

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 13 September 2015

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1. 12,000 Syrian refugee intake expected to cost \$700 million over four years

The Age
September 9, 2015
Nicole Hasham

Syrian refugees are due to arrive in Australia by Christmas under the Abbott government's emergency humanitarian intake, after passing stringent health and security tests and promising to support Australian values.

Senior government officials said the 12,000-strong refugee intake is expected to cost \$700 million over four years.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott on Wednesday said the commitment would be one of the largest made to date anywhere in the world.

The focus of the intake will be on people in camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, although it will extend to people living on the streets and in the community in countries such as Lebanon.

The refugees will be assessed in the camps or via video conference, and all will be interviewed by an Australian immigration official.

They will undergo health, character, identity and national security checks, and will be asked to provide biometric data, such as a facial recognition scan.

Refugees will also be asked to make an Australian values statement to ensure they are familiar with the Australian way of life and values, and the behaviour expected of them, officials said.

They would not be required to meet English language standards. The health checks will screen out conditions such as contagious diseases, but will not preclude those with a disability from entering Australia.

The refugees will be flown to Australia on commercial flights, and the first are expected to touch down before Christmas. It is expected that the entire 12,000 refugee intake will have arrived by mid-2016.

The government has already mobilised officials in the Middle East to aid the departure of refugees to Australia, in collaboration with the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, who will refer eligible refugees to Australian staff.

Additional government officials will be deployed to the Middle East next month and another group would likely fly out a month later.

Once refugees arrive in Australia, they will be provided cultural orientation, housing, health assistance and other services.

These would largely be provided by existing refugee settlement services, and it is understood the Department of Social Services is already preparing for an increased workload.

It is expected that refugees will largely be settled in urban metropolitan areas, near existing Syrian communities where possible. Should a refugee request to be settled in a specific location, officials will try to accommodate this.

State leaders have expressed a willingness to settle refugees, however no state quotas will be applied.

The intake is expected to cost \$700 million over the forward estimates, excluding processing costs.

As Mr Abbott indicated on Wednesday, women, children and families from persecuted minorities will be prioritised.

This may include unaccompanied minors, however such refugees pose complex guardianship issues.

Refugees would be granted permanent residency. Over time, it is expected their family members could also apply for visas to Australia on family reunification grounds. Many refugees are expected to be skilled, so the cost of welfare benefits is expected to taper off over time as they find work.

The Abbott government will also contribute a further \$44 million to the UNHCR to help shelter and clothe refugees in camps as they face a tough winter.

This will fund items such as shelter kits, cooking stoves, blankets and cash assistance.

The \$44 million is not new money, and will be drawn from an existing development assistance emergency fund usually used for incidents such as natural disasters.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/12000-syrian-refugee-intake-expected-to-cost-700-million-over-four-years-20150909-gjjjng.html>

2. Australia confirms air strikes in Syria, announces additional 12,000 refugee places

ABC News Online

By political reporters Anna Henderson and Eliza Borrello

First posted Wed 9 Sep 2015, 9:26am

Updated Wed 9 Sep 2015, 8:31pm

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has confirmed Australia will extend its campaign of air strikes from Iraq into Syria, at the same time as announcing plans to "move quickly" to accept an extra 12,000 refugees affected by the conflict in both countries.

The extra permanent resettlement places will almost double this year's refugee intake, and the boost is expected to cost the federal budget \$700 million over the next four years.

A senior government official has told the ABC it is hoped the first refugees will arrive before Christmas, but the department also has a significant existing caseload.

The Government will also provide \$44 million in financial aid for refugee agencies — in the form of food, supplies and cash — as people living in refugee camps prepare for the winter.

The extra measures have been warmly received by the Opposition and refugee groups.

"The Prime Minister's announcement comes at a crucial time when UNHCR is stretched to capacity in meeting the needs of the most desperate," the United Nations refugee agency said in a statement.

Mr Abbott's announcement on accepting an extra 12,000 refugees comes just days after he ruled out such a move.

He also stressed the need to move beyond a purely humanitarian response, and ramp up military action in Syria.

"We have to act with our heads as well as with our hearts," he said.

"As a free and democratic country, we must stand against those who wish to destroy life and to build a terrorist state."

The Government maintains the legal basis for the extended air strikes is the "collective self-defence" of Iraq, and predicts Australia could begin contributing to the campaign in Syria within a week.

"I emphasise that our aircraft will be targeting Daesh, not the Assad regime, evil though it is," Mr Abbott said.

"This is very much in Australia's national interest.

"Destroying this death cult is essential, not just to ending the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East but also to ending the threat to Australia and the wider world."

Conservative Queensland backbencher George Christensen said he has been reassured sleeper agents for the IS group would not be smuggled into Australia as part of the intake.

"I am very worried that if there wasn't those background checks there could be people who come here with values and motives we very much would not like to have in our country," he said.

Syria has been embroiled in a vicious civil war since a popular uprising against dictator Bashar al-Assad in 2011.

More than 200,000 people have been killed and an estimated four million have been forced from their homes amid fighting between Mr Assad's forces, Islamic State and other Islamist militants, and other rebel groups.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten received a personal briefing from the Prime Minister about the decision.

"The swamp of terrorism can never be drained by military methods alone," Mr Shorten told Parliament.

"Labor will support this proportional action within international law," he said.

"This decision is not taken lightly."

He said Labor's support is conditional, and Australia's methods must be "strategically, legally and morally sound".

"The ADF operations have to be constrained to the collective self-defence of Iraq," Mr Shorten said.

"Further, the use of force must be limited to what is necessary to halt these cross-border attacks and defend Australian personnel."

Mr Shorten said he as also been assured of effective search and rescue provisions for Australian personnel.

Australian officials to start identifying candidates for new refugee places 'shortly'

The Government is preparing to send officials to the Middle East region to work with the UNHCR to start identifying candidates for resettlement, but Mr Abbott would not identify a timeframe for places to be filled.

Under current policy the Federal Government committed to increase the existing refugee intake of 13,750 people to 18,750 by 2018.

The Government has confirmed the 12,000 places will come on top of that previous commitment.

It is not clear whether the full intake will be immediate or whether it will be staggered over a number of years.

"We will move very quickly, but everyone who is resettled in Australia will be subject to the usual security, health and character checks," Mr Abbott said.

"We're not putting a timetable on it because we do have to make all of these important checks.

"Our focus for these new 12,000 permanent resettlement places will be those people most in need of permanent protection — women, children and families from persecuted minorities who have sought refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey... the most vulnerable of all."

"It is important that we bring in people who are going to be contributors to the Australian community, it is important that we don't bring in anyone from this troubled region who might ultimately be a problem for the Australian community."

Labor had called for an extra 10,000 refugees to be accepted and The Greens argued for double that figure.

Yesterday Mr Abbott promised a "generous" boost in the number of refugees and emphasised the Government's policy would be informed by meetings Immigration Minister Peter Dutton held in Europe.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Assistant Treasurer Josh Frydenberg had suggested considering issuing temporary visas, along the lines of the assistance provided to the Kosovars under the Howard government in 1999.

Pyne says Government 'colour blind' on refugee religion

Government ministers previously flagged that the focus of the refugee intake would be minorities that are largely Christian.

One backbencher said the message to the Prime Minister was "no more Muslim men".

But Cabinet minister Christopher Pyne stressed the Government was not focused on singling out one religious group.

"Religion is not the issue here, the issue is persecuted ethnic and religious minorities," he said.

"We have a colour-blind policy in terms of humanitarian support."

Mr Abbott has echoed that position.

"Some Muslim people are very much members of persecuted minorities, as I said, there's Druze, there's Kurds, there's Turkmen, there's Yazidi," he said.

"There are Muslim and non-Muslim persecuted minorities in this part of the world and we are prioritising all of them."

Government backbencher Cory Bernardi said Christians were in most need.

"The most vulnerable people in the Middle East are persecuted Christians, women, children and families," Senator Bernardi said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-09/australia-to-accept-additional-12000-syrian-refugees/6760386>

3. MEDIA RELEASE: Syria refugee announcement: too little, too discriminatory, too hypocritical

FREE THE SYRIANS IN DETENTION

Wednesday September 9, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

It is a welcome fact that the Abbott government will take 12,000 Syrians on top of the existing humanitarian intake of 13,750. But the failure of the government to say over what time period the 12,000 will be brought to Australia, makes it impossible to know how generous the government is being.

What we do know is that 12,000 is on the low side of the suggestions that have been recently made regarding the numbers that Australia could reasonable take. At the moment, Germany is taking more than this number each day.

"The Abbott government cut the refugee intake from 20,000 when it was elected. So we are already taken 18,000 fewer people because of the anti-refugee policies of the Abbott government. Abbott want to look like he is doing something, but is doing as little as possible at the same time," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. "Even Liberal NSW Premier Mike Baird said that 10,000 was a minimum. Some Liberal backbenchers were suggesting 50,000, which is more like it."

What is also shocking is that the Abbott government is making a fundamental break with the policy of a non-discriminatory humanitarian program.

"The stipulation that Australia's selection would be from minority groups is also transparently anti-Muslim," said Rintoul. "Abbott is continuing to inflame anti-Muslim sentiments which have been on display from the likes of Cory Bernadi and George Christensen.

"By making the announcement of bombing Syria at the same time as announcing the refugee intake, Abbott is trying to hide the reality that it is the US bombing in Syria that creates refugees. The fact is that the barrel bombs of Assad is responsible for far the vast majority of Syrian civilian casualties.

"Lastly, the Abbott government, and the Labor Party, have turned a blind eye to the Syrian asylum seekers that have been left rotting in Australian-run detention centres."

The Refugee Action Coalition has called a rally on Saturday, 12 September, 2pm at Sydney Town Hall to call for the government to free the Syrian asylum seekers from detention, increase the immediate Syrian intake, increase the annual humanitarian intake, end tow-backs, and close Manus and Nauru.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

4. UN cautions against prioritising Christians as Peter Dutton indicates more Syrians may be accepted

Sydney Morning Herald
September 11, 2015 - 5:41PM
Nicole Hasham

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says Syria is a "very bad situation getting worse" and suggested Australia may increase its emergency refugee intake, as those displaced from the war-ravaged nation continue to spill into Europe.

Fairfax Media has learned the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, is concerned Australia's intake may not be based purely on need, as questions persist over whether Christian minorities will be unfairly favoured when the government decides which refugees to accept.

Community and church leaders and refugee resettlement services met Prime Minister Tony Abbott and other senior ministers in Canberra on Friday to start planning how to deal with the wave of refugees, which are due to start arriving by December.

Ahead of the meeting, Social Services Minister Scott Morrison said in the last two years Australia had settled almost 8000 Syrian and Iraqi refugee and humanitarian entrants - 25 per cent of them Muslim.

"Our policy as a government has always been ... to focus on the persecuted minorities in that part of the world," he said.

Mr Dutton, asked if Australia would revise its refugee offer if the crisis escalates, told ABC radio "we'll have to assess in due course what the next wave of support might be".

Later he said the war raging in Syria was "a very bad situation getting worse".

"The political turmoil in Syria shows no sign of resolution, and we have a very important job to do ... to try and provide an opportunity for these people to start a new life," he said.

Fairfax Media understands the UNHCR is waiting to learn how many refugee referrals it should make to the Australian government.

A proportion of the emergency refugee intake is likely to be special humanitarian entrants, who are identified by Australian government officials and not the UN.

While thousands of Syrian refugees need resettlement, the UN prioritises those under immediate threat such as those who are being persecuted in the asylum country, face deportation back to danger or have pressing medical or psychological problems.

Senior government ministers such as Eric Abetz and Malcolm Turnbull have argued for accepting more Syrian Christians.

It is understood some UNHCR officials are concerned Australia may choose refugees based on religion, not protection needs.

However others in the organisation believe the government rhetoric is aimed at appeasing some in the electorate, and the refugee intake will ultimately favour protection needs above all else.

A UNHCR spokesman welcomed the 12,000-strong intake and said it hoped to work with the Abbott government to ensure the places on offer met the needs of the most vulnerable refugees.

"UNHCR assesses resettlement needs on the basis of individual circumstances, and with reference to long-established protection criteria," he said.

Refugees sent to Australia will mostly be drawn from camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It is understood that if the UNHCR is given the freedom to choose, it will prioritise those in Lebanon, where refugee numbers are highly concentrated compared to the local population, and Turkey, where numbers are higher overall.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/syria-refugee-crisis-un-cautions-against-prioritising-christians-as-peter-dutton-indicates-more-syrians-may-be-accepted-20150911-gjkgcz.html>

5. 'World of difference' between Syrians to be resettled in Australia and those on Manus Island and Nauru: Tony Abbott

Sydney Morning Herald
September 10, 2015
Michael Gordon

PORT MORESBY. Tony Abbott has declared there is a "world of difference" between refugees from Syria and Iraq who will now be resettled in Australia and those from the same countries and have been languishing in detention for more than two years in Papua New Guinea and on Nauru.

The Prime Minister said he was very encouraged by the "big-hearted, generous response" of the Australian people to the government's decision to accept 12,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict.

While these people had sought refuge near Syria's borders, Mr Abbott said those on PNG's Manus Island and in detention on Nauru had "done a deal with people smugglers to go way beyond the country of first asylum".

"We will never ever do anything that encourages the evil trade of people smuggling and all of those who have come to Australia by boat are here as a result of people smuggling," he said.

Refugee advocates argue that asylum seekers should not be treated according to the way they fled persecution and that the international protection system would break down if all countries adopted the Australian approach.

Mr Abbott was speaking after meeting with PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill and thanking him for hosting the detention centre on Manus Island, where nearly 1000 asylum seekers remain in detention.

He told Mr O'Neill Australia was "very grateful" for PNG's assistance in "processing illegal boat arrivals".

Federal and state officials would meet early next week to discuss the mechanics of the resettlement of the 12,000 refugees, Mr Abbott said.

The Prime Minister returns from Port Moresby to Canberra on Thursday night and will meet community leaders and service providers on Friday to discuss "exactly what we need to do to ensure that people coming to Australia from the conflict zone can swiftly and effectively integrate into our country".

Mr Abbott promised that Australia would cooperate with PNG authorities in the investigation of rape allegations against three Australians who left Manus island after the alleged incident took place last month.

Mr O'Neill has backed the call by PNG police for the alleged offenders to be brought back to face questioning.

"There are due processes of law and they must always be followed but crime is crime is crime," Mr Abbott said.

"Where there are credible allegations, they must be investigated. Where there is strong evidence, it should be prosecuted. Where people have done wrong thing, they should be convicted and punished."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/world-of-difference-between-syrians-to-be-resettled-in-australia-and-those-on-manus-island-and-auru-abbott-20150910-gjj6ok.html>

6. Australia's refugee intake increase the 'pimple on the hippopotamus'

ABC News Online

By political reporter Anna Henderson

First posted Wed 9 Sep 2015, 6:42am

Updated Wed 9 Sep 2015, 7:39am

International aid organisation World Vision has characterised the potential increase in Australia's refugee intake as a "pimple on the hippopotamus" and urged the Federal Government to provide more financial support.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has promised Australia's response will be "generous" but has not confirmed the size of the planned increase to the existing overall refugee intake of 13,750 people for this year.

Labor is pushing for an additional 10,000 places, and the Greens want double that number to be accepted.

World Vision chief executive Tim Costello said that for Australia to fulfil the promise of generosity it would need to be prepared to accept hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Mr Costello is pushing the Government to significantly boost its financial commitment.

"We're running out of food. The conditions are desperate. People therefore are fleeing," he said.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has been in Geneva meeting with representatives of key agencies dealing with the crisis, and has acknowledged there is an urgent need for Australia to provide extra money.

Mr Dutton has been in talks with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, among others.

"These are desperate people. And it's not just about accommodation. It's about food. It's about education for young people as well," Mr Dutton said.

"And their most immediate requirement is for funding to provide support to those people.

"That's the most urgent need, urgent requirement, and that's what they've asked of Australia, to look first at what financial support we might be able to provide."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-09/australia-refugee-intake-pimple-on-the-hippopotamus/6760586>

7. Christian or Muslim? It's irrelevant if children are drowning at sea, Labor says

The Age

September 8, 2015

Nicole Hasham

Religion is irrelevant if children are drowning at sea and Australia should not favour Christians when deciding which Syrian refugees deserve sanctuary, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten says.

Government leader in the Senate, Eric Abetz said on Tuesday Christians were "the most persecuted group in the world" and should be at the front of the resettlement queue if Australia increases its Syrian intake.

"I think the Australian people would see a need for that to be a focus," he said.

"Given the plight of Christians, I think a very strong case can be made that Christians should be prioritised ... it should be based on need."

His comments followed ABC reports that government backbenchers had sent a blunt message to Prime Minister Tony Abbott on refugees: "No more Muslim men."

But Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said war victims were not confined to a particular religion.

"If you're a woman facing terrible crimes committed against you, if you're a child, a little child potentially drowning at sea, I'm not interested in their religion, I'm interested in their safety," he said.

Labor immigration spokesman Richard Marles said Mr Abetz's comments were "really dangerous ... and they would take our immigration program in a very different direction".

"Of course there are persecuted Christian minorities, but there are persecuted minorities of a range of faiths and there are also people who are fleeing war from a range of different religions," he said.

"At the end of the day it is really important that we maintain a principle of having a non-discriminatory immigration policy."

He said the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, was the "global arbiter" on which refugees most urgently needed resettlement.

"These sorts of comments, which imply a religious bias in the way we go about things, I think, [are] very concerning," Mr Marles said.

The ABC on Tuesday reported that the government wants to restrict any intake of Syrian refugees to largely Christian minorities.

A government backbencher was reported as saying some Coalition MPs were telling Mr Abbott "no more Muslim men" should be accepted as refugees.

The debate came as Tasmanian independent MP Andrew Wilkie told Parliament during question time on Tuesday that Australia's refugee intake was "shameful" compared to other nations.

The government claims that on a per capita basis, Australia takes more refugees than any other nation – an argument also made previously by Labor.

This statement is true of the refugees accepted through the UNHCR resettlement programs, which represent a minuscule proportion of refugees resettled globally.

But Mr Wilkie said taking into account resettlement avenues outside the UNHCR, Australia was 27th in the world "not [number] one or two".

He said based on GDP and raw numbers, Australia ranked 46th and 22nd respectively.

"We are the 12th largest economy in the world, we do indeed have boundless plains to share. If there is one country in the world that has the capacity to do much more ... it is Australia," he said.

Assistant Treasurer Josh Frydenberg on Monday suggested Australia could temporarily house thousands of Syrians fleeing the civil war, as it did for the Kosovars in 1999, but the refugees would not be allowed to apply for permanent asylum.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young on Tuesday said Syrian refugees deserve permanent safety "and a chance to rebuild their lives in Australia, which they'll never get with temporary protection".

"Australia is big enough and strong enough to give people safety on a permanent basis and that's what we should be aiming for," she said.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/christian-or-muslim-its-irrelevant-if-children-are-drowning-at-sea-labor-says-20150908-gjhlm4.html>

8. Syrian refugees told to read this government book before being resettled in Australia

Sydney Morning Herald
September 10, 2015 - 7:52PM
Nicole Hasham

Australians use tongs to handle food, do not blow their nose on to the footpath and say "yes please" if they would like a cup of tea, according to official guidelines on Australian behaviour Syrian refugees will be asked to read before being granted a visa.

The 'Life in Australia' document supplied by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection also includes a statement on the nation's values, which the 12,000 new arrivals must sign before being granted humanitarian entry.

The booklet, provided to all people seeking permanent residency, reveals the extent of cultural orientation refugees are expected to undergo as they settle in Australia.

It explains the meaning of common slang that has bamboozled many a new arrival, including arvo, barbie, bloke, cuppa, ocker and BYO.

New residents are instructed on what it means to bring a plate, be feeling crook, shout a round or go for your life.

Refugees aged over 18 will be asked to sign a statement confirming their respect for concepts like the freedom and dignity of the individual, equality of men and women and the importance of English language as a "unifying element of Australian society".

They are told Australians value the precept of a fair go: that what someone achieves in life should be a product of their talents, work and effort rather than their birth or favouritism.

But that does not mean everybody has equal wealth or property and "the cost of houses and apartments ... is relatively high, particularly in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Canberra".

Settlement Services International humanitarian services manager David Keegan said refugees can find it difficult to find shops, recreation facilities and churches, and may also struggle with language, using transport and buying groceries.

"Understand[ing] how life works in Australia and the expectations of Australian residents are something that refugees are keen to learn more about," he said.

The guide says it is forbidden to kill animals on someone else's property and that "people who do not know each other generally do not kiss or hug when meeting".

Being on time for meetings and other visits is important. Most Australians "blow their noses into a handkerchief or tissue, not onto the footpath. This is also true for spitting".

"When sharing food with others to prevent the spread of germs, it is usual practice to pick up food using the utensils provided. This might be tongs, a spoon or fork, chopsticks or salad servers," the document instructs.

New residents are encouraged to use niceties when dealing with other people, such as "yes please" when accepting the offer of a cup of tea and "sorry" if they bump into someone.

Australians also say "pardon me" if they burp or belch in public or in a person's home, and line up when waiting to be served, the document advises.

Many Aussies dress scantily at the beach – some even go nude – but this does not mean they have "low moral standards" and people from other countries can dress as they like, migrants are told.

Mr Keegan's organisation provides community orientation programs including topics on Australian norms and expectations.

"What we find is the cultural differences are not so significant that they find themselves in difficult situations," he said.

"Many Syrian refugees have been living in urban areas and are used to urban lifestyles. There are some cultural differences but it doesn't take people long to work them out."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/syrian-refugees-told-to-read-this-government-book-before-being-resettled-in-australia-20150910-gjj8qn.html>

9. Dutton transfers suspected drug trafficker to Christmas Island ahead of trial

The Age
September 13, 2015 - 12:15AM
Chris Vedelago, Nino Bucci

Australian Border Force officials have secretly transported an Iraqi man to the Christmas Island detention centre despite a Melbourne magistrate granting the man bail while he awaits trial on drugs charges.

The man, who has lived in Australia on a humanitarian visa since 1998, was reporting to police as part of his bail conditions when he was detained by officers from Australia's new paramilitary immigration agency. His family and lawyer were not told he had been taken to the offshore camp.

The move has prompted concern by Australia's top human rights official, Gillian Triggs, and other legal experts that the Abbott Government's new policy could be circumventing due process and the right to a fair trial.

The Sunday Age understands it may be the first time the government has used sweeping new immigration powers to detain a non-citizen on Christmas Island while they are awaiting trial.

Immigration and law enforcement authorities have refused to explain why the man was taken to the island in the Indian Ocean shortly before he was due to appear at multiple court hearings in Melbourne.

The former Shiite Iraqi refugee, who has a lengthy criminal record in Australia and extensive connections in Melbourne's underworld, was on bail and could face a committal hearing over his alleged involvement in a \$6 million heroin and ecstasy importation ring.

The 31-year-old was taken into custody after Federal Police called in Australian Border Force officials. The Melbourne-based Magistrate hearing his case rejected a bid by the Australian Federal Police to have his bail revoked.

The man's defence solicitor had successfully argued he posed no risk of offending and should be released from remand so he could care for his wife and young child.

His family was reportedly distraught after he failed to return because the man had been subject to underworld threats. A close relative of the man was gunned down in an execution-style murder earlier this year.

He was detained on the same day Fairfax Media published details of telephone intercepts from an unrelated court matter that authorities believe included a coded message to collect a debt and possibly maim or kill someone on behalf of a jailed outlaw biker.

The decision to incarcerate the man on Christmas Island comes after Immigration and Border Protection Minister Peter Dutton was given the power in December to unilaterally deport suspected and convicted criminals following sweeping changes to the Migration Act.

Minister Dutton and his newly formed paramilitary agency, the Australian Border Force, have used the powers to detain 366 people in the past eight months.

In May, he announced the high-security Christmas Island facility would be used to house criminals who were "on a pathway to exiting our country".

A Department of Immigration and Border Protection spokeswoman declined to comment on how many detainees suspected or convicted of criminal activity were being held on Christmas Island.

Legal experts have warned they could remain on the island indefinitely – regardless of the outcome of a trial on the mainland – as their countries of origin may not agree to repatriate them if they have been convicted of serious criminal offences.

Australian Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs said it was ironic that people imprisoned in Australia after being convicted of a criminal offence were likely to be held in better conditions than those who were yet to face trial after having their visas cancelled.

While she declined to comment on the man's case, she said the commission had "significant concerns" about people detained offshore receiving proper access to legal services and the potential delays they could face coming to trial.

"If you were held in a prison, you'd be better off," Professor Triggs said. "We really need greater clarity about this, and what it means for people who are on trial, and those who may be held indefinitely."

She said the commission also had grave concerns about criminals being held in the same centres as women and children who were waiting to have their claims for refugee status assessed.

Greg Barns, spokesman for the Australian Lawyers Alliance, said Minister Dutton was "playing judge" with his new powers and there was no legitimate reason why a detainee could not be housed on the mainland.

"I can think of no other reason he would do it other than to be vindictive," he said. "How is an offender expected to be able to instruct his lawyer or participate in their defence from Christmas Island?"

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/dutton-transfers-suspected-drug-trafficker-to-christmas-island-ahead-of-trial-20150912-gjl0fn.html>

10. Mike Seccombe: Hesta's Transfield dumping highlights ethical focus

Borrowing lessons from fossil fuel divestment, a group of activists and investment funds are using the sharemarket in an attempt to shape refugee policy.

The Saturday Paper
Sep 12, 2015
Mike Seccombe

[....]

The reason Hesta's dumping of Transfield was such a big deal is that it was widely believed it was motivated by conscience. And that concerned a lot of people.

Hesta's chief executive, Debby Blakey, insisted the decision was ultimately based on financial rather than ethical considerations. But she also cited a "substantial body of evidence" pointing to human rights abuses in the detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island. She said this exposed Transfield to the risk of costly legal action that could impact on its longer-term financial performance and share price. She also noted that the government-imposed secrecy about details of the contracts with Transfield meant Hesta could not get important information.

Boiled down, what Blakey was saying was that Hesta was not acting on its own conscience, but out of an expectation that other people would act on their consciences, and that could damage Transfield as an investment.

That might seem like a subtle distinction, but it's an important one. Blakey was suggesting the fund had been hard-headed about financial risk, rather than soft-hearted about human rights.

Nonetheless, numerous people, including assistant treasurer Josh Frydenberg, suggested Hesta was not doing its fiduciary duty.

"You would hope that Hesta was making decisions based on the best economic interests of its members," he said.

[....]

Full story at <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2015/09/12/hestas-transfield-dumping-highlights-ethical-focus/14419800002369>

11. Federal Circuit Court judge Alexander Street accused of bias after rejecting hundreds of migration cases

ABC News Online
By the National Reporting Team's Natasha Robinson
First posted Thu 10 Sep 2015, 1:33pm
Updated Thu 10 Sep 2015, 2:22pm

A Federal Circuit Court judge from one of Australia's most famous legal families has been accused of apprehended bias after he rejected more than 250 appeals in migration cases in six months.

Rulings of Judge Alexander "Sandy" Street have been subject to several appeals in two recent cases in the Full Federal Court, which has strongly criticised the newly appointed Federal Circuit Court judge.

In a highly unusual move, applicants have presented statistics to support their allegation that those seeking a judicial review of migration decisions had virtually no chance of succeeding in Judge Street's court between January and June this year.

In the latest application, filed last week in the Full Federal Court, the editor of the Federal Court Reports, Victor Kline, has sworn an affidavit which alleges Judge Street found in favour of the Immigration Minister in virtually every case he heard between January and June this year.

Of 254 rulings delivered, Judge Street rejected migration appeals in 252 cases.

According to the statistics, the judge dismissed a large number of cases at the first court date, which is usually set aside for laying down a timetable for gathering evidence and scheduling a hearing.

Monash University law professor Matthew Groves said such analysis of an individual judge's rulings was rarely seen in Australian courts.

"The very fact that they were collected is unusual, and the stats themselves are quite unusual because they show that for migration hearings, essentially you've got no prospect of succeeding in front of this particular judge," Professor Groves said.

The judge hails from the well-known Street legal family, which has produced three NSW chief justices.

Judge Street's father, Sir Laurence Street, served as NSW Chief Justice between 1974 and 1988.

Judge Street was appointed to the Federal Circuit Court in late December last year by Commonwealth Attorney-General George Brandis.

He was the subject of media attention in the year prior to his appointment when it was revealed he was carrying hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and faced possible bankruptcy.

In his time on the Federal Circuit Court, Judge Street has heard an astonishing number of cases.

Between January and June this year, he delivered rulings in 286 cases. The other eight judges who sit on the Federal Circuit Court in Sydney delivered 357 cases combined.

Judge subject of criticism over Tamil asylum seeker case

Judge Street has been the subject of pointed criticism in two successful appeals of his decisions in the Full Federal Court in which the judge was found to have denied litigants procedural fairness.

In one case, an unrepresented Tamil asylum seeker told Judge Street that his younger brother, younger sister and her husband had been killed in Sri Lanka.

"The police will be targeting me as I was seen as being opposed to the police," the Tamil man told Judge Street.

"I plead to this court that I have come here to seek refuge and protection, and therefore, I urge this court to grant me protection and allow me to stay in this country."

In response, the judge asked the Tamil man to identify why there was a jurisdictional error in his case.

In that case, lawyers for the Immigration Minister had cautioned against the summary dismissal of the Tamil man's case, stressing the duty of the Minister to put evidence before the court.

The man's immigration file had not yet been obtained. But the judge did not accept the Minister's counsel's entreaties, summarily dismissing the case with costs.

The Full Federal Court took a dim view of the judge's approach when it ruled the case should go back before a different judge to be re-heard in the Federal Circuit Court.

"Serious issues relating to the procedural fairness of proceedings must arise in circumstances such as the present, in which an unrepresented applicant whose primary language is not English ... is called on, without notice, to mount arguments resisting the summary dismissal of his application," judges Mansfield, Tracey and Mortimer said.

"These circumstances, or ones similar to them, should not occur again."

Former NSW Supreme Court judge Anthony Whealy said the comments from the Full Federal Court were notable.

Mr Whealy said it was essential that courts offer procedural fairness, most particularly in migration cases.

"When we're dealing with a case that involves the refugee issue, I think it's even more important because often these people are unrepresented, they can't speak English, they don't understand any of the issues that are involved," Mr Whealy said.

"It's terribly important that they be allowed to prepare their case."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-10/federal-court-judge-alexander-street-accused-of-bias/6764704>

12. Papua New Guinea wants Australia to extradite Manus guards to face rape charges

Sydney Morning Herald / AAP
September 10, 2015

Port Moresby: Papua New Guinea will ask Prime Minister Tony Abbott to extradite three Australians who worked at the Manus Island immigration detention centre so they can face rape allegations.

Mr Abbott is due to arrive in the PNG capital on Wednesday night for the Pacific Islands Forum.

"We expect the rule of law to prevail," Prime Minister Peter O'Neill told reporters at Parliament House in Port Moresby.

"They must face up to the allegations and be tried under the normal rule of law in Papua New Guinea."

Rape convictions carry the death sentence in Papua New Guinea.

Three guards employed by Wilson Security were stood down and returned to Australia following an incident in mid-July.

The return of the accused men prompted anger among Manus Island police and locals, claiming they were sent back before a proper investigation was completed.

Detention centre operator Transfield Services reportedly told the victim's family the trio would be returned to the island to face police questioning, after a relative hijacked a bus and truck belonging to the facility.

Mr O'Neill was unapologetic about PNG's tough stance on rape.

"That's our laws, we can't break our laws," he said.

He also expressed his general frustration with Australian expats evading PNG's justice system with quick evacuations - citing the case of two Australian guards involved in a drink-driving car crash on the island a fortnight ago.

"How would you feel if we treated Papua New Guineans the same way when they cause offences in Australia?" he said.

"We have to respect each other's laws."

Meanwhile, Mr O'Neill said "good progress" was being made on resettlement arrangements for refugees on Manus Island, anticipating refugees will get proper resettlement before the end of the year.

At the moment they do not have work rights and are living in limbo at a high security transit centre.

"You must realise we have communities with 800 different languages and 1000 unique tribes, so it's not as easy as one would think it is like settling them in metropolitan Melbourne or Sydney," Mr O'Neil said.

"People have to be a little bit patient with us."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/papua-new-guinea-wants-australia-to-extradite-manus-guards-to-face-rape-charges-20150909-gjj144.html>

13. PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill asks for patience on the resettling of Manus refugees

The Age
September 10, 2015
Michael Gordon

PORT MORESBY. Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has demanded that people "be a little bit patient" with his country's failure to resettle refugees who were detained on Manus Island, predicting that some will be resettled well before the end of the year.

"You must realise that we have communities with over 800 different languages and a thousand different unique tribes, so it's not as easy as one would think," Mr O'Neill told reporters on Wednesday.

Human rights groups have expressed alarm that more asylum seekers who were taken to Manus Island against their will have so far died than been resettled since the detention centre was reopened more than two years ago. One was murdered when locals invaded the centre during a riot last year. Another died after a wound became infected.

Early last year Mr O'Neill predicted that resettlement would begin in the middle of 2014, but none of the the relative few who have been re-located to a transit centre after being recognised as refugees have work rights or freedom of movement.

Mr O'Neill insisted his country was "making good progress", with "a good number" returning home voluntarily and progress toward resettlement of those whose claims have been upheld.

He said that resettling refugees was a much greater challenge for his country than in cities such as Melbourne or Sydney. "People need to be a little bit patient with us and we will get there," he said.

While the asylum issue will be discussed on the sidelines of the Pacific Islands Forum, climate change is expected to dominate discussion among the 16 leaders at Thursday's retreat, with Mr O'Neill predicting the leaders would agree on a "very strong statement" and would present "a united, strong Pacific voice" at climate negotiations in Paris in December.

In a speech opening the forum, he declared the leaders had to act on behalf of small Pacific states whose survival was threatened by global warming.

"The people who are at the greatest risk did not cause climate change, but they suffer because of it. Right now communities across the region live in fear with each high tide that is coming in or when a storm is approaching," he said.

"Many of these communities are isolated, so that when sea water enters their homes and covers their crops, we do not see them on the international news because they continue to suffer in silence."

Arriving at the summit on Wednesday, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key made it clear that he would not be supporting the call from smaller island states for a commitment to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

Mr Key strongly defended his country's performance on climate change, but said it would have to reduce its number of animals to meet the commitment, which would simply result in other countries having bigger herds with no impact on climate change.

"We're very serious about what we are doing in New Zealand," he said, citing the country's expansion of renewable energy and commitment to an emissions trading scheme and research on climate change.

"Realistically, for an answer to climate change to be found, we need international consensus and ultimately for the big emitters to make sure they step up to the plate."

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/png-prime-minister-peter-oneill-asks-for-patience-on-the-resettling-of-manus-refugees-20150909-gjidoo.html>

14. No progress on suspension of New Zealand aid to Nauru after talks

Nauru is no closer to having \$1.2m in aid from New Zealand restored, despite talks between the NZ foreign minister and Nauru justice minister

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Saturday 12 September 2015 09.58 AEST

Nauru is no closer to having its aid from New Zealand restored.

After a number of failed attempts, the New Zealand foreign minister, Murray McCully, finally met with Nauru's justice minister, David Adeang, on Friday on the sidelines of the Pacific Islands Forum in Port Moresby.

McCully was keen to talk to Adeang after New Zealand suspended the \$1.2m of aid it provides to keep Nauru's justice sector going.

The decision, which McCully said wasn't taken lightly, followed growing concerns about the deterioration of the rule of law in the tiny Pacific nation and worries about democratic and civil rights.

New Zealand says it's prepared to reinstate that aid if changes are made and credibility is restored to Nauru's justice sector.

But Friday's talks apparently made no progress towards this and McCully said Nauru was no closer to getting further funding from the New Zealand government.

The New Zealand prime minister, John Key, may have also found himself in an awkward conversation with Nauru's president, Baron Waqa.

The alphabetical seating arrangement at the Pacific Islands Forum meant Nauru was seated next to New Zealand for the final day of talks with non-forum members.

Key and McCully returned to New Zealand late on Friday.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/12/no-progress-on-suspension-of-new-zealand-aid-to-nauru-after-talks>

15. Rally for Mojgan Shamsalipoor calls on government to release Brisbane student from detention

ABC News Online

Posted Sat 12 Sep 2015, 12:48pm

Hundreds of people have marched in Brisbane to show support for an Iranian student who was sent to immigration detention after spending two years living in the community.

Mojgan Shamsalipoor, 21, came to Australia by boat from Iran in 2012 and was released into community detention.

She had been living in Brisbane for two years, and is married to an Australian resident, but was forcibly removed to Darwin last month.

Ms Shamsalipoor had been just months away from finishing high school at Yeronga.

Many of her school community and the teacher union members rallied in Brisbane today to show their support for Ms Shamsalipoor.

Chanting "Open the border, close the guards, free the refugees" the group of about 200 marched through Brisbane's South Bank to the city.

A Year 11 student from Ms Shamsalipoor's school, who did not want to be named, said all the teachers loved her dearly.

"It's just horrible, she wasn't even able to finish her education," she said.

A letter from Ms Shamsalipoor's husband Milad Jafari, 21, was read to the crowd.

He has been visiting Ms Shamsalipoor for two weeks but will return to Brisbane on Saturday night.

"I am feeling depressed knowing Mojgan will stay here and how she will cope in this dark place," he wrote in the letter.

"Mojgan does not belong in the middle of a desert behind fences and under guard.

"I feel like her soul is with me always and it will return to Brisbane with me, but her physical body is out in the middle of nowhere in north Australia."

Ms Shamsalipoor's lawyer said she was raped by family members in her home country and would be persecuted if she returned due to the social stigma attached to rape victims.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-12/brisbane-rally-mojgan-shamsalipoor-immigration-detention-yeronga/6770746>

16. Jenna Price: What happened to Iranian asylum seeker Nazanin?

The Daily Life

September 9, 2015 - 9:23AM

Jenna Price

Columnist for The Canberra Times and Daily Life

Nazanin, in a black blouse and loose floral pants, made her way slowly around the hospital courtyard yesterday.

And that's the only good news Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, can give Australians who care about asylum seekers.

Nazanin, the 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, who was allegedly raped on Nauru, who refused to eat, who tried to take her own life, was – finally - medically evacuated from Nauru last month, and is now in Brisbane's Prince Charles Hospital to receive the kind of medical help she could never have received on the island.

Rintoul visited her first on Saturday and then again on Tuesday afternoon this week at the large public hospital in Chermiside on Brisbane's northside and he said she was able to go for a brief walk with the aid of a crutch.

"She's mobile now but has difficult walking," he said. "There will need to be a lot of physiotherapy for her to get the strength she needs in her legs again."

But it wasn't so much her physical condition which worried him. Earlier concerns that she might need to have an operation seem to have been allayed.

"She is anxious, she is fearful, concerned about being separated from her mother and brother . . . they have very little contact, just two or three minutes at a time . . . the phone calls are short and difficult."

And he says that as he sat with her, there were long periods where she would not – or could not – talk.

"There are clearly times when the words don't fill the space."

This is a young woman in a terrible state. As an asylum seeker, she is not permitted to have a mobile phone. No 'boat arrivals' are permitted to have mobile phones. There are no regular communication arrangements between Nauru – where her mother and brother are - and Prince Charles Hospital, so she waits anxiously for a call, whenever they can get permission to ring.

Nazanin's condition is of serious concern, says Alanna Maycock, tuberculosis specialist nurse and the refugee coordinator for the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Maycock says that Nazanin's story has attracted much media attention – and that there are many many other women who have been sexually assaulted on the island. And nothing changes.

She says that when she was on Nauru working as a nurse, women would disclose sexual assaults. But in conversation with her fellow health professionals, they would respond to allegations of rape doubting the veracity of the claims.

"How do we know that's true? This question was asked by members of the public in Australia. Of course we don't know because we didn't witness it but the conditions lend themselves to making women extremely vulnerable."

She says that women have to wash themselves and their babies in showers with no doors, with just flimsy pieces of fabric.

"And the guards are just sitting seven to ten metres away, watching. They can see clearly into the showers."

Her biggest fear is that Nazanin will be transferred back to Nauru, the scene of her alleged assault and her physical and mental deterioration, which will set back any recovery.

"The International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) should be stipulating that no woman, no child, who has suffered trauma should be forced back into detention . . . but I think there is no doubt she will be forced back to Nauru."

Maycock wants people to know that the UN said that in 2013 and again this year that torture is happening on Nauru.

"To treat this woman and throw her back into the lion's den is inhumane.

There isn't even security to protect her. - and IHMS, the health service contracted to treat, aligns itself with the government. . . . [they have] a contract worth \$1.3b.

"Is their duty of care to their patients or their loyalty to the government?"

Shortly after the introduction of the Border Force Act, the prospect of going to prison and leaving her two small children behind so terrified Maycock, she was silent. She'd signed a contract saying she would not speak out against the government but her conscience would not let her keep quiet. She's spoken out about the shocking treatment of asylum seekers but fears that IHMS will use other means to keep her quiet. Now she has been banned from visiting Nauru but she says she will continue to speak out.

There are two things which stay with her – the seven-year-old who pleaded with Maycock to share her story so she could leave detention with her family. And the young woman who'd been raped; and whose treating psychologist told her that she was wearing skimpy clothing and dressing provocatively. And who demanded to know: "Why didn't she cry out when she was being raped?"

Says Maycock: "That woman wasn't removed from Nauru, she is still there facing her aggressor."

She says that Nazanin should be able to stay in Australia and make a complete recovery; and believes that the support of her family is essential.

Which is why Ian Rintoul and RACS are working to make that happen. Nazanin now has access to legal representation, Dimi Iannaou from Maurice Blackburn.

Says Rintoul: "We are trying to get her brother and mother to Australia, that's central to her recovery."

And meanwhile, Maycock tucks her own children into bed each night.

"The asylum seeker children we treat in our clinic give me the courage to carry on but when i go home to my own children and tuck them into bed i become fearful and a sense of dread falls over me again."

<http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/news-features/what-happened-to-iranian-asylum-seeker-nazanin-20150908-gji7bx.html/?987897>

17. Nauru alleged rape victim's condition deteriorates

The Age
September 7, 2015 - 11:28AM
Neelima Choahan

The brother of an Iranian asylum seeker who was allegedly raped on Nauru has made a heartfelt plea to the government to reunite the woman, now in Australia, with her family.

The asylum seeker, Nazanin, was allegedly attacked in May on her way back to the Nauru detention centre after a visit to the island to meet friends. She was flown to Australia in August for treatment.

The man, who doesn't want to be named, said his sister was bleeding in the stomach and was likely to undergo surgery on Monday.

"Emotionally she has completely deteriorated. She needs her family," he said.

"She is not really OK. She is ... completely scared and worried ... because she is alone.

"Even for a normal girl when they have operation, the family is going to be beside [them] and supporting. How about a 23-year-old girl, brutally assaulted and raped, and two times tried to suicide."

Her family had earlier said she had been on a hunger strike since the alleged attack and had attempted suicide twice, including by drinking insecticide.

While in Nauru, the woman was reportedly kept in a separate compound away from her family after the alleged assault.

The brother said being separated from her mother and brother made the situation worse.

"I am worried that she will lose herself mentally," he said.

"Because we don't know what is happening for her mentally and physically, the pressure won't allow us to sleep for even one minute."

Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites spokeswoman Janet Galbraith said her family should be brought to Australia.

"Her mother and brother remain in Nauru and must be brought to Australia to be with her," Ms Galbraith said.

"[We] hold the Commonwealth government of Australia and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection responsible for the well-being of Nazanin's family on Nauru, should there be any repercussions because of their speaking out."

Greens' immigration spokesperson, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said she would write to Immigration Minister Paul Dutton asking him to bring the family to be at Nazanin's side.

"Nazanin's situation is extremely concerning," Ms Hanson-Young said. "With her condition deteriorating in such a serious way ... bringing her family to be with her is the very least we can do."

Ms Hanson-Young said Australia had a duty of care to the young woman and her family. "She came to Australia asking for safety and, instead of protecting her, the Abbott government dumped her in harm's way on Nauru.

"I have been speaking with the Immigration Department and have requested a visit with Nazanin as soon as possible."

The Minister of Immigration Peter Dutton had not responded before the paper went to press on Sunday evening.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/nauru-alleged-rape-victims-condition-deteriorates-20150906-gjgd3u.html>

18. Brother of alleged rape victim claims he was urinated on by guards in Nauru

The Age
September 9, 2015
Neelima Choahan

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has called on the government to investigate claims into the treatment of an asylum seeker in Nauru detention centre, after claims he was held without charge for more than 30 hours in a cell wet with urine.

The Australian government has said the allegations were a matter for the Nauru Police Force.

The Nauruan government has denied these claims.

The Iranian, who doesn't want to be named, has been held at the Nauru detention centre along with his mother and sister .

In May, his sister, Nazanin, was allegedly raped while on her way back to the detention centre after a visit to the island to meet friends.

The man, 21, has alleged that he was tortured in July following his sister's second attempt at taking her own life.

"I was under too much pressure ... I was begging them ... asking them to just let her see her," he said.

"...The Nauruan Police came and handcuffed me in front of my mother, [who] was screaming, crying ... and my sister was in the hospital.

"I was really shocked ... because of my crying and begging they want to send me to police station ... like a criminal."

The man said he was taken to a Nauru Police Station and then into a Nauruan prison where he was put in a cell.

"When I went to the cell, I could see some Nauruans ... from outside ... they urinate on the ground and the urine coming on my back."

He said he was forced to use his shirt to clean the cell, which was completely bare of any furniture, so he could lie on one side.

The asylum seeker said he had been afraid to speak up about the incident earlier due to fear of reprisal from the Nauru Police and the Australian government.

Senator Hanson-Young said the family had been torn apart and deeply traumatised by the Abbott government's cruelty.

"I am very worried about the safety of this young woman's brother who is still in the camp and being intimidated and targeted by local guards," she said.

"The harassment and bullying that he has reportedly been subjected to is extremely concerning. The Immigration Department must conduct a fully independent investigation into this young woman's rape and the subsequent treatment of her brother inside the centre."

Senator Hanson-Young said the Nauruan Police were in no way up to the job of conducting this investigation and keeping refugees on the island safe.

"I have sought a visit with this young woman in Brisbane and will be urging the government to bring this family back together in Australia."

A spokesman for the Minister of Immigration Peter Dutton said allegations regarding arrest and jail time in Nauru were a matter for the Nauru Police Force.

A spokesman for the the Nauru government denied the allegations and said they were "completely false".

Nazanin's lawyer, Maurice Blackburn principal Dimi Ioannou, who visited Nazanin on Tuesday at the Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane, also called on the government to allow the 23-year-old's family to be by her side in Australia.

Ms Ioannou said the asylum seeker was still traumatised.

"She feels very isolated and alone and is guarded by two guards 24-hours a day," Ms Ioannou said.

"The one thing that would improve her wellbeing is to have her mother and brother with her. That is her number one request.

"Having the support of loved ones is crucial to anyone who is sick and in hospital and we would urge the federal government to allow her family to be with her."

Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites spokeswoman Janet Galbraith said they held the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection responsible for the wellbeing of Nazanin's family on Nauru should there be any repercussions because of their speaking out.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/brother-of-alleged-rape-victim-claims-he-was-urinated-on-by-guards-in-nauru-20150908-gji03l.html>

19. Darwin asylum seeker with rectal bleeding had colonoscopy request ignored, partner says

ABC News Online

By Elliana Lawford

First posted Tue 8 Sep 2015, 4:14pm

Updated Tue 8 Sep 2015, 4:56pm

An asylum seeker at Darwin's immigration detention centre has had a colonoscopy request ignored despite suffering rectal bleeding, the man's partner has told the ABC.

Mohammed Nemati had the procedure booked when he was in detention at Victoria's Maribyrnong centre in July, but he was transferred to Wickham Point Detention Centre one day before the appointment.

Since then he has been told to wait indefinitely, Mr Nemati's partner, Australian resident Maree Johnson, told the ABC.

She said nurses were not taking his case seriously and she feared for his health and her own.

"Their medical health care and the care that they are giving to these people are Panadol and Nurofen," Ms Johnson said.

"That's it, that's the medical care.

"I actually called and was put through to a nurse who was rather rude. She told me, 'Well he's just going to have to wait'.

"I explained that he's been so sick and she said again 'he's just going to have to wait'.

"I'm sure any doctor would say that it is crucial to have an investigation and see what's happening. In Mohammed's case he's just been left."

Mr Nemati, who is from Iran, met Ms Johnson at a nightclub more than two years ago.

They planned to marry and had begun building a house together in country Victoria when Mr Nemati was placed in immigration detention on June 30. Three weeks later he was transferred to Darwin.

"All we wanted was a peaceful and simple life in the country," she said.

"I just want Mohammed to come home. I need him to come home."

Ms Johnson said she was concerned her partner's rectal bleeding was due to a history of hereditary bowel cancer.

"Bowel cancer runs in his family," she said. "His uncle and his cousin both recently had to have chemotherapy and bowel surgery."

Letters requesting ministerial intervention not answered

Ms Johnson suffers several mental disorders including bipolar affective disorder, social phobia and agoraphobia.

Since the detention of Mr Nemati, who was both her partner and carer, Ms Johnson said her health had begun to deteriorate rapidly.

"I've lost probably about eight kilos now," she said.

"I don't go out much. I just go to my mum's, a little bit of shopping, that's it ... I just stay home and I'm not sleeping.

"These people that are stuck in there, they're suffering, they really are ... I'm suffering here and this is my home."

Ms Johnson's psychiatrist has sent a number of letters to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection supporting Ms Johnson's application for ministerial intervention.

Ms Johnson said she was disappointed the letters had gone unanswered.

"There has been no acknowledgement whatsoever. His letters have just been ignored and totally disregarded," she said.

A spokeswoman for Darwin's Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (DASSAN) said that while she could not comment on individual cases, it was not uncommon for detainees to complain that their health was being ignored.

"It would happen on an almost weekly basis, if not more than once per week we would be told about people who are really concerned about their health care and whether their health care is being attended to," Natasha Blucher said.

She said it was not uncommon for people in detention to be moved before receiving long-awaited treatment.

"It is something that we are regularly told by asylum seekers ... so it seems to us that often operational concerns will come above people's health care in some cases," the spokeswoman said.

The Immigration Department declined to comment on the case but issued a statement about the level of health care available to detainees.

"All detainees have access to health care as needed while in detention. The standard of that health care is comparable to care available to the Australian community," a spokesman said in a statement.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-08/partner-of-asylum-seeker-claims-colonoscopy-request-ignored/6759198>

20. Refugee wants to quit Cambodia following Australia's controversial \$55 million deal

The Age
September 7, 2015 - 1:55AM
Lindsay Murdoch

One of four refugees sent to Cambodia in a \$55 million deal with Australia only three months ago wants to quit the impoverished nation.

Three others, an Iranian couple and Iranian man, have also complained about their lives in the capital Phnom Penh, sources say.

A 24-year-old ethnic Rohingya man from Myanmar has told Cambodian officials he wants to return to his homeland.

The decision is a blow to attempts by Australian immigration officials to convince hundreds of other refugees on the tiny Pacific island of Nauru that Cambodia is a promised land of opportunity with mosques, jobs, football and martial arts, no violent crime or even stray dogs.

Ian Rintoul, Sydney-based director of the Australian advocacy group Refugee Action Coalition, said the four refugees agreed to give up their hopes of reaching Australia and take a one-way ticket to Cambodia in the belief they would receive lump sum payments in excess of \$10,000.

"They all went with the idea that they would get the money that they were being told they would get and be able to go somewhere else," Mr Rintoul told Associated Press.

"The government has dribbled the money to them. They've been kept in a very isolated arrangement and there's been no prospect for them," he said.

Mr Rintoul said the Iranian couple never received enough money to "even subsist, let alone do anything with it."

"They complained bitterly that they were struggling to survive in Cambodia...the whole resettlement arrangement is going belly-up," he said.

Refugee agency sources in Phnom Penh confirmed to Fairfax Media that the four refugees have been unhappy despite living in an Australian-paid luxury villa and being promised training, help finding work, language tuition, health insurance and other benefits.

"Their movements are restricted...they want to live the way they were promised they would be allowed to," said one source who asked for anonymity.

Australia has spent a staggering \$15 million to resettle the four on top of \$40 million in additional development aid the Abbott government gave the regime of strongman Hun Sen for signing the controversial agreement at a champagne-sipping ceremony last year.

Cambodian Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak told Associated Press the Rohingya man had contacted the Myanmar embassy in Phnom Penh asking to return home.

He said he did not know the embassy's response.

Australia's Immigration Minister Peter Dutton last week downplayed comments made by Mr Khieu Sopheak that Cambodia does not have plans to accept any more refugees from Australia.

"I think the less we receive the better," Mr Khieu Sopheak had told the Cambodia Daily, prompting Mr Dutton, prime minister Tony Abbott and foreign minister Julie Bishop to defend the agreement.

In his latest comments Mr Khieu Sopheak said the agreement remains valid "but at the moment we want to see the first pilot refugees that have already arrived here integrate into our society before we accept newcomers."

The agreement gives Cambodia the right to decide how many refugees it accepts.

Mr Khieu Sopheak said the Rohingya man did not explain why he wanted to quit Cambodia but that his father had visited him recently and he may have sought to reunite his son with their family.

Myanmar's military-dominated government does not regard Rohingya as citizens, raising doubts the country will accept his return.

Tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled western Myanmar in recent months to escape persecution and denial of their basic rights.

The four refugees have not spoken publicly since arriving in Phnom Penh in June, shielded by officials from the International Organisation for Migration which received an undisclosed amount of money from Australia for taking care of the group.

The Abbott government has a policy not to comment publicly on the Cambodian operation that has been condemned by Cambodian opposition parties, human rights and refugee advocate groups and the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

Mr Rintoul, who has been a major source on Nauru refugees and asylum seekers, said Australian immigration officials stopped harassing people on Nauru to go to Cambodia a few weeks ago.

A shipping container on the island had been set-up as a "Cambodian Information Hub" where refugees and asylum seekers were told they should take-up the offer because they would not be allowed to live in Australia.

"There's no sign of anyone else on Nauru going to Cambodia," he said.

<http://www.theage.com.au/world/refugee-wants-to-quit-cambodia-following-australias-controversial-55million-deal-20150906-gjgg25.html>

21. One of four refugees sent to Cambodia under \$55m deal 'wants to go home'

Twenty-five-year-old Rohingya man has contacted Myanmar's embassy in Phnom Penh seeking permission to return, interior ministry official tells reporter

The Guardian
Ben Doherty and agencies
Monday 7 September 2015 12.23 AEST

One of only four refugees sent to Cambodia under Australia's \$55m deal to move refugees from Nauru to the south-east Asian country reportedly now wants to go home to Myanmar.

Speaking in Phnom Penh, a Cambodian interior ministry spokesman, Khieu Sopheak, told the Associated Press that the 25-year-old Rohingya man had contacted Myanmar's embassy in Cambodia seeking permission to be allowed to go home.

It is not known why the man wants to return home. The four refugees, who are housed in a villa in the Cambodian capital, are not free to speak to the media. But it is understood he was recently visited by his father, who may have encouraged him to reunite with his family.

The refugee's repatriation might be problematic, however. Myanmar does not recognise ethnic Rohingyans as citizens and may refuse him travel documents or permission to enter.

Muslim Rohingyans suffer intense persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, the country formerly known as Burma. They have been described as the “most persecuted people on earth”.

Rohingyans cannot move from their villages without permission, are refused access to education or to work in certain professions, and are subject to communal violence and attacks from security forces. The military-dominated Myanmar government has previously imposed a two-child limit on Rohingya couples.

The man who wants to go back to Myanmar has been formally recognised as a refugee, meaning he has established he has a “well-founded fear” of persecution in his home country.

Australia’s deal with Cambodia to resettle refugees sent from Australia to detention centre camps on Nauru has attracted fierce criticism. Human rights group such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty have argued that impoverished Cambodia, whose government faces a slew of human rights abuse allegations, is an unsuitable countries in which to resettle refugees.

“The Australian government is trying to pay Cambodia to take some refugees off its hands and its conscience,” said HRW’s Australia director, Elaine Pearson. “This isn’t a solution but rather a business deal at the expense of some very vulnerable people.”

In Australia, criticism has centred over the cost to taxpayers. Under the deal, signed last September by the then immigration minister, Scott Morrison, and Cambodia’s interior minister, Sar Kheng, Australia promised an additional \$40m in aid to the impoverished country as well as \$15.5m in resettlement, housing, education and integration costs for the refugees. The deal was not contingent on Cambodia taking a certain number of refugees.

Last week Sopheak said Cambodia did not want to take any more refugees beyond the four who had arrived in the country in June. “We don’t have any plans to import more refugees from Nauru to Cambodia,” he told the Cambodia Daily. “I think the fewer we receive the better.”

By phone, he clarified to the Associated Press that the agreement between the two countries to resettle refugees remains valid, “but at the moment we want to see the first pilot refugees that have already arrived here integrate into our society before we accept newcomers”.

The four refugees are living in the Phnom Penh villa at Australia’s expense. There is now no plan for them to move into community.

Australian ministers, including the prime minister, Tony Abbott, last week defended the agreement with Cambodia, saying it was ongoing and demonstrated “Cambodia’s readiness to be a good international citizen”.

The opposition’s immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, described the deal as an “expensive joke”.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/07/one-of-four-refugees-sent-to-cambodia-under-55m-deal-wants-to-go-home>