

British children held in Egypt due to H1N1

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Forty British children - some as young as four - were marched off by armed airport guards as they landed for half-term holidays in Egypt because they were thought to have swine flu

Horrified parents watched as officials used draconian legislation to hold anyone with a temperature of more than 38C.

Some children were kept apart from their parents for five days in a squalid makeshift hospital - even though they had no symptoms of the H1N1 virus.

Sarah and Chris Kemp said they were terrified when daughter Ellie, eight, was grabbed after the family was scanned by hidden thermal imaging cameras in the terminal at Sharm el Sheikh International.

Mr Kemp, 39, and Ellie were forced to spend five days of their £1,650 holiday in a 'hellhole' hospital, sharing a urine-stained bed in a mosquito-filled room with about 30 other families.

He said: 'We were at passport control when this policeman, who was dressed all in white and had a gun, came and grabbed my daughter's arm without warning.'

'She was screaming. At first I slapped his hand off her arm but they said as her temperature was 38C they needed to take her to hospital.'

'They demanded our passports at gunpoint and then refused to give Ellie's back.'

Armed guards stopped Mrs Kemp, 36, who insists her daughter had no swine flu symptoms, from staying with them.

She said: 'This bloke just grabbed my daughter who was screaming. It was the most frightening experience of my life. She and her dad were stuck in a room you wouldn't leave your dog in.'

The family, from Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, have complained to their local MP, Peter Bone, and are now seeking a refund from holiday firm First Choice, who they say should have warned them about the situation.

Zachariah Plant, four, from Chesterfield Derbyshire, was also quarantined with swine flu after arriving at the airport with his family for a week-long holiday.

Overnight tests were carried out and he was held for another four days after swine flu tests were positive.

Mother Dawn Pearson, 34, said: 'I was quite distraught about it. I don't believe that he had swine flu – there was nothing wrong with him.

'He was happy as Larry and his temperature was back to normal the next morning.'

Father, Karl Plant, 27, said the couple were told they would be arrested if they took Zachariah out of the hospital, which they claimed was dirty and infested with rats.

Millie Powell, 11, of Rochester, Kent, was also taken from her parents by force.

Her worried aunt, Claire Harvey said: 'Her parents were terrified Millie would catch something in the hospital.'

A Foreign Office spokesman said: 'There is little we can do as these measures have been put in place by the Egyptian authorities.

'If any traveller's temperature is above normal they are quarantined for up to five days.'

The Egyptian embassy in London said matters were 'under control'.

First Choice said: 'We have no control over these procedures.'

