوروپادا نازانم. لهو باومردام له یونانوه گهشتی کرد بو ئەلمانیا و داوی له ئەلمانیاوه بو فهره نسا. ههركاتیک دهگهيشته شوینیکی نوئ موبایلی هاوړی جوړاوجۆرهکانی بهکاردههیناو له ریگهی واتسناپهوه پهيوه نديم پئوه دهکردو ناگاداری دهکردمهوه که له کوئی به باشه. مههمه لهوه وردهکاری زیاتری نهخستهروو. پيش نهوهی بگاته فهره نسا، هچ کیشهیهکی له هچ کام لهو ولاتانهی که بهناویاندا تپیهریوه، بوی نهگوتم. پهيوه نديمان له ریگهی تهلهفونهوه بوو، بویه توماریکی نووسراوم نيبه که له کوئ بووه. ههروهها به سهختیهکی زوردا تپیهريم لهبهر لهدهستدانی کورمهکم و نهستهم وردهکارییه تهوام لهبیره.

باکووری فهره نسا:

23. بهرواری وردی گهيشتن به کهنارهوهکانی باکووری فهره نسی نازانم، بهلام پیموایه له 20 یان

