

SPEECH TO HONG KONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

By “OUR LIVES MATTER”

Represented by Suleiman Mohammed Bashiru

I represent a group of asylum-seekers who come from Africa, South Asia, and Eastern Europe. We have been failed by the asylum system in Hong Kong time and again, so that we wasted more than 10 years of our life in limbo. We want to tell you that Our Lives Matter.

We have gone through rounds of interviews with the Immigration Department over the last decade, and twice – TWICE the Court of Final Appeal declared that the screening process was unfair and unjust – first in 2008 and then in 2013. And every time, the Security Bureau would come up with a new system. Just like they are proposing again now. So we have been turned into guinea pigs of the asylum system in Hong Kong as it continuously develops new “standards of fairness,” while 10, 12, 15 years of our lives waste away.

The members of this group are all people with qualifications or skills to contribute to society: lecturers, graphic designers, chefs, technicians, athletes etc. But living in HK for over a decade as asylum-seekers, we have been prohibited from working, studying, developing our talents and professional skills. We are forced to rely on destitution-level support from the HK government. Still, our group is made up of law-abiding individuals who have no criminal records. We have maintained our integrity and dignity.

Like others here today, we live in fear, anxiety, and panic everyday. Our claims are at different stages of screening, appeal, or judicial reviews, but we are all subjected to removal proceedings. Everyday, we live in fear of being detained and deported, of being returned to danger, to a country we can no longer call our own, and of being separated from our loved ones, our children.

We are not here to challenge the decision of the Hong Kong Government. We would like to plea with the policy-makers and with the public to empathize with this humble and law-abiding group, who have been going through such psychological and mental torture in Hong Kong.

We would like to request this honorable house and the authorities to recognize us as residents of Hong Kong on humanitarian grounds.

We stand here not just as asylum-seekers, but as men, husbands, and fathers. We stand here as human beings.

Our Lives Matter.

Thank you.