



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. Twelve refugees and asylum seekers have died there.

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.

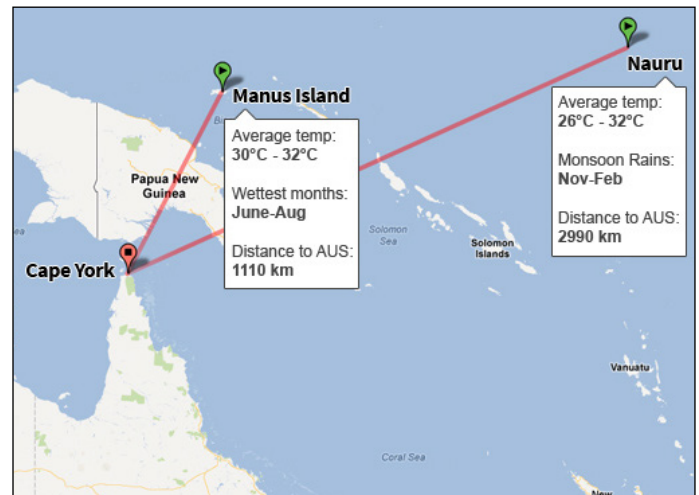
Manus Island

There are around 531 refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island as of May 2019. 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 2017 the refugees were forced out of the old detention centre, with PNG immigration and police using 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."

They were moved to three new camps closer to the Lorengau township. 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.

A Human Rights Watch report in October 2017 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 an asylum seeker, Hamid Kehazaei, died after a simple skin infection developed into septicaemia. In December 2016 Faysal Ahmed died after requesting medical treatment 13 times in two months.

In all seven refugees and asylum seekers have now died there: Reza, Hamid, Faysal, Kamil Hussein by drowning, Hamed Shamshiripour, Salim, and a Tamil refugee by suicide.

Infections and skin diseases are rife among the asylum seekers on Manus Island. About one in six people living on Manus Island contract malaria each year, and SBS reported a typhoid outbreak in April 2019.

Medical services have been reduced further with the closure of the old detention centre. There is now no mental health treatment at all. Dozens of suicide attempts have been reported since the Australian federal election in May 2019.

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 350 asylum seekers and refugees left on Nauru. According to Dr Robert Adler, a paediatrician,

atric psychiatrist who worked on the island in 2015:

“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. Five asylum seekers have died on Nauru since 2014.

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.

In 2015 Lateline reported that there had been at least 20 rapes or sexual assaults of refugee women on Nauru in the past year.

The case of Abyan, a Somali refugee who was raped on Nauru in 2015, exposed the lies and brutal mistreatment of refugees by the Minister for Immigration, Peter Dutton, and the Immigration Department. The Guardian reported that he ignored three separate IHMS recommendations to transfer Abyan, confirming advocates’ version of events.

US resettlement deal

The US resettlement deal will not solve the problem. Almost three years since it was announced just 552 refugees have been resettled in the US.

The White House has confirmed that it has set a cap of 1250 refugees, though it is unlikely that even that number will be accepted. Even in a best case scenario, hundreds of people are going to be left behind by the deal, and Australia’s cruel offshore detention regime will remain in place. On Nauru alone, 265 people have been rejected by the US, many under Donald Trump’s travel ban on Iranian, Somali, Sudanese and Syrian refugees.

New Zealand has offered to take 150 refugees each year, which the Australian government has so far refused. 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.

References available on our website

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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.