

NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS
Manchester Branch

PRESS RELEASE - for immediate release

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**MANCHESTER NUJ MEMBER ON HUNGER STRIKE OVER THE
HANDLING OF HIS IMMIGRATION CASE**

Manchester NUJ Branch member James Fallah-Williams, who has lived, worked and studied in the UK for 13 years, is on hunger strike in protest about the handling of his immigration case.

James, a journalist and human rights activist, says he has been driven to take this drastic action because he has become trapped in an "immigration limbo" - with the UK Border Agency consistently failing to respond to queries raised by both his MP and his legal representative.

He wants a proper review of his case and answers to questions which have been put to the UKBA by Andy Burnham, Leigh MP and Shadow Education Secretary. James says he hopes his hunger strike will "expose the abuse of power" on the part of the UKBA.

Manchester NUJ Branch wants to know why the UKBA, after first misleading Andy Burnham about aspects of James' immigration history, is now refusing to answer his MP's queries and is also ignoring letters from his lawyer.

We are angry and dismayed that one of our members has reached a point where he believes he has no choice but to take this action. We are writing to the Home Secretary and Immigration Minister to urge them to intervene and ensure that James' case is examined properly.

James left Sierra Leone 16 years ago, at the height of the civil war, with the help of British missionaries. He lived in Gambia before coming to the UK in 1998.

James studied and worked in this country, and began writing about the political situation in Sierra Leone. In 2008, he applied for asylum after receiving threats about his articles published in newspapers in Sierra Leone. He was housed in Leigh where, working on a voluntary basis, he set up a community project to support local people and refugees into employment.

James was employed by Manchester Refugee Support Network in April 2010 and he worked with a family on a successful landmark case which

went to the Asylum Support Tribunal Court in London. Shortly after this, in October last year, his work permit was revoked and 19 days later he was told his asylum claim had been refused. He had to leave his accommodation in Leigh and, since then, has stayed with friends in Manchester.

Following representations from Andy Burnham, the UKBA suggested James apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. He did so in March this year but the application was refused the following month.

A spokesperson for Manchester NUJ Branch Committee said: "James is an active member of our Branch and respected by all his colleagues. He is a rational, intelligent and principled person who has become so frustrated with the UKBA's handling of his case that he has decided a hunger strike is his only option.

"We want the UKBA to abide by its responsibility to consider the case properly and to treat James – and all other people seeking asylum – in a fair, just and humane way."

For more information, please contact:

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