



WHY MANUS AND NAURU MUST BE CLOSED

Why are asylum seekers held on Manus and Nauru?

Manus Island and Nauru first became the locations for Australia's offshore immigration detention centres in 2001, when former Prime Minister John Howard launched the "Pacific Solution".

Labor reopened them in 2012 as part of a plan to prevent any asylum seeker arriving by boat from gaining resettlement in Australia. Liz Thompson, a former migration agent involved in refugee-assessment interviews on Manus, described the process on SBS's *Dateline* as a "farce", saying, "Manus Island is an experiment in the ultimate logic of deterrence, designed to frustrate the hell out of people and terrify them so that they go home."

Offshore detention is designed to be so brutal that asylum seekers are forced into despair and agree to go back home to whatever they have fled.

Dumping people in such remote locations also means denying them proper legal support and medical services. Nauru is 3000 kilometres from the Australian mainland, while Manus Island lies 300 kilometres north of the main island of Papua New Guinea.

Manus Island

There are around 870 refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island. *Amnesty International* described the situation on Manus Island as "tantamount to torture", after visiting the centre in November 2013.

In February 2014 Reza Barati was murdered in the detention centre during an attack on asylum seekers by PNG guards. During the attack another man was shot in the hip and others lost eyes. Threats from locals against the asylum seekers continue.

In November last year the refugees were forced out of the old detention centre, after PNG immigration and police used metal bars, fists and knives. After over four years in detention, they had refused to be transferred simply to another prison camp. Behrouz Boochani, a refugee there, wrote that what they wanted was, "one thing, and one thing only, and that is freedom."

Locals have held repeated protests and blockades against the three new camps they have been moved to. There may be fences but because people are forced to go to the Lorengau settlement area for food and medications, they are vulnerable to attack.

And the attacks are frequent and brutal. A Human Rights Watch report in October documented



these assaults. One man nearly lost his arm following a machete attack. An Iranian asylum seeker suffered a fractured skull after an attack with a metal rod as his phone and money were stolen.

Medical and other services were already grossly inadequate. In August 2014 a second asylum seeker, Hamid Kehazaei, died after a simple skin infection developed into septicemia.

In all six refugees and asylum seekers have now died there: Kamil Hussein by drowning, Faysal Ahmed, after also being denied proper medical care, Hamed Shamshiripour and a Tamil refugee by suicide.

Infections and skin diseases are rife among the asylum seekers on Manus Island. In addition to the extreme humidity, broken toilets mean asylum seekers are forced to walk through raw sewerage, often barefoot. About one in six people living on Manus Island contract malaria each year.

Medical services have now been reduced further with the closure of the old detention centre. There is now no mental health treatment at all.

On 26 April 2016 the PNG Supreme Court held that detention on Manus Island was unlawful and the detention centre would have to close. Both PNG and Australia have refused to act on the ruling.

Conditions on Nauru

There are around 1000 asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru, 370 of them still in the detention centre.

On Nauru, according to Dr Robert Adler, a paediatric psychiatrist who worked there providing medical services:

"Families were living under a marquee, separated from one another with plastic sheets, with no easily

accessible toilet or kitchen facilities, no privacy and no air-conditioning in 40 degree heat”.

Since 2014 there have been a series of bashings, robberies and rapes on asylum seekers and refugees, as locals blame them for “taking jobs” and bringing high-handed Australian expats to their island.

The change to an “open centre” arrangement, where the detention centre gates are open, has changed little. There is no other accommodation outside the centres for many people to move to. And many are too afraid to leave the camps because of the threat of bashings and rape.

Lateline recorded 20 rapes or sexual assaults of refugee women on Nauru in one year.

The case of Abyan, the raped Somali refugee, exposed the lies and brutal mistreatment of refugees by the Minister for Immigration, Peter Dutton and the Immigration Department. Dutton lied when he said Abyan had changed her mind and no longer wanted a termination. *The Guardian* reported that he ignored three separate IHMS recommendations to transfer Abyan, the first on 16 September, confirming advocates’ version of events.

US resettlement deal

Malcolm Turnbull’s US resettlement deal will not solve the problem. When the second lot of transfers

are completed by the end of February 2018, just 230 people on Manus and Nauru will have made it to the US in the 15 months since the deal was announced.

The White House has confirmed that it has set a cap of 1250 refugees, though whether even that number will be accepted is unclear. This means that, even in a best case scenario, hundreds of people are going to be left behind by the deal. Australia’s cruel offshore detention regime will remain in place.

Donald Trump’s travel ban meant that Iranians, Somalis, Sudanese and Syrian refugees were barred from the most recent intake. Doubts remain about whether any refugees from these countries will gain acceptance. And Iranians make up the largest single nationality group in the offshore camps. New Zealand has offered to take only 150 of the refugees.

There is nowhere else for the asylum seekers and refugees to come but Australia. The offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru must be closed. It’s time to #BringThemHere.

Contact Refugee Action Coalition

phone 0417 275 713 web refugeeaction.org.au

email refugeeactionsyd@gmail.com

facebook Refugee Action Coalition Sydney

twitter @rac_sydney

Reza Barati: Murdered on Manus

On 17 February 2014, local G4S personnel brutally attacked asylum seekers on Manus Island, armed with guns, machetes, pipes and sticks. PNG Police and the PNG ‘mobile squad’ also entered the facility.

This resulted in the murder of Reza Barati, a 23-year-old Faili Kurd from Iran, and injuries to at least 62 other asylum seekers. One man was shot in the hip and others lost eyes.

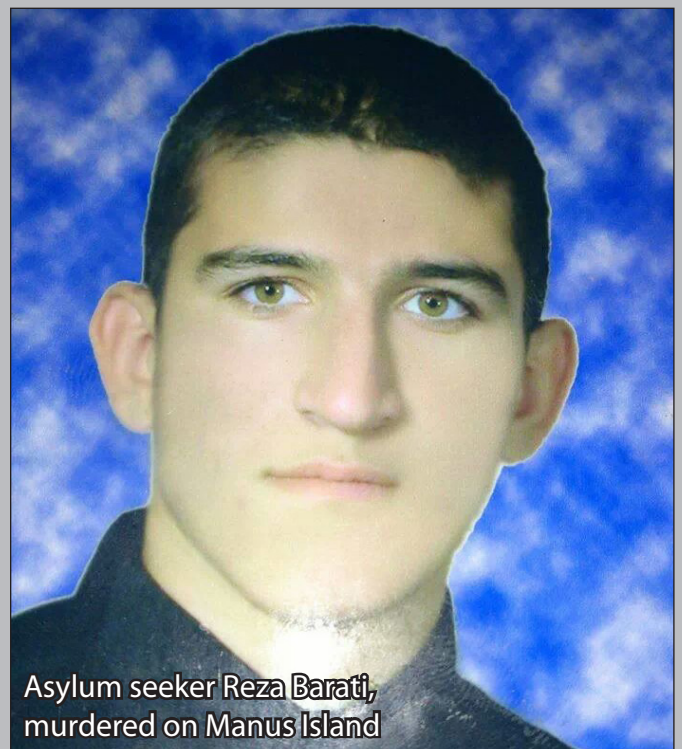
This was an act of retribution against asylum seekers after they had been holding protests for a month, demanding that the processing of their claims begin.

Although the attacks were carried out by PNG personnel, responsibility ultimately lies with the Australian government. The detention centre is funded and run by Australian authorities.

Hamid Kehazaei

Hamid died from a simple skin infection that turned into septicaemia on Manus Island in August 2014. **Medical documents leaked to the media confirm that negligence and inadequate care caused his death.**

Medical staff recommended to the Immigration Department that he be “urgently transferred” to Port Moresby rather than continue to receive inadequate treatment on Manus. But this didn’t happen, for over 24 hours.



Asylum seeker Reza Barati,
murdered on Manus Island

By the time Kehazaei arrived in Port Moresby it was too late. He suffered a heart attack, and was transferred a Brisbane hospital the next day. His family agreed to turn off his life support when he was confirmed brain dead. **Medical staff failed to use the correct anti-biotics recommended by PNG health guidelines.** If they had, he would likely have survived.