

JUSTICE FOR THE FAMILY OF ALEKSANDRA

On the 19 February 2021, Kurdish Iraqi couple Rupak Sharif and Hazhar Ibrahim filed a complaint against French police for actions they allege led to the death of their daughter, Aleksandra, at birth. The complaint concerns deliberate violence against a pregnant woman, non-assistance to persons in danger, and endangering the lives of others. Rupak and Hazhar have called for the justice system to provide clarity on the facts leading up to the death of their daughter.

We – organisations working to support migrants at the UK-France border – express our support for the complaint filed by Rupak Sharif and Hazhar Ibrahim.

On the night of the 1st-2nd September 2020 at around 4 am, a group of migrants about to attempt a boat crossing across the Channel were intercepted by a police patrol at Oye-Plage, near to Calais. Rupak and Hazhar, accompanied by their two children aged nine and two, were part of this group. Rupak was at the time 35 weeks pregnant.

According to the family, soon after being intercepted Rupak's waters broke and she began to experience severe pain. Rupak and Hazhar asked the police officers multiple times for help in getting to hospital, but they refused to release the group. After almost three hours being held outside in the cold, the police officers left the group of migrants on the beach without offering any assistance to Rupak, despite her physical state and the family's requests for help.

At around 7 am, the family began to light a fire to warm themselves up whilst waiting to get back to Calais. Another police patrol saw them, and when they were informed of Rupak's state called the emergency services.

Rupak was admitted urgently to the Calais hospital, and gave birth to Aleksandra Hazhar. Upon birth, the baby girl suffered from multiple neurological and respiratory problems. Three days later, despite the medical staff's efforts, Aleksandra's state had not improved. With the consent of her parents, a decision was taken to cut her ventilatory support. Aleksandra died on the 5 September 2021.

Traumatised by these events, Rupak and Hazhar decided to file a complaint. As a result, an investigation has been opened for non-assistance to persons in danger and failure to provide help.¹

Soon after the complaint was brought, the Calais Préfet published a press release absolving the police forces of all responsibility in the events that led up to the death of Aleksandra. The Préfecture stated that during the police operation on the beach that night, "none of the migrants showed signs of particular difficulties". This press release entirely contradicts the testimony of the parents.

Our organisations, who work with migrants at the UK-France border, do not adhere to the version of events presented by the Préfet. We stand in solidarity with Rupak and Hazhar in their pursuit of justice for the events they were subject to. We will follow closely the progression and results of the investigation, particularly with regard to the actions of the police and the possible causal link with the death of Aleksandra Hazhar.

¹ Under French law this is known as "non-assistance à personne en péril et omission de porter secours".