

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Monday, 12 September 2016

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ALL DAY EVENTS THIS WEEK in all Capital Cities: #NauruFiles Reading Vigils:

<http://lovemakesaway.org.au/event/naurufiles-reading-vigils/>

1. 'Demagogues and cheats': UN rights chief condemns Trump and Wilders
2. Bruce Haigh: White Prado brigade blocking Indigenous empowerment
3. Jane McAdam: We can resettle refugees in Australia and it's not just wishful thinking. This is how
4. The Saturday Paper: Madeline Gleeson on an end to offshore processing
5. John Martinkus, The Saturday Paper: Forbidden island
6. The Guardian: Inside Manus: life in detention – a photo essay
7. Naysir missed the boat ... and now he's being forced to miss his family
8. Michael Gordon: Time to end this latest cycle of inhumanity
9. 'My story is now 1,100 pages long': Manus refugees speak about their plight
10. Government told doctors to cut health care costs for refugees in onshore detention centres: report
11. Refugee boy who broke arm on Nauru has lost movement in his wrist and fingers, lawyer says
12. Australia criticised over 'hollow' promise to resettle 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees
13. Peter Dutton defends refugee lag, saying Australia's security checks better than Canada
14. Liberal MP says Australia's refugee program one of the world's best
15. Malcolm Turnbull thanks Nauruan President for 'combating people smuggling'
16. Human Rights Watch: What Nauru Is Hiding From Danish Lawmakers
17. Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen: Australia's offshore refugee processing is no inspiration. It deserves condemnation
18. Former Nauru president Sprent Dabwido blocked from coming to Australia for heart surgery
19. MP Andrew Wilkie says Nauru visa denial proves Australia 'has much to hide'

1. 'Demagogues and cheats': UN rights chief condemns Trump and Wilders

Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini delivers scathing rebuke, saying he fears 'colossal violence' if populists continue peddling 'half-truths, manipulations and fear'

The Guardian
Agence France-Presse
Tuesday 6 September 2016 14.51 AEST

The UN human rights chief has launched a scathing attack on populist politicians including Donald Trump and the Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders, calling for action to halt "demagogues and political fantasists".

Speaking in The Hague, Zeid Raad al-Husseini said he was a Muslim whose role was "to defend and promote the human rights of each individual, everywhere".

"And I am angry too. Because of Mr Wilders's lies and half-truths, manipulations and peddling of fear," Zeid told the inauguration of the Peace, Justice and Security Foundation in The Hague.

Zeid said he worked as a peacekeeper in the Balkans for 20 years and the cruelty he saw during the conflict "flowed from this same factory of deceit, bigotry and ethnic nationalism".

In August Wilders's Freedom party (PVV) launched its campaign platform ahead of March elections vowing to "close mosques, Islamic schools and ban the Qur'an" if elected. Zeid called the document "grotesque".

The PVV, which has been leading in opinion polls, also vowed to reverse the "Islamisation" of the Netherlands by closing borders, shutting asylum-seeker centres, banning immigrants from Muslim countries and stopping Muslim women wearing headscarves.

Zeid strongly criticised the PVV's proposals and said Wilders had much in common with the US Republican presidential hopeful Trump, Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orban, the French National Front leader Marine Le Pen and the leading Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage.

He said they had similarities to the ideology espoused by the Islamic State group.

"All seek in varying degrees to recover a past, halcyon and so pure in form, where sunlit fields are settled by peoples united by ethnicity or religion," Zeid told prominent members of the justice community.

"A past that most certainly, in reality, did not exist anywhere, ever."

Promises to recover such a past were "fiction; its merchants are cheats. Clever cheats," he said, accusing populist leaders of using "half-truths and oversimplification" to feed the fears of "anxious" individuals.

It was a simple formula "to make your target audience feel good by offering up what is a fantasy to them, but a horrendous injustice to others".

"I do not equate the actions of nationalist demagogues with those of Daesh, which are monstrous and sickening," Zeid said, using another name for Isis.

But the jihadists' methods of communication were "similar tactics to those of the populists", with both groups benefiting from the other to survive, he said.

"We must pull back from this trajectory," Zeid warned, adding that there was a risk "the atmosphere will become thick with hate" which could "descend rapidly into colossal violence".

Urging people to speak out and "draw the line", he asked: "Are we going to continue to stand by and watch this banalisation of bigotry?"

Reacting to Zeid's speech, Wilders in a text message to AFP said the Jordanian prince was "an utter fool".

"Another good reason to get rid of the UN," said the populist politician, calling again for the world to "de-Islamise".

"Islam and freedom are incompatible whatever this Jordanian bureaucrat says," Wilders said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/06/demagogues-and-cheats-un-human-rights-chief-condemns-trump-and-wilders>

2. Bruce Haigh: White Prado brigade blocking Indigenous empowerment

Canberra Times
September 2 2016
Bruce Haigh

Indigenous people are yet again asking to be empowered. Requesting government, ever so politely, to be given the power to shape their lives. It should not be a big ask, but it is.

Colonial paternalism is alive and well. Noblesse oblige still buzzes around inside some coiffured white middle-class heads. The "dear little black baby" syndrome still exerts some pull. But overriding all notions and motivations of duty on the part of bureaucrats, churches, non-government organisations, social and anthropological research institutions and business groups is the fixed belief that Aborigines cannot handle money.

All of the above will tell you that many Indigenous people have a propensity to burn it up, piss it up and give it away. Maybe they do, but then, when you treat people like children, they tend to behave like children. When you offer people no respect, they tend not to respect themselves. When you are racist, you tend to make people angry.

Now the white man with his burden may not believe him or herself to be racist, they may go out of their way not to be racist, they may suppress it in non-white company, but the person who is not white and middle class will pick it up in a flash. It's the condescension, it's the awkwardness, it's the body language, and it's the conversational tone. It's the inability to converse in any meaningful way, to get on the wave length. It's the lack of understanding of others lives, struggles and pain. Of course there are exceptions to the rule.

But Aborigines are not allowed to make mistakes with money, so they are quite often not allowed to manage it or even to have it. Never mind that less-than-paternalistic whites allowed to manage the money pinch it or rip it off with poor quality work in housing and other infrastructure. Some blacks have joined forces with the whites to steal and rip it off their brothers and sisters; that's what happens when you put a race of people in a metaphorical ghetto.

Not being allowed to make mistakes and not being cut any slack means that a lot of Aboriginal people are put in prison. For some young men it is a rite of passage; cruelly so, as we saw recently in NT. This has been backed by claims of widespread abuse of minors amounting to torture in Queensland by Amnesty International. Shame Australia.

Abuse of drugs and alcohol and each other is common in some Aboriginal communities. It always is among the dispossessed and marginalised. People behave badly when stripped of hope and denied respect. Working class East Newcastle in the late 1940s could be a cesspool on a Friday night. Booze, fights, the sound of breaking glass, women screaming, kids running, low pay and no hope. Aborigines don't behave badly because they are Aboriginal, although listening to John Howard and Adam Giles you would think so; they behave in relation to the way they have been treated from the time of white settlement until today.

So what about empowerment? Well it's not happening because an industry has developed around Aboriginal despair and hopelessness. It's now sustained by fleets of Prados and zealous white middle-class and middle-aged whites, who know what is best for the dispossessed. Funding policies are designed in Canberra and Sydney with scant regard to empowerment.

These projects are designed to rescue the natives from themselves, from breakfast programs to foster care, to housing, health and education, white public servants and NGO service providers know best. They know that Aboriginal children should not be taught in their own language and scant resources are spent on developing educational tools around language. Nor are kids and parents consulted on the most appropriate way of teaching. White teaching models are dumped on communities.

Millions of dollars are wasted on white superimposed programs, not least of all on salary packages. White, middle-class "social workers" and other "experts" are paid packages of between \$90,000 to \$150,000 to administer their paternalism. This allows them to maintain their white, middle-class status and standard of living and bolsters their sense of entitlement. Off duty, most do not mix with their "clients". They deliver and then desert.

Many if not most Indigenous people in remote communities want to continue to live there. Whites, who control the purse strings, say no. Most whites don't want to live in remote Aboriginal communities any longer than is necessary to see out generous contracts or collect the benefit of some housing or infrastructure scam. Of course there are exceptions, there always are.

Many Aboriginals are warehoused in prison. Of Australia's 24 million population, about 500,000 (3 per cent) are Aboriginal; but more than 28 per cent of the prison population is Aboriginal. The rate of incarceration is 2340 for every 100,000 of the Aboriginal population and probably higher. The national average is 200 for every 100,000. There are 38,000 people in detention in Australia, not counting refugees.

Aboriginal youths are imprisoned at a rate 24 times greater than white youths. In WA's Aboriginal population, one in 13 is in prison. Clearly the "programs" of the white Aboriginal industry are not working. The white industry exists to hand out money; accountability revolves around who has received the money rather than the long-term effectiveness of the handouts. It is easy to hand out money.

If just some of the money that is devolved to the white Prado brigade was directed to Aboriginal empowerment, some of the incarceration rates might begin to fall. With such a large proportion of the Aboriginal population in prison, the opportunity might be taken to run empowerment and education programs within prison, including with the partners, children and relatives who "camp" around the prisons. It would seem logical for such empowerment programs to be run by Aboriginals.

The white Prado brigade should be aiming to marginalise themselves out of work. If Aboriginal mentors had been within the walls of Don Dale prison in the Northern Territory, the children would not have been abused by the white prison officials.

---->>>> *Bruce Haigh is a retired diplomat and political commentator, who has worked in the Kimberley, Port Hedland and Broome.*

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/white-prado-brigade-blocking-indigenous-empowerment-20160902-gr7d91.html>

3. Jane McAdam: We can resettle refugees in Australia and it's not just wishful thinking. This is how

With some simple policy changes we could find a humane way forward, we could stop offshore detention and families would not be separated

The Guardian
Jane McAdam
Monday 5 September 2016 09.38 AEST

There are many sides to the refugee debate in Australia, but an overarching question is this: how can we create a more sustainable and humane policy that accords with international law?

I was challenged to identify a single intervention that could have this effect. It seemed a formidable task, but the answer is quite simple if we go back to first principles.

We could insert a legislative requirement that Australian law must be interpreted in good faith, in accordance with our responsibilities under international refugee law and international human rights law.

In most democratic countries, no one would blink at such a proposal. It simply reflects basic rules of international law. It's sobering that in Australia, a provision like this would be seen as radical.

Australia is the only country whose law explicitly says it is "irrelevant" whether or not our non-refoulement obligations are engaged when removing an asylum seeker. Indeed, under the Migration Act, an official's duty to remove such a person "arises irrespective of whether there has been an assessment, according to law, of Australia's non-refoulement obligations in respect of the non-citizen."

The principle of non-refoulement is the cornerstone of the international refugee regime. If there is one thing on which all states agree – even those that are not parties to the Refugee Convention – it is that this principle is sacrosanct. It prohibits the return of people to places where they risk being persecuted, tortured, subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or arbitrarily deprived of life.

This September, the principle will be reaffirmed unreservedly in the political declaration that world leaders will adopt at the UN secretary general's summit on refugees in New York.

To my knowledge, Australia is also the only country to have deleted all references to the refugee convention from its domestic law. Instead, it has replaced them with a "self-contained statutory framework" setting out Australia's own interpretation of its protection obligations under the refugee convention. International law makes clear that states do not have the right to auto-interpret their treaty obligations.

Basic rules of treaty interpretation state that a treaty must be interpreted in good faith, and in accordance with the ordinary meaning to be given to its terms in their context, and in the light of the treaty's object and purpose. Furthermore, asserting that a treaty obligation is inconsistent with domestic law provides no justification for breaching it.

If Australia did insert a legislative provision requiring a principled, good faith interpretation in accordance with international refugee law and international human rights law, our approach to asylum would necessarily change.

For a start, it would flip our focus towards the responsibility to provide protection, as part of a global cooperative effort, rather than deflecting those in need. It would mean that people seeking asylum would live among us in the Australian community, not in closed mandatory detention.

Offshore processing could not continue, and families would not be separated. Children's best interests would be a primary consideration in every decision affecting them. Refugees would be welcomed into Australian society quickly, resulting in

greater cultural, economic and social benefits over time. People would not be pushed back at sea without the opportunity to have their protection claim thoroughly examined and reviewed.

Principled, effective and transparent refugee status determination in Australia would be reinstated, with well-trained decision-makers, access to legal assistance, and robust independent merits and judicial review.

All this might sound like wishful thinking in today's political climate. But each element reflects a feasible past practice in Australian asylum policy.

By learning from history and effective practices, we could model "protection in action". In turn, we could help to grow the capacity for protection and assistance within our region. We would regain our international reputation as a welcoming country that respects human rights and the rule of law ... and we would also save a lot of money.

The drafters of the refugee convention – including Australia's representative – were well aware that refugee protection was not a way to short-circuit migration controls. In fact, the refugee regime requires the most stringent checks of all. But what they also recognised was that never again should the world bear witness to millions of people fleeing for safety and being turned away.

Refugees and other vulnerable migrants embark on dangerous land and sea journeys because there are no safe alternatives. Governments could rectify this situation, and save lives, with some simple policy changes – for instance, by creating humanitarian visas allowing travel to places of safety, by increasing resettlement, or by abolishing carrier sanctions that impose hefty fees on airlines that transport people without visas.

Acknowledging that forced migration will continue for as long as war, persecution and human rights violations continue, it is imperative that we adopt a policy that does the least damage to people who have been forced to leave their homes.

Our current approaches are not sustainable, fiscally responsible or protection-sensitive. We must develop and promote durable, legal and humane solutions for people in need of protection. A new Australian approach should not be considered a sign of weakness or a policy backflip, but rather a considered response to the legal and moral imperative to take a leading role in an area of acute global need.

---->>> *Professor Jane McAdam, director of the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW, was one of the speakers at Can we solve the asylum crisis?, a Guardian workshop, supported by Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas in Sydney*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/05/we-can-resettle-refugees-in-australia-and-its-not-just-wishful-thinking-this-is-how>

4. The Saturday Paper: Madeline Gleeson on an end to offshore processing

Lawyer and author Madeline Gleeson says there are positive elements in Australia's asylum-seeker policy, but a lack of political will to abide by the Refugee Convention.

The Saturday Paper
Karen Middleton
Sep 10, 2016

Karen Middleton: I wanted to start by asking you a big-picture question. In a perfect world, if you were allocated the job of designing Australia's refugee and asylum policy, what would you retain from the current policy and what would you change?

Madeline Gleeson: That's a great question. Often people go straight to "What would you change?" and don't take a moment to focus on the positives. What I would retain are the two things on which Australia really is a world leader. That is integration of people from other countries and other cultures, and the settlement services that we provide to refugees once they get to Australia. There is a lot that Australia can teach the world about these two things, and be a model – together with countries like Canada. In fact, efforts and programs that promote integration and settlement should be increased, and receive greater funding and support. Bringing people to safety is just the first step; the next important part is supporting them in establishing their new lives in Australia and promoting social cohesion once they are here. That's the positive, but apart from that there's not a lot I would retain. It probably comes as no surprise that as an international human rights lawyer, with a good understanding of the realities of displacement in this part of the world, I would propose an approach that brings what we are doing completely into line with international standards.

In terms of specifics about what should be changed: offshore processing needs to cease immediately. There is indisputable evidence of how damaging this policy is for men, women and children offshore. This evidence is also consistent, with little dispute about how destructive offshore processing is for the people who are in Australia's care. This practice needs to end, ideally in a matter of days or weeks from what I'm told by the people who are there.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2016/09/10/madeline-gleeson-end-offshore-processing/14734296003717>

5. John Martinkus, The Saturday Paper: Forbidden island

The Saturday Paper
Sep 10, 2016
John Martinkus

It was the mid-'90s when I started my career in journalism. The reports I would seek out and try to emulate were those from places, countries, regimes where journalists were kept out, banned, jailed, killed for trying to report. Back then it was countries such as Timor-Leste, West Papua, Myanmar that inspired me. Here were regimes trying to hide things at all costs. Occasionally some reporter would get through, usually by stealth, pretending to be a tourist, an English teacher, anything other than a journalist. They would come out with some footage or a report on the human rights abuses being carried out by secretive regimes. People such as British journalist Max Stahl, who filmed the Santa Cruz massacre of East Timorese by Indonesian troops in 1991, were doing work, I believed, that made a difference, righted wrongs and led to definitive changes in government policy for the better.

These were troubled places, run largely in secret by cruel regimes. They were black spots that seemed almost not to exist. Australia has become that place. We have our own black spots. We ban reporting. We threaten whistleblowers with jail. In these black spots, people die.

When I started in journalism, Australians weren't involved in the "war on terror". We were seen internationally as benign and neutral. We lectured other countries with a clean conscience, or so it seemed, and were perceived as a nation that respected human rights. I travelled abroad and found that Australia was regarded as a generally decent place: fair, egalitarian, multicultural. All those traits we still like to think apply to us as a people, as a nation, seemed to me as a young man reflected in how I was treated overseas.

But these past few weeks have been devastating for Australia's international reputation. First we had the release of more than 2000 "incident reports" from the detention centre on Nauru which, despite Australia's legal feints and obfuscation, is run by Australian companies and staffed by Australians. The reports document rapes, self-harm, suicide attempts and violent treatment of the 500 or so men, women and children held there indefinitely by the Australian government. The release was followed by denials and silence by the Turnbull government. Then Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young was denied permission to visit Nauru. Then a delegation of Danish parliamentarians was denied permission to visit Nauru. Then the independent MP from Tasmania, Andrew Wilkie, was denied permission to visit Nauru. Needless to say no journalists, Australian or otherwise, have been allowed to visit Nauru since the release of the documents. This is our black spot.

Just a day after being formally rejected for a visa to visit Nauru to inspect the conditions there, Andrew Wilkie talked to me about what he thought the government was trying to hide.

"The only conclusion I can draw is that the Australian government has something to hide," he said. "We already know that the forcible transfer of people to a third country and indefinite detention without trial are explicitly identified as crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute, and the Australian government is simply unable to hide that. But keeping people in inhuman conditions is also explicitly a criteria for such a crime under the statute and that is exactly what the government doesn't want the public to learn of."

I asked if this refusal was related to the Nauru files, published by The Guardian.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/topic/2016/09/10/forbidden-island/14734296003719>

6. The Guardian: Inside Manus: life in detention – a photo essay

The Australian-run detention centre on Manus Island is home to more than 800 asylum seekers who live in bleak conditions – fearing for their own safety and facing uncertain futures. Photographer Matthew Abbott visited the island and documented the lives of the refugees and asylum seekers he met, including the aftermath of a brutal attack

The Guardian
Photographs by Matthew Abbott ; words by Ben Doherty
Saturday 10 September 2016 08.00 AEST

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2016/sep/10/inside-manus-life-in-detention-a-photo-essay>

7. Naysar missed the boat ... and now he's being forced to miss his family

Sydney Morning Herald
Nick McKenzie, Richard Baker, Michael Gordon
September 10, 2016

In a cramped flat in Bankstown, the Ahmed children wait impatiently for the face of the father they have not kissed for three years to appear on a small computer screen.

The Skype rings out once. Then twice, and then again and again for almost an hour. But there is no sign of Naysar, 63, who has been detained without charge on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea for what seems like an eternity.

Naysar's wife stands silently in the room cluttered with toys and school books, her eyes lowered, waiting for a husband whose hand she last held in 2013.

Finally, the sing-song ring of an incoming call breaks the silence. Ahmed's lined face appears from Manus, one of the island's more than 900 asylum seekers who immigration minister Peter Dutton recently vowed will never set foot in Australia.

His eyes glisten as he absorbs the faces of his daughters and wife on an iPhone.

Suddenly, his seven-year-old son darts towards the screen, holding a pair of two-dollar sports socks bought as a Father's Day gift the previous week. He wields the socks proudly before the camera. They are still gift-wrapped in plastic.

Next, he brandishes a brown mug before the screen - last year's Father's Day gift. It, too, is still wrapped in plastic.

The seven-year-old then holds up a card he has carefully coloured in. "To the Best Dad Ever," says the cover. He haltingly reads aloud his primary school scrawl.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.smh.com.au/national/investigations/naysar-missed-the-boat--and-now-hes-being-forced-to-miss-his-family-20160909-grcodg.html>

8. Michael Gordon: Time to end this latest cycle of inhumanity

Canberra Times
Michael Gordon
September 9 2016 - 3:59PM

Albert Einstein is generally credited with asserting "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results".

Here's a definition of inhumanity: doing the same thing over and over when you know the damage you are doing to people's lives.

We know from the experience of the Pacific Solution that leaving people in limbo on Nauru without hope of being able to rebuild their lives makes them feel worthless, depressed and suicidal.

We know this because the last substantial group from that caseload, many of whom were refugees, was only resettled in Australia when the resident psychiatrist warned she would not be held responsible if they took their lives.

Now Paris Aristotle, the man who investigated the plight of this group back in 2005, has issued a similar warning about those who have been on Nauru and Manus Island. We also know about the damage done by separating refugee families, because this was also part of the Pacific Solution.

Back in 2003, it emerged that several men who had been recognised as refugees and granted protection visas had wives and children on Nauru who had arrived on separate boats in 2001. Just like now, the Australian government refused to bring them together, despite strong representations from the United Nations refugee agency, on the grounds that this would encourage people smuggling.

Just like now, those involved suffered depression so serious they could not function, whether they were families "free" in the Australian community or fathers and husbands on Nauru. The ordeal of the families only ended when New Zealand agreed to resettle the families, having already taken a sizeable portion of those who were rescued from their sinking boat by the Norwegian freighter, MV Tampa.

It didn't reignite the boat trade. Nor would ending the suffering of this group now.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/time-to-end-this-latest-cycle-of-inhumanity-20160909-grcx4a.html>

9. 'My story is now 1,100 pages long': Manus refugees speak about their plight

Getup and Human Rights Law Centre launch new campaign following visit to the facility, and publish statements of several of the men being held there

The Guardian
Paul Farrell
Saturday 10 September 2016 11.25 AEST

Refugees held on Manus Island as part of Australia's offshore detention regime have spoken out about their plight, as pressure grows on the government to resolve the impasse.

Getup and the Human Rights Law Centre on Saturday launched a new campaign following a recent visit to Manus Island to view the Australian-run detention and resettlement facilities.

The Manus Island detention centre is to shut down after it was found to be unlawful, although the timeline for this closure is uncertain. It remains unclear what will happen to the men found to be refugees and whether they will be resettled in Papua New Guinea or elsewhere.

The organisations have published the statements of several of the men held on Manus.

Imran Mohammad said: "I learned English by writing a page of my life story every single day. Each day I would take that page to a teacher in the camp to correct my mistakes. I have been here for three years, and my story is now over 1100 pages long."

Nayser Ahmed, who has a family that lives in Australia, said: "The thing I miss the most about my kids ... is sitting down for dinner together. Every night we would sit together and eat dinner together. That is important for a family. Every night here I think of that."

The Human Rights Law Centre's director of legal advocacy, Daniel Webb, interviewed the men held on Manus Island in person as part of the recent visit.

"I spent my time on Manus Island interviewing the men our government has warehoused there for the last three years. I met some truly amazing people. I met one man who speaks seven languages, two of which he taught himself while in detention. I met another guy who didn't speak a word of English when we first sent him to Manus but who has now written a book," he said.

"They are men of different ages, from different parts of the world and with different stories to tell. But what they all have in common is they are tired. After three years of fear, violence and limbo, they are completely exhausted. It's time to bring them here."

Webb's trip was not without incident. During his visit to the island, two refugees were attacked with machetes by a group of seven local men. Webb witnessed the aftermath of the assault along with freelance photojournalist Matthew Abbott. Police demanded that the photos taken by Abbott of the attack be erased.

Guardian Australia has published on Saturday a photoessay of Abbott's visit to the island.

Getup's human rights director, Shen Narayanasamy, urged the government to allow the men held on Manus to come to Australia.

"These men include engineers, poets, soccer players and cooks. They cut hair, they write books and they have dreams of being part of our community," she said. "They fled dangerous places in search of a better life, for safety, and it is time we allowed them to come to Australia."

Malcolm Turnbull's government is facing growing pressure over Australia's two remote offshore detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island.

Guardian Australia's publication of the Nauru files renewed attention to Australia's offshore detention facilities and the prolonged holding of the men, women and children held there.

The information disclosed in the 2000 incident reports published drew strong domestic and international condemnation.

The Labor party has also launched a push for a Senate inquiry, which is likely to succeed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/10/my-story-is-now-1100-pages-long-manus-refugees-speak-about-their-plight>

10. Government told doctors to cut health care costs for refugees in onshore detention centres: report

ABC News Online

By medical reporter Sophie Scott

First posted Fri 2 Sep 2016, 4:03am

Updated Fri 2 Sep 2016, 4:41am

An audit of the medical services in Australia's onshore detention centres has revealed the Government asked operators to reduce the costs of treating asylum seekers.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report examined the delivery of health care services in immigration detention.

"In December 2013, when planning for the re-tendering of the health service contract, the Government indicated, through a letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, its expectation that the total costs and the cost per detainee would be lower in the new contract," the report said.

The department instituted a number of cost saving measures including determining "a fixed fee to cover all services and activities necessary to meet the health care needs of detainees".

"Any additional service requests would only be used in exceptional circumstances," ANAO's report said.

It said the approach was aimed at reducing the risk of "over-servicing".

The report found a high number of asylum seekers were at high risk of self harm or suicide, leading them to be placed "under supportive monitoring and engagement".

More than 407 detainees were judged as at high or imminent risk of suicide or self harm between February 1 and November 9, 2015.

Contractor failed to deliver health services 'to an accepted standard'

At May 2016, there were 1,570 detainees in onshore detention and 658 in community detention.

ANAO found the Department could improve its administration of health services by better monitoring of the "quality of the health services that are being delivered and key areas of health service delivery risk (such as services to detainees with mental health conditions)".

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) was selected to deliver health care services in held and community detention after a tender process in 2014.

But there were concerns raised about "alleged improper conduct by the contractor (IHMS) relating to the provision of health services", the audit report said.

The report said an external review commissioned by the department found the contractor at the time (IHMS) was "failing to deliver health services to an accepted standard, which could impact on the health outcomes of detainees".

The current contract is valued at \$438 million over the five-year contract period from December 11, 2014 to December 10, 2019.

The ANAO report made a number of recommendations including that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection strengthen its monitoring practices to ensure the effective delivery of health services in onshore detention.

It also recommended that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection analyse complaint and incident reports data about health services to "inform management and operational decision-making".

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection agreed to both recommendations.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-02/government-told-doctors-to-cut-health-costs-for-refugees/7807034>

11. Refugee boy who broke arm on Nauru has lost movement in his wrist and fingers, lawyer says

ABC News Online

Posted Sat 10 Sep 2016, 10:10am

The lawyer for a 12-year-old refugee boy who suffered a broken arm at the Nauru detention centre last year says his client needs urgent medical treatment.

The child, who lived in the Nauru community outside of the detention centre, after his family were granted refugee status, underwent surgery to insert plates into his arm after he fell off his bike in May 2015.

But his lawyer George Newhouse said he was given no post operative care and had now lost movement in his wrist and fingers.

"That is the most astounding situation, when all we have is a fracture."

Mr Newhouse said Immigration Minister Peter Dutton urgently needed to intervene, to give the boy and his family some comfort.

"They weren't asking to come to Australia for treatment," he said.

"They were in Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby, all they wanted was a doctor to care for them in Port Moresby.

"That was the reason they were taken there, and they didn't get any treatment after months and months of waiting."

In June last year the boy's mother said immigration officials had told her Australia had agreed to send doctors to provide treatment, but she did not want the surgery to be carried out at Nauru Hospital because it was poorly equipped and had unsanitary conditions.

"They will send a team from Australia, but I repeat: I was made angry because I know Nauru Hospital is not qualified to do operation on my son's arm," she said.

At the time Mr Dutton told 2GB radio there were medical services available in Nauru.

"The Nauruan Government obviously has the system up there to provide people with support that need it when it comes to medical attention," he said.

Mr Dutton has been contacted for comment.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-10/refugee-boy-broke-arm-nauru-wrist-fingers-care-lawyer-says/7833134>

12. Australia criticised over 'hollow' promise to resettle 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees

Leading humanitarian groups say government's dilatory response to Syrian crisis 'incomprehensible' given fewer than 2,000 have arrived in the country

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Thursday 8 September 2016 16.39 AEST

Australia's promise to settle 12,000 refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq appears "hollow" after a year when fewer than 2,000 have reached the country, six of Australia's leading humanitarian organisations have said.

World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children, Plan International, Care and Amnesty International have condemned Australia's dilatory response to the Syrian crisis as "incomprehensible", and called on the government to resettle all the promised 12,000 by the end of March 2017.

Friday marks one year since then prime minister Tony Abbott committed Australia to resettling 12,000 refugee from the Syrian and Iraq conflict, saying "our officials will work with the UNHCR to resettle the refugees as soon as possible".

Since then, Australia has resettled fewer than 2,000 refugees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, while the US and Canada have resettled more than 10,000 and 30,000 respectively. Canada's government runs a website, tagged #Welcome Refugees, which gives progress updates.

Australian immigration department sources have told the Guardian there has been a recent rise in refugee processing, but that the process remains mired in bureaucratic delays, mainly around identity and security checks.

The World Vision Australia chief executive Tim Costello said it was incomprehensible Australia had been able to resettle only a fraction of the special intake.

“When Tony Abbott promised to take 12,000 more refugees, he said it would reflect ‘Australia’s proud history as a country with a generous heart’,” Costello said. “But there is a point at which a promise begins to look hollow when it is not honoured, and Australia has reached that point.”

The conflict across Syria and Iraq is producing the largest number of forcibly displaced in the world at present. Nearly 12 million Syrians are either internally displaced, asylum seekers, or refugees. Neighbouring countries Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon are hosting the vast majority of those forced out by the five-year-old internecine conflict.

The Plan International Australia chief executive officer Ian Wishart said the world was in the middle of one of the largest refugee crises in living memory.

“In Syria, half the pre-conflict population of 22 million Syrians have fled their homes in the past five years and more than 13.5 million people are in need of help. Australia needs to shoulder its fair share of the global responsibility for refugees.”

Eighty-six percent of the world’s refugees are hosted by developing countries, usually near to their country of origin. The chief executive of Oxfam Australia, Helen Szoke, said Australia’s efforts lagged well behind even those of other wealthy nations.

“Canada completed security checks and settled 25,000 people in just four months. We know millions of ordinary men, women and children have been forced to flee their homes in a desperate search for protection and are in dire need of assistance. We urgently need to help as many as we can,” said Szoke.

Abbott announced the additional 12,000 resettlement places on 9 September 2015, saying Australia’s was a “generous, prudent and proportionate response by a decent and compassionate nation”.

Abbott said the refugees would be selected from those “most in need” and all would undergo normal security, health and character checks before being resettled in Australia and offered permanent protection.

The 12,000 would be in addition to Australia’s annual humanitarian intake of 13,750. No timeframe was put on the resettlement.

A senior department source told the Guardian last week the figure was “starting to pick up but it’s still only about 2,000”. The majority of that figure are understood to have arrived in the past six weeks.

The immigration minister and his department both declined to answer questions. However, the NSW coordinator general for refugee resettlement, Peter Shergold, told the Guardian in a recent interview: “We’re working on basis that most of those 12,000 will arrive this year. We expect 6,000 of those 12,000 to come to NSW.”

Criticism of Australia’s resettlement efforts means Australia approaches two major global fora on refugees with its hardline asylum policies under unprecedented international pressure.

In April, the Papua New Guinea supreme court ruled the Manus Island offshore detention centre was “illegal and unconstitutional”, a finding accepted by the PNG government which promised to shut the centre down.

And in August, the Guardian published the Nauru Files: more than 2,000 leaked incident reports from within the detention centre on that island that show systemic violence and sexual abuse, including by guards; catastrophic rates of mental illness; regular downgrading and manipulating of reports; and almost daily instances of self-harm and suicide attempts.

On 19 September, the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-Moon, will host a summit in New York “addressing large movements of refugees and migrants”. A draft declaration document from the summit has already been widely circulated – and widely condemned – for its failure to commit countries to concrete actions to make refugees’ journeys better or safer.

The day after Ban’s summit, the US president, Barack Obama, will host his own “leaders’ summit”, also in New York. But, unlike the UN event, the US summit has been billed as a “pay-to-play” summit, with Obama offering invitations only to countries who indicate in advance they are prepared to make concrete commitments to accept more refugees.

The Guardian understands Australia has been invited but has not yet formally accepted.

A further commitment to resettle more refugees from Middle East conflict zones has been mooted as a possible commitment from Australia, but it is understood a final decision has not been made.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/08/australia-criticised-over-hollow-promise-to-resettle-12000-syrian-and-iraqi-refugees>

13. Peter Dutton defends refugee lag, saying Australia's security checks better than Canada

Immigration minister excuses his department after humanitarian groups criticise Australia for only settling 3,532 of pledged 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Friday 9 September 2016 13.44 AEST

Peter Dutton has excused his department's slow processing of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, suggesting other faster countries were not taking the same security precautions.

Australia has been criticised for only settling 3,532 people after former prime minister Tony Abbott pledged one year ago to take in 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children, Plan International, Care and Amnesty International labelled the delay "incomprehensible" and called for the full 12,000 to be settled by March next year.

However the immigration minister said on Friday he could not commit to a firm deadline, and defended the inaction of the Australian government when asked how Canada was able to settle more than 30,000.

"Canada has a very different approach to the security checks they're conducting," Dutton told ABC radio.

"The scrutiny that we apply is greater than Canada there's no question about that ... because we want to make sure we aren't bringing people into the country that would seek to do us harm."

When asked if he was suggesting that Canada was letting in potentially dangerous people, Dutton said he couldn't comment because he didn't know the details about Canada's program.

The Canadian government settled 25,000 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and 29 February 2016, and has pledged to "make every effort" to finalise all privately sponsored applications received before April this year, by early 2017 at the latest.

On a dedicated website, the Canadian government says its security screening process includes checks of immigration, law enforcement and security databases, interviews, as well as biometric and biographic collection.

In May the Canadian government increased its overseas staff levels to continue processing applications, with the bulk operating in Beirut.

"Syrian refugees who are accepted for resettlement are expected to arrive in Canada within three to six months of their interview," the website said.

"Cases with complications arising from a need for additional security or medical screening will take additional time for the visa officer to be satisfied that there are no security or medical concerns."

The Australian process has sped up recently – more than 1,600 have been settled in Australia in the past month.

On Thursday Dutton's office sent out a media release stating more than 6,600 visas had been issued out of the 12,000 commitment, and another 6,293 had been interviewed but were still awaiting health and security checks.

"The government's prime responsibility is to protect the Australian community and Australians would understand that these checks must be carried out in the current global security environment," said Dutton in the release.

"As a government we made it clear at the outset this special intake would take time to fulfil, that processing would be thorough, that there would be no shortcuts."

Dutton's office has been contacted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/09/peter-dutton-defends-refugee-lag-saying-australias-security-checks-better-than-canada>

14. Liberal MP says Australia's refugee program one of the world's best

Jason Falinski says he won't let anyone attack the country's system, after growing criticism over delay in resettling Syrian and Iraqi refugees

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Saturday 10 September 2016 14.13 AEST

The Liberal MP Jason Falinski says he won't let "anyone criticise Australia's refugee program", amid a growing chorus of international and domestic criticism over Australia's slow resettlement of Syrian refugees.

The former prime minister Tony Abbott pledged to take 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2015, in a move that was at the time lauded as a significant improvement in Australia's humanitarian intake.

But the Australian government has now come under sustained criticism over breaking this promise – only 3,632 people have been resettled.

On Saturday, Falinski grew defensive on ABC TV after the New South Wales Greens MP David Shoebridge pointed to the criticism by World Vision, the United Nations and other groups, of Australia's failure to resettle the Syrian refugees it had committed to take in.

"I'm not going to let anyone criticise Australia's refugee program. It is one of the best in the world, the most generous. The criticisms you are making are broad-based," Falinski said.

"Are you telling us we don't have one of the most generous refugee programs in the world? Are you telling me the Australian community isn't one of the most generous communities in the world?"

Shoebridge pointed to Canada's fast processing of Syrian asylum seekers and its substantial commitment compared with Australia, and said Malcolm Turnbull's government had showed "a lack of political will" to resettle them.

"The people on the ground are saying Australia has been dragging the chain. They point to Canada. Canada has enormous integrity in its intake system. It's processed almost 10 times as many refugees in the same time as Australia," he said.

"A generous promise is great. But we want generosity on the ground. We need to bring them here."

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has also defended the program, claiming that "the scrutiny that we apply is greater than Canada".

The global response to the growing migration crisis around the world is likely to come under further scrutiny later in September, with the US president, Barack Obama, hosting a migration summit in the middle of the United Nations general assembly.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/10/liberal-mp-says-australias-refugee-program-one-of-the-worlds-best>

15. Malcolm Turnbull thanks Nauruan President for 'combating people smuggling'

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

Posted Fri 9 Sep 2016, 5:33pm

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has thanked the Nauruan President for his country's "ongoing support" regarding asylum seekers, three days after the island nation refused to grant a visa to an Australian MP.

Mr Turnbull met with President Baron Waqa today on the sidelines of the Pacific Islands Forum in Micronesia.

The meeting between the pair follows a decision by the Nauruan Government to refuse a visa to crossbench MP Andrew Wilkie, who had planned to visit the immigration detention centre on the island.

Mr Turnbull used the meeting to thank President Waqa for his Government's support regarding the centre, which has been in use since it was reopened by the Gillard government in 2012.

"It's very, really, very much appreciated and saving many, many lives too. That is the critical thing."

According to the latest statistics from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 411 people were counted as living in the Nauruan centre.

The statistics, dated July 31, included 49 children.

Mr Wilkie was refused a visa on Tuesday, less than a week after Danish politicians were also blocked from accessing the island.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young was also denied a visa earlier this year, after being spied on while visiting the centre in 2013.

Mr Wilkie said the public had "a right to know what goes on" in the centre and took aim at the Turnbull Government for not supporting his attempted trip.

In an earlier statement, Mr Wilkie cited the reports surrounding the thousands of leaked files alleging abuse of children and adults in Nauru's offshore immigration centre.

The reports prompted a motion from Labor, whose motion to appoint an Independent Children's Advocate passed the Senate last week — 35 votes to 33.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-09/turnbull-thanks-nauruan-president-for-'combating-smuggling'/7832466>

16. Human Rights Watch: What Nauru Is Hiding From Danish Lawmakers

Australia's Offshore Refugee Processing Center Is No Model for Europe

Human Rights Watch
August 31, 2016 3:37PM EDT
Michael Garcia Bochenek
Senior Counsel, Children's Rights Division

True to form, this week Nauru abruptly canceled the visas of three out of six Danish lawmakers shortly before they were to visit the tiny Pacific island nation and examine Australia's offshore refugee processing operations there.

Two of the three parliamentarians, Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen and Jacob Mark, have publicly criticized Australia's refugee operations on Nauru and on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island. The third, Naser Khader, has not commented on Australia's refugee policy but told the Sydney Morning Herald he believed the Nauruan government banned him because of his background. He was born in Syria, the homeland of many of the refugees.

Access to the island is severely restricted – Nauru has issued visas to only two journalists in the last three years, and just last week turned down a visa request from an Australian senator, Sarah Hanson-Young.

The Danish lawmakers' visit was controversial in Denmark and Australia because one member of the delegation, Martin Henriksen, has stated that Australia's offshore detention regime is "an interesting model" that could be replicated in Europe. Henriksen's visa was not canceled. He could have gone ahead with the visit, but he and the other delegation members agreed that no one would travel to Nauru unless the full delegation was able to.

That's the right call.

If the visit had gone ahead, the lawmakers would likely have struggled to conduct a credible investigation. In evaluating a detention setting, it's all too easy to see only what you're shown instead of working to uncover the real story. To get a complete picture, the delegation would have had to fact-check claims by Australian and Nauruan authorities. They would have had to assess the island's medical care facilities, evaluate mental well-being, and examine whether the authorities investigate and prosecute assaults and other alleged crimes against the refugees. Importantly, they would have needed to talk in private settings to the people detained there.

Nauru's actions tell the lawmakers that it has something to hide. As I saw when I spent seven days on the island for a joint Human Rights Watch/Amnesty International report, refugees and asylum seekers are routinely neglected by service providers hired by the Australian government. They have frequently been assaulted by local Nauruans, who go unpunished. They endure unnecessary delays and at times denial of medical care for even life-threatening conditions. Many have dire mental health problems and suffer overwhelming despair, with frequent self-harm and suicide attempts. The Guardian newspaper found similar evidence of abuse.

In the end, the Danish delegation may have learned more about Australia's extraordinarily abusive offshore detention regime than if they had made it to Nauru. And that it is certainly no model for Europe.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/31/what-nauru-hiding-danish-lawmakers>

17. Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen: Australia's offshore refugee processing is no inspiration. It deserves condemnation

I was denied access to Nauru because of my criticism of Australia's offshore detention centres there. The secrecy around the camps calls for international attention

The Guardian

Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen

Wednesday 7 September 2016 06.30 AEST

On 27 August, six Danish MPs boarded an aeroplane in Copenhagen. Our intention was to visit Australia and the tiny Pacific island state of Nauru – a country that depends on the money it receives for hosting the internationally-criticised Australian offshore detention centre for asylum seekers.

The delegation consisted of MPs from six different political parties with different views on the Australian offshore asylum model. The nationalist Danish People's Party has for many years argued in favour of a similar model in Denmark. They suggest the deportation of refugees to a Danish military base in Greenland. I, on the other hand, had sharply criticised the Australian camps in Danish and international media. The governing party in Denmark has been lying low, but the minister for integration, who was originally going on the trip, has indicated that inspiration could be sought in Australia.

On 29 August – just over 24 hours after arriving in Australia – we received a disheartening piece of information. Three MPs were denied access by the government of Nauru, which didn't even try to hide the reason. Government representatives openly said to the chairman of the delegation and to the Danish embassy that critics were not welcome.

Nauru is an extremely poor country facing serious democratic challenges. Law professor and president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, has been denied a visa. Very few journalists have been granted access to the camps.

I repeatedly tried to get an answer to the question: who has the legal responsibility for the refugees on Nauru?

It is, however, quite disturbing that Australia operates refugee camps on these conditions. During our visit to Canberra we met UNHCR representative Thomas Albrecht. He told us that after 30 years of working with refugees he expected that nothing could shock him. But on Nauru he saw greater hopelessness than anywhere else. He told us of his shocking encounter with a girl of about eight years old – the same age as his grandchild. He had asked her name. "EZBO7," she replied. "No, what is your name," he insisted. "EZBO7". He told us about children that had stopped playing and about self-harm and attempted suicide even among pre-teenagers.

During our Australian visit, I repeatedly tried to get an answer to the question: who has the legal responsibility for the refugees on Nauru, in light of the Nauru files? I have asked high-ranking representatives of the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection and assistant minister, Alex Hawke. After asking for a whole week I still haven't got a clear answer. In the Nauru files, we can read about a great number of incidents where children were abused. The Danish delegation hasn't been able to get an answer to the question whether even one single incident has been investigated by police or led to a verdict in court.

The vast majority of the asylum seekers who have been sent to Nauru and Manus Island have been recognised as refugees according to the UN Refugee Convention. They are supposed to be under protection and they will be at risk if they are sent home. But where can they go? After 10 years, their residence permit on Nauru will expire. What's next? This question also remains unanswered.

As a European I wondered how this can take place within the framework of international law. Prof Triggs gave me the answer. As opposed to Europe, where almost all countries are part of the European Convention on Human Rights (and its court), there is, in Australia, no authority with legal powers to stop human rights violations. UN committees may express criticism, but they can't enforce the rules.

In Europe, we also have an ongoing debate on how to handle people who flee their countries. And rightwing politicians, not only in Denmark, praise the Australian model. If I were to even go near considering the concept of regional processing centres for asylum seekers, I would need good answers to these questions: how will you ensure that conditions in these centres live up to human rights and to the UN Refugee Convention? And how do you ensure a realistic perspective for resettlement?

The Australian camps are certainly no source of inspiration. On the contrary. The secrecy in itself and the undefinable legal responsibility call for a massive international condemnation.

---->>>> *Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen is a member of the Danish parliament for the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten).*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/07/australias-offshore-refugee-processing-is-no-inspiration-it-deserves-condemnation>

18. Former Nauru president Sprent Dabwido blocked from coming to Australia for heart surgery

Canberra Times
September 5 2016 - 4:33PM
Tom McIlroy

Sprent Dabwido was ready to board a plane at Nauru's modest international airport on Friday when he was greeted by security officials bearing bad news.

Mr Dabwido, the island nation's former president, has a range of serious health problems and was on his way to Australia for potentially life-saving medical treatment after having a heart attack in jail last year. The senior opposition figure was among a group of politicians arrested outside the Parliament during a democracy protest in June 2015.

Just two days after Nauru's Supreme Court had ruled the opposition figure should be allowed to travel to Brisbane, Mr Dabwido was told his passport had been cancelled by Nauru's controversial Justice Minister, David Adeang.

Supreme Court Judge Mohammed Shafiullah Khan heard last week that doctors had advised Mr Dabwido's heart condition needed "overseas referral" due to a lack of local services on Nauru.

Even Nauru's Director of Public Prosecutions had agreed treatment in Australia was the only option.

But police and immigration officials at the airport had other ideas.

Fairfax Media has obtained a document signed by Mr Adeang on August 16 cancelling 20 passports, including those of former MPs Squire Jeremiah and Matthew Batsiua and others involved in the protests.

Time could prove critical for Mr Dabwido. Doctors warned in early August his condition was worsening, including a blockage to his heart.

Tests in Australia were expected to find the blockage before he could undergo surgery and be back in Nauru by September 29, as required by the judge's order.

The Nauru government has been contacted for comment.

On Monday, Mr Dabwido took his case to the the Nauru District Court but a judge said he needed to apply for the cancelled passport to be reinstated rather than ask for a new one.

"When they cancelled my passport, I asked the director of immigration 'what will put my bum on the seat of a plane?' They said I needed new travel documents," he said from outside the hearing.

"I have been fighting for the passport. There is a basic constitutional right to freedom of movement and I have enjoyed that since I was a toddler.

"The doctors have told me I could die if I don't have treatment. I have had two strokes where my heart has really slowed down or I have collapsed."

Lawyers are considering their next moves.

The case isn't the first of its kind in Nauru. In 2015 the Nauru government tried to block former opposition MP Roland Kun from leaving the island to be with his family.

Mr Kun was eventually granted New Zealand citizenship and a new passport on humanitarian grounds.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/former-nauru-president-sprent-dabwido-blocked-from-coming-to-australia-for-heart-surgery-20160905-gr8y5e.html>

19. MP Andrew Wilkie says Nauru visa denial proves Australia 'has much to hide'

Independent MP says 'only conclusion' is that the government doesn't want truth about detention regime to come out

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Tuesday 6 September 2016 14.32 AEST

Nauru's secrecy over the Australian-run immigration detention centre on its island continues to deepen, with the independent parliamentarian Andrew Wilkie denied a visa to the country.

“The Nauru government’s official refusal of my request for a visa to visit the Nauru detention centre confirms that the Australian government has much to hide,” the member for Denison said.

“The only conclusion that can be drawn from not allowing a sitting member of the federal parliament to visit is that the Australian government doesn’t want the truth coming out.”

He joins the Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young and three Danish politicians in being refused a visa to visit the tiny Pacific nation this year, because of sensitivities over alleged systemic abuses within the detention camp.

Nauru has long shied from independent scrutiny of the offshore processing centre. Foreign journalists – save for specially selected acquiescent reports – are refused permission to even apply for a visa.

The United Nations refugees agency, the UNHCR, is permitted to visit the country but human rights groups such as Amnesty and Human Rights Watch are routinely denied.

Hanson-Young was previously granted a visa in 2013 but was spied on by Wilson guards, a secret surveillance operation initially denied by the company but later admitted.

Wilkie rejected the Australian government’s argument that such visas were a matter for Nauru – a sovereign nation. He said the Australian people had a right to know what was being done with their money and in their name.

“Last week prime minister Malcolm Turnbull advised me that visiting Nauru is entirely a matter for the Nauru government,” he said. “But let’s be clear – this is entirely down to the Australian government because we all know that Nauru does exactly what Australia tells it to. Prime minister Malcolm Turnbull could facilitate an official visit tomorrow if he wanted to. To claim otherwise is misleading and fanciful.

“The recent leaking of thousands of accounts of incidents has re-energised public concern with offshore processing and the government is desperately scrambling to avoid any further scrutiny.”

Calls to the Nauruan government by the Guardian have not been returned.

However, the government said last month on social media: “Government won’t comment on individual visa applications but like Australia reserves right to disallow entry to those who incite violence or hatred in or against Nauru or otherwise considered unwelcome and/or deemed contrary to the national interest”.

Last month, the Guardian published the Nauru files, more than 2,000 leaked incident reports from the island that reported systemic abuse of children, sexual violence against women and children, and massive rates of self-harm and suicide attempts among refugees.

In the wake of the Nauru files, Australia’s offshore detention regime has come under unprecedented pressure. Labor, the Greens and crossbench senators have promised to support a new Senate inquiry into conditions in the offshore camps and the PNG supreme court has ordered the Manus Island centre to close, ruling it “unconstitutional and illegal”.

The pre-eminent adviser to successive Australian governments – both Labor and Coalition – on asylum policy for more than two decades, Paris Aristotle, has said the current offshore arrangements have failed and that people held on Nauru and Manus Island needed a “decent solution” quickly.

Aristotle, along with Michael L’Estrange and Sir Angus Houston, sat on the 2012 expert panel on asylum seekers that recommended to the Gillard Labor government the re-opening of offshore detention camps on Nauru and Manus as part of a “comprehensive regional network”.

He said offshore processing was never meant to become an arbitrary or indefinite detention and that asylum seekers and refugees were never meant to be used as “human shields” to prevent other people making boat journeys.

“We need to find a decent outcome for these people,” Aristotle told the Guardian from Malaysia.

“The people on Manus Island and Nauru now need to be given a pathway to a resettlement that is decent, in a country where the services exist to support them, where they will be able to work and to go to school and to restart their lives. For these people, it’s been too long.”

Aristotle said that if the government would not countenance – as it appears resolute to – resettling refugees from Manus and Nauru in Australia it should negotiate with suitable countries around the world.

“The situation is critical and these people are desperate. If these people are not given hope soon, if they can’t see that this is leading to an outcome that is decent, we will see more and more people attempting to harm themselves, and attempting to kill themselves.”

Aristotle said recommendations of the 2012 expert panel report had not been fully or properly adopted – including those to increase Australia’s humanitarian intake to 27,000 (currently 13,750) and pursue stronger co-operative agreements with countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

The panel report said processing on Manus and Nauru should be re-established but only for short-term purposes and expressly stated there should be “no arbitrary detention”.

He said neither PNG nor Manus Island could be made a suitable place for refugees to be settled.

Aristotle said the offshore regional processing arrangements could be retained but only if the arrangements could guarantee fair and humane treatment, and were used as short-term contingencies for future irregular migration flows.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/06/mp-andrew-wilkie-says-nauru-visa-denial-proves-australia-has-much-to-hide>