

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 5 February 2017

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1. Yassmin Abdel-Magied: I broke bread with Malcolm Turnbull. Now he's breaking my heart

Malcolm Turnbull claims to be committed to multiculturalism but his failure to condemn Donald Trump's discriminatory travel ban tells another story

The Guardian

Yassmin Abdel-Magied

Friday 3 February 2017 11.34 AEDT

Malcolm Turnbull is breaking my heart. Why are all citizens equal, but some are more equal than others?

It was only a few months ago that we broke bread together. He talked about how much he valued the Muslim community. I was so proud of what I hoped were changes in the attitude of the the Australian government – it was the first ever Iftar (which is the breaking fast meal during Ramadan) held at Kirribilli House – that I wrote an article supporting the event following criticism it received in the press.

I had thought there was real potential we could be welcoming a prime minister who valued us as equal citizens in this country, despite all the global hatred and rhetoric. I looked forward to this country being led by someone who cared. Perhaps, I naively thought, we would see a changed approach to the threats of terrorism, a change of approach to processing refugees and asylum seekers and maybe (with my fingers really crossed), we Muslims might soon start to feel truly equal in this country.

But it wasn't to be, was it?

I have sought to have empathy for Turnbull's position. The man, caught between numerous boulders and many a hard place, doesn't seem like he has much room to turn. He seems stuck trying to please everyone, and in doing so pleasing no one and allowing the marginalised in this country to bear the brunt of his dithering.

And for what? To allow the allies we so dearly dedicate ourselves to an opportunity to shut us down and humiliate us? It's embarrassing. The Australian government seems to think our historic alliance and tacit support of the xenophobic policies of the United States is the best option for our national interests – but I beg to differ. These are policies and positions that have been proven time and time again to make countries less safe and to play right into the hands of those we are all trying to fight. What will it take for one of our leaders to show values-based leadership and to live the principles we claim to build our country on?

"Our commitment to multiculturalism and a non-discriminatory immigration system is well known," Turnbull said a few days ago.

If multiculturalism means we can all get great Vietnamese, Turkish and Brazilian food all within a few blocks of each other, sure. If it means we will all know to say "Happy lunar year!" to a colleague, I'll agree with the prime minister. If it means that someone like me, a Sudanese-born Muslim woman, can be sent to countries overseas as part of a Dfat-funded public diplomacy program to show people that "not all Australians are white" (or racist, as I am constantly asked) then I can see where that statement comes from.

But that's not really what being committed looks like.

Being committed looks like not "supporting" a ban that discriminates based on birth country and faith, because we value inclusivity, and we want to heed the lessons of history.

Being committed looks like not continuing to support terrorism laws that are not-so-subtly aimed at young Muslims, and are shown to further marginalise young people. Being committed looks, sounds and feels like not violating the refugee convention by indefinitely locking up those seeking asylum. I thought we had boundless plains to share? (Boundless plains, mind you, that aren't even ours.)

The irony is that last year the federal government funded me to travel to Sudan – one of the countries on Trump's banned list – with the Australian embassy in Cairo, which is also accredited to Sudan. We reached out to universities, non-for-profit organisations and entrepreneurs. I waxed lyrical about the benefits of Australia, the opportunities afforded and what we could all learn from the Australian example.

I was incredibly grateful for the opportunity to bring my countries of birth and breeding together. It was the first ever public diplomacy program that the Australian government ran in Sudan. It was a huge achievement and one that has begun an ongoing relationship. But how much is that relationship valued?

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/03/i-broke-bread-with-malcolm-turnbull-now-hes-breaking-my-heart>

2. Oliver Laughland: On refugees, Trump and Turnbull compete in a race to the bottom

As the former Australian immigration minister said about Trump's border plans: 'Really, the rest of the world is catching up to Australia'

The Guardian

Friday 3 February 2017 11.31 AEDT

Oliver Laughland

The fallout between President Donald Trump and the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, on the resettlement of refugees is not only an extraordinary break from diplomatic norms. It is a collective race to the bottom between two of the world's wealthiest nations on failing to offer sanctuary to the world's most vulnerable people.

The US president rode a wave of racially charged anger and anti-migrant rhetoric throughout his campaign and formalised it last week with executive orders imposing a travel ban targeted at seven Muslim-majority countries, the suspension of the US refugee resettlement program, and a directive to start work on a 1,200-mile wall across the southern border.

Meanwhile, the Coalition government in Australia has already implemented a hardline crackdown – after years of bipartisan support for tough measures on immigration – against asylum seekers who make the precarious maritime crossing from Indonesia.

Australia has had its own version of a border wall since 2013: its name is Operation Sovereign Borders. That military-led effort has seen boats carrying migrants turned back to Indonesian shores and the mandatory offshore detention and resettlement of asylum seekers who have made it to Australian territory.

These 1,250 men, women and children, who languish on the tiny island state of Nauru and in Papua New Guinea are the end result of that aggressive policy, stuck in limbo while Australia has struggled for years to find a viable resettlement plan.

President Trump now brands these people “illegal immigrants” and the “next Boston bombers”. The aspersions are breathtaking and at odds with reality. Not only would the roughly 1,250 individuals that could be resettled in America be vetted refugees, they come from a host of religious groupings and countries, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, as well as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Somalia.

But Trump's blunt assessment, which may or may not result in the cancellation of the deal altogether, is partly how Australia sees these refugees as well. By adamantly refusing to resettle them in Australia and initially branding them “illegal maritime arrivals”, the Australian government too has otherized and marginalized them.

They represent a tiny fraction of the world's refugee crisis, which has left more than 65 million people forcibly displaced across the world. They once again find themselves tossed around at the behest of powerful leaders seeking cheap political victories while lacking the moral fortitude to act in the interests of the most vulnerable.

Before moving to America, I spent a year and a half investigating the conditions of immigration detention in offshore sites and was often confronted by the deliberate strategy of harshness.

I wrote about the Iranian man Reza Berati, murdered by private security contractors at the offshore detention centre on Manus Island; about unaccompanied minors kept in solitary confinement for months as they self-harmed, of other children sexually assaulted by detention centre staff on Nauru, and those who died after receiving lacklustre medical attention. This was coupled with the creeping discrimination imposed by a “code of conduct” that asylum seekers on the Australian mainland were forced to sign.

Covering the Trump campaign trail, I was reminded of this discriminatory rhetoric and seeming affection for institutionalised cruelty. Trump's vows to build a wall and expedite deportations sounded all too familiar.

Once in power, he wasted no time issuing executive orders imposing mandatory detention of those apprehended while crossing the southern border, rapidly expanding the private detention network and drastically lowering America's refugee intake.

As Scott Morrison, the former Australian immigration minister, said earlier in the week about Trump's border plans: “Really, the rest of the world is catching up to Australia.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/02/refugees-trump-turnbull-compete-race-bottom>

3. 'Big personality': Australian PM puts brave face on phone call with Trump

Turnbull says commitment to resettle refugees has been 'confirmed several times' as US and Australian commentators fear for future of alliance

The Guardian
Paul Karp in Canberra
Friday 3 February 2017 13.33 AEDT

The Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has described Donald Trump as a "very big personality" after a bruising public spat over the US-Australia refugee resettlement deal.

Joe Hockey, the US ambassador, has been called into the White House to meet with Trump's chief strategist, Steve Bannon, and chief of staff, Reince Preibus, for what was described as a "productive meeting".

The moves come after further statements from Trump and the White House spokesman, Sean Spicer, overnight that Trump is "unbelievably disappointed" with the deal and is entitled to review it and question why the Obama administration had agreed to it. But Spicer and Trump did not close the door on the deal.

On Friday morning Australian time, Turnbull told 2SM Radio in Sydney that as prime minister he had to stand his ground and make his case for Australian interests, but he had done so privately.

Turnbull again denied that Trump had hung up on him during the pair's 25-minute weekend phone call, saying it was a "frank discussion" that had ended "courteously".

Asked if Trump was a brash character, Turnbull replied: "I'll leave others to comment on him but he's clearly a very big personality."

Turnbull said Trump had given him a commitment to the refugee resettlement deal which had been "confirmed several times since".

On Thursday the deal for the US to take up to 1,250 refugees from Australia's offshore detention facilities on Manus Island and Nauru was thrown into doubt by Trump labelling it a "dumb deal" and questioning why the US was taking "thousands of illegal immigrants".

Spicer said the refugees would be subject to an "extreme vetting" process to ensure they came with "peaceful intentions" and did not pose a threat to US security, indicating that the resettlement deal had not been scrapped despite the president's outrage. Australian officials remain concerned it could be scrapped entirely or made effectively meaningless by the vetting process.

Spicer attempted to smooth over a report in the Washington Post that the phone call between Trump and Turnbull had been "the worst" of a round Trump had made, describing it as "cordial".

Australian government ministers have tried to frame the spat as the prime minister standing up to Trump in a show of strength.

The defence industry minister, Christopher Pyne, told Channel Nine the refugee resettlement agreement was "not a deal Donald Trump would have done if he had been president at the time and he obviously doesn't like the deal". But he added a "deal is a deal" and Turnbull had stood up for Australia's interests in ensuring that the US follows through on its commitment.

Australia's opposition leader, Bill Shorten, said Trump "needs to show greater respect to Australia and the Australian alliance than he seems to be displaying". "On this one, I have some sympathy for [Turnbull] because quite bluntly I don't think you can run the American-Australian alliance by Twitter," he said.

Experts in US-Australian relations have warned Trump's concern may lead to fewer refugees reaching the US, increased demands from Trump and a decline in the US-Australia alliance. The response in the US to Trump's handling of the refugee deal focused on the wisdom of picking fights with a staunch US ally. Chris Murphy, a Democratic senator from Connecticut, tweeted:

"I made a Top 100 Possible Trump Administration Foreign Crises list & I gotta admit "Rupturing US-Australia Relations" was NOT on there."

Another Democrat, congressman Ted Leiu from California, wrote: "As Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee-and as an American-I find this unhinged behavior by @POTUS to PM Turnbull embarrassing & shocking."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/03/big-personality-australian-pm-puts-brave-face-on-phone-call-with-trump>

4. Anthea Vogl, Elyse Methven: In a global trend towards crimmigration, Australia has led the world

Donald Trump's plans to detain and deport non-citizens follows the lead of Australian policies that inflate executive powers and criminalise immigration

The Guardian

Anthea Vogl and Elyse Methven

Tuesday 31 January 2017 13.40 AEDT

Many have expressed opposition and abhorrence towards US President Donald Trump's plan to deport undocumented migrants en masse from the United States.

Last Wednesday, Trump signed executive orders vowing to deport or incarcerate an estimated 2-3 million non-citizens who have been charged with or convicted of a crime; who have "abused" public welfare programs; and who, in the opinion of an immigration officer, "pose a risk to public safety or national security".

A further executive order instructed the US Department of Homeland Security to publish a "weekly list" of crimes committed by undocumented migrants. When signing the order, the president – performing a kind of dark political pageant – recited names of Americans allegedly murdered by undocumented migrants.

Before Trump, the Obama administration deported more than 2.5 million immigrants from the time he took office until 2015, more than any other US president. Two-thirds of deportees had committed only minor infractions, such as driving without a license or jumping a turnstile. Others had no criminal record at all. In the same period, detention of non-citizens increased by 25%.

Trump's executive orders may take racialised border control, Islamophobia and aggressive deportation of non-citizens to new extremes. But in the last two decades, successive Australian governments have paved the way in showing there is no rock bottom when it comes to inhumane treatment of refugees and non-citizens.

On Monday, former Australian immigration minister, Scott Morrison, boasted that "the world is catching up to Australia" by implementing harsh border protection policies. The executive in Australia can already deport adult non-citizens found guilty or suspected of criminal offences. These powers apply to all non-citizens, including people who have lived in Australia for most of their lives or whose immediate family are Australian citizens.

The Turnbull government has repeatedly trumpeted its offshore detention centres, where asylum seekers are held in conditions that have been described by the UN as amounting to torture, as the prototype for tough border control. Indeed, this week Turnbull "welcomed" the US to "emulate" Australia's approach.

US and Australian border control policies comprise part of what US law professor Juliet Stumpf has called the "crimmigration crisis": a trend of migration law – with its largely unfettered and unscrutinised executive powers – encroaching on the distinct regime of the criminal law, and vice versa.

A symptom of this crimmigration crisis is that immigration officials increasingly adopt a "law and order" approach to migration control. Police resources are diverted away from prosecuting criminal offences and towards policing "irregular" or "undocumented" migrants. Non-citizens live in a perpetual state of anxiety, fearful that their interactions with police, state welfare agencies, their employers or their neighbours, might result in an allegation that could lead to their removal. Penalties imposed on non-citizens are often cruelly disproportionate to their alleged transgressions.

The Australian government has expanded its visa cancellation powers against non-citizens for criminal or "anti-social" conduct across three key areas.

The first is on "character grounds". The immigration minister may cancel a visa if s/he reasonably suspects a non-citizen does not pass the character test. Changes introduced under former prime minister Tony Abbott in 2014 significantly expanded these powers.

Before 2014, two consecutive years of imprisonment were required as grounds for visa cancellation. Now, a person may not pass the character test if they are serving a sentence of 12 months' imprisonment; if the minister reasonably suspects the person is "associated" with someone involved in criminal conduct; if the minister foresees a risk that they may engage in criminal conduct; or if the person harasses, molests, intimidates or stalks someone in Australia.

Between 2013–14 and 2015–16, the number of visa cancellations on character grounds increased tenfold. In 2015-16, the immigration minister Peter Dutton cancelled 983 visas on character grounds.

The Australian government has signalled its intention to expand these already-broad powers. This year, Dutton announced that a parliamentary committee was looking at lowering the age for visa cancellation on character grounds to include children

of 16 or 17 years. This would allow the commonwealth to further encroach on “law and order” issues including Victoria’s Apex gang-related problems. Such criminal justice issues are ordinarily within the purview of state and territory governments.

The second category of visa cancellation exists for actual or suspected criminals. The minister may cancel the bridging visas of people who have committed or are suspected of committing a crime. Between 29 June 2013 and 9 October 2016, the minister used these powers to cancel 322 bridging visas of so-called “illegal maritime arrivals”.

These migration law powers reverse the fundamental presumption of innocence under Australian common law. An asylum seeker charged with, but not convicted of, a crime may have just 10 minutes to make their case against visa cancellation.

At the close of 2016, the Commonwealth Ombudsman released two reports expressing serious concerns about the exercise and scope of the minister’s immigration powers. The Ombudsman found that people whose visas had been cancelled faced “unnecessarily prolonged and potentially indefinite periods of immigration detention”. This is due to the combination of delays in the resolution of criminal charges and a neglectful, under-resourced immigration case management system.

One of the government’s unprecedented initiatives was when in 2013, it introduced a code of behaviour for asylum seekers living in the community. This code, which all bridging visa holders over 18 must sign, forbids asylum seekers from engaging in “antisocial” or “disruptive” activities including spitting, swearing, bullying, being “disrespectful” or “inconsiderate”. It demands that asylum seekers respect “Australian values” and cooperate with government authorities. If accused of a breach, an asylum seeker (not the minister) must prove s/he did not engage in the alleged behaviour.

Consequences of breaching the code are severe. They include being sent to an onshore or offshore detention centre (such as Nauru or Manus Island); reduced (already meagre) income support payments; and separation of the family unit.

In recent protests against the “Muslim ban” in New York, demonstrators shouted “let them stay” outside the courthouse that placed a temporary stay on the ban. This demand is all-too familiar to Australians who oppose the government’s treatment of asylum seekers.

Trump’s executive orders against non-citizens constitute crimmigration in action. Rather than sigh with relief in the knowledge that we are not living in Trump’s America, Australians should recognise how his policies are founded and reflected in our own, and unite with Americans in protest against the use of non-citizens as political fodder.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/31/in-a-global-trend-towards-crimmigration-australia-has-led-the-world>

5. Is Donald Trump Mentally Ill? Three Professors Ask Obama To Conduct an Evaluation’

Is Donald Trump Mentally Ill? 3 Professors Of Psychiatry Ask President Obama To Conduct ‘A Full Medical And Neuropsychiatric Evaluation’

Huffington Post

12/17/2016 01:53 pm ET | Updated Dec 20, 2016

Richard Greene

Communication Strategist, Author of “Words That Shook The World”

I received this stunning letter to President Obama from a source, with written permission from Dr. Herman, Dr. Gartrell and Dr. Mosbacher, because the source knew that I had been interviewing Psychiatrists and Psychologists about Donald Trump’s alleged “Narcissistic Personality Disorder”.

Virtually every mental health professional I interviewed told me that they believed, with 100% certainty, that Mr. Trump satisfied the DSM criteria of this incurable illness and that, as a result, he is a serious danger to the country and the world.

Listed below is a summary of their comments and an overview of this psychiatric condition. To provide further context, here is a short and a longer interview with Dr. Lynne Meyer, a Psychologist specializing in personality disorders, brilliantly explaining how such a disorder might help us understand Mr. Trump’s comments and behaviors and the challenges that likely lie ahead for our country.

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

November 29, 2016

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the mental stability of our President-Elect. Professional standards do not permit us to venture a diagnosis for a public figure whom we have not evaluated personally. Nevertheless, his widely reported symptoms of mental instability — including grandiosity, impulsivity, hypersensitivity to slights or criticism, and an apparent inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality — lead us to question his fitness for the immense responsibilities of the office. We strongly recommend that, in preparation for assuming these responsibilities, he receive a full medical and neuropsychiatric evaluation by an impartial team of investigators.

Sincerely,

Judith Herman, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry
Harvard Medical School

Nanette Gartrell, M.D.
Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry
University of California, San Francisco (1988-2011)
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School (1983-87)

Dee Mosbacher, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor
Department of Community Health Systems
University of California, San Francisco (2005-2013)

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM - 5, Cluster B) for “Narcissistic Personality Disorder” by The American Psychiatric Association (APA)

Here, according to The APA, are the 9 criteria for “Narcissistic Personality Disorder”. If an individual has 5 out of the 9 they have a confirmed diagnosis of this illness. Many individuals have “traits” of narcissism but only about 1% of the population has clinical NPD.

FULL STORY AT http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-greene/is-donald-trump-mentally_b_13693174.html

6. 'Second class citizens': Senator Sam Dastyari hits out at Trump Muslim crackdown

Canberra Times
January 29 2017 - 4:33PM
Deborah Snow

Iranian-born NSW Senator, Sam Dastyari, fears he and members of his family may be among those caught up by the Trump administration's freeze on visitors from seven Muslim nations, as confusion reigns around the world in the wake of the US order.

Senator Dastyari, who migrated to Australia at the age of five with his parents and older sister Azadeh, told Fairfax there was shock and sadness throughout the Iranian-Australian community at President Donald Trump's executive order, which slaps a temporary ban on Muslim migration and a 90 day halt on entry for people from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, Libya and Somalia.

The ban also applies to those with dual citizenship, the Wall Street Journal reports, which includes the great majority of Australia's 65,000 or so Iranian-born citizens.

Senator Dastyari said he had taken steps to divest himself of Iranian citizenship prior to his entering parliament, but the process was complex and expensive (costing up to \$20,000 employing lawyers in both countries) and most Iranians did not have the resources to undertake it.

Even when they had, he says, a question mark remains over how the Trump administration will judge a person trying to enter the US if their passport records Iran as their place of birth.

"It's so saddening that as an Australian senator, despite having taken every possible step to renounce my Iranian citizenship, I can not tell you with any certainty whether I would be allowed in the US today," Senator Dastyari told Fairfax Media.
Advertisement

"And there are whole bunch of Iranians, Syrians and others living in Australia right now who are Australian citizens, who are proud of being Australian, and yet have not gone through that incredibly expensive process to renounce their dual citizenship who are now being treated by America as second class citizens."

"At the end of the day the decision [to accept renunciation of Iranian citizenship] sits in the hands of a handful of clerics who hate so much what the Australian-Iranian community stands for, which is democracy, tolerance, freedom"

Senator Dastyari was born in the northern Iranian village of Sari, travelling here as a child with his family to escape the Iran-Iraq war.

On Sunday, standing with his proud and quietly spoken father Naser in the family shop in the basement of Sydney's Queen Victorian Building, the pair spoke of the sadness and anger that was permeating Muslim communities over the Trump administration's stand.

"We are shocked," Naser said. "I really feel pity for the American Iranians, and I'm sure they will show a big reaction to this."

Within his own family there were concerns that his nephew, now living in the US with an American Jewish wife, would not be able to come to Australia to visit an ailing father, who had recently had a stroke.

"He has got a very good job in Silicon Valley, and now he can't come any more [to see his father] and my sister can't go to see him" Naser Dastyari said. "These are people who have not travelled to Iran at all in all these years, they have nothing to do with Iran but are stuck in the middle of this".

Senator Dastyari warned that the Trump administration's blunt order risked fuelling terrorism. "What hurts so much is that the people who had fled the exact same wars that America and Australia shed blood for, those people are being told they are no longer welcome, and the message goes beyond America and is [construed as] a message from the West. I can only imagine how much of a recruitment tool this must be for those extremists and terrorists who want nothing more than to divide us."

The head of the Australian-Iranian community organisation, Siamak Ghahreman, agreed saying that "terrorists will use this to recruit people because of the anger it will cause."

"I do understand that every country has the right to choose some rules and regulations but we are talking about people who have been living outside Iran for 10,20, 30 years now."

Mr Ghahreman said another difficulty for those seeking to divest themselves of dual Iranian nationality was the danger it could pose to relatives still in Iran.

Senator Dastyari has a sister, Azadeh, a one-time Fulbright scholar who studied at Harvard and has pursued an academic career in Australia. He said she was due to address a human rights conference in Connecticut in April but may not now be allowed to travel there to deliver her speech.

A former high-flyer, Senator Dastyari, 33, has kept a lower profile in recent months since stepping aside from the Labor front bench late last year over receiving payments from Chinese donors for travel expenses.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/second-class-citizens-senator-sam-dastyari-hits-out-at-trump-muslim-crackdown-20170129-gu0rrg.html>

7. Malcolm Turnbull refuses to denounce Trump's travel ban

PM emphasises Australia's 'nondiscriminatory immigration program' but says 'it is not my job ... to run a commentary on the domestic policies of other countries'

The Guardian

Paul Karp

Monday 30 January 2017 14.41 AEDT

Malcolm Turnbull has refused to comment on Donald Trump's contentious ban on travel by people from a group of Muslim-majority nations, labelling it the "domestic policy" of another country.

At a press conference in Canberra Turnbull relied on the fact the Australian government has not yet had any reports of dual citizens being denied entry to the United States, promising only to "take up" such issues with the US administration if they arose.

But the prime minister did reiterate Australia's commitment to multiculturalism and a nondiscriminatory immigration program.

Turnbull said he and Trump had spoken on Sunday, confirming reports Australia had secured Trump's agreement to honour the deal to resettle refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru, which was negotiated under the Obama administration.

"We discussed the importance of border security. The threat of illegal and irregular migration, and recognised that it is vital that every nation is able to control who comes across its borders," Turnbull said.

Asked about the ban – which has sparked protests, a legal challenge and criticism in the US and internationally – Turnbull said: “It is not my job, as prime minister of Australia, to run a commentary on the domestic policies of other countries.”

Labor’s foreign affairs spokeswoman, Penny Wong, has written to the government to ask if the travel ban applies to Australian dual citizens and for “clarification” on its position on the ban itself.

She noted that the terms of the order imply dual citizens will be affected but the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has said its dual nationals will be exempt.

“I seek your advice on what representations the government has made to the US administration on behalf of these Australians, and confirmation on whether the executive order applies to Australian dual nationals,” Wong wrote.

Asked to comment on the order given it may affect Australian dual nationals, Turnbull said “we have not seen any cases of it so doing”.

“As the foreign minister’s spokesman said this morning, our embassy is engaging with US officials on this subject.

“But at this stage, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has not had any consular assistance requests from Australians unable to board.

“If those issues arise in respect of Australian citizens, we will, and we are, taking up that issue with the administration.”

Asked whether the US policy was discriminatory, Turnbull said “our values are very well-known – our commitment to multiculturalism, our commitment to a nondiscriminatory immigration program is very well-known”.

“That’s where we stand. That’s our policy – but our borders are secure.”

Turnbull said Australia’s border security arrangements “are the envy of the world” because they helped keep terrorists out of Australia.

“If others wish to emulate what we’re doing, they’re welcome to do so,” he said, echoing comments from the treasurer and former immigration minister, Scott Morrison, that the rest of the world is now “catching up” with Australia’s harsh deterrence policies.

On Sunday, Australia’s trade minister, Steve Ciobo, said he would not support a Trump-style ban and nor would most Australians.

In an interview with Sky News on Monday, the education minister, Simon Birmingham, repeated Turnbull’s formulation that the executive order was a US policy but Australia had a nondiscriminatory immigration program of which we “should be proud”.

Morrison did not address the principle of nondiscrimination in his interview on 2GB Radio on Monday.

Birmingham rebuked Coalition colleague George Christensen, who told Guardian Australia that he would like to see a total ban on Australia’s humanitarian intake and a Trump-style ban from countries that have a high level of violent extremism.

Turnbull refused to give further details of the refugee deal, of which much is still unknown including how many people will be resettled.

He said the US screening process - which is already under way with US officials visiting Manus Island and Nauru – would be “very thorough” and would take “some time”.

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said the US has the ultimate say in who it accepted under the resettlement deal, subject to its own screening.

He said the Australian government is aware that “people smugglers are trying to pitch to people to pay money to hop on to boats so that they can eventually end up in the US”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/30/malcolm-turnbull-refuses-to-denounce-trumps-travel-ban>

8. Scott Morrison says Trump travel ban shows 'world is catching up' to Australia

Treasurer empathises with Donald Trump, who is facing a backlash over ban on those from some Muslim-majority countries

The Guardian

Katharine Murphy Political editor

Monday 30 January 2017 11.47 AEDT

Scott Morrison has declined to criticise Donald Trump's contentious travel ban, saying it is up to the United States to determine its border control arrangements, and noting the rest of the world is now "catching up" with Australia's harsh deterrence policies.

Morrison, a former immigration minister, suggested to Sydney radio host Ray Hadley he empathised with the US president Donald Trump, who is facing a fierce backlash against his controversial executive order banning travel to the US from seven Muslim-majority countries.

"I remember when we came in in 2013 and I was implementing our border protection policy people threw their hands up – and I said I'm doing what I said I would do in the way I said I'd do it – and guess what, I'm now getting the results I said I'd get," Morrison told Hadley during their weekly Monday morning chat.

"And we did that as a government, and we've continued that as a government, and we are the envy of the world when it comes to strong border protection policies. "The rest of the world would love to have our borders and the way they are secured and the immigration arrangements we have put in place, particularly most recently, over the last three or four years.

"We've got a good history around this. Really, the rest of the world is catching up to Australia."

Morrison refused to condemn Trump's policy, which has sparked protests, a legal challenge and criticism in the US and internationally.

Australia's treasurer said Trump was doing what he said he would do during the presidential race. "Now how the US wants to handle [border protection] is a matter for them. As you say, they've had an election, and the president is implementing what he said he would do."

The foreign minister, Julie Bishop, has reportedly indicated Australia will support Donald Trump's "strong immigration and border protection policies". "The Australian government is working very closely with the administration and the US officials and we want to ensure that Australians continue to have access to the United States, as they have in the past, and people from the United States have access to Australia," Bishop is reported to have said in Los Angeles.

The prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has not yet addressed the subject of the US travel ban. In a call with the president at the weekend, Turnbull secured Trump's agreement to honour the deal to resettle refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru, which was negotiated under the Obama administration.

With the new political year opening with another round of strategic sniping by the former prime minister Tony Abbott, Morrison pointedly welcomed this development as "an extraordinary achievement by Malcolm Turnbull". "[The prime minister] is very pleased we've been able to secure this arrangement. They are both business people aren't they, and a deal's a deal," the treasurer said. "We are just getting on with it and Malcolm is leading it."

Labor's deputy leader, Tanya Plibersek, was asked on Monday whether the Trump travel ban was racist and said it was very important for countries to maintain non-discriminatory immigration policies. "I think that it's very important that policies, immigration policies, all government policies, are not based on race or religion or ethnic background or country of origin," Plibersek told reporters.

"Australia has had a non-discriminatory immigration policy for 40 years and that's served us very well. We are stronger as a nation when we are united. When we fight discrimination. "Of course, any country has the right to do background checks, to be careful and cautious about who it invites to become a permanent resident or a citizen. "But flat-out discrimination based on religion or ethnicity or country of origin has never served us well."

The One Nation leader, Pauline Hanson, has welcomed Trump's move, but questioned what Turnbull had to give to secure the new administration's backing for the refugee resettlement agreement.

"It seems like Australia might be getting a good deal on the resettlement of those housed on Manus and Nauru," Hanson said on her Facebook page. "But I would like to know what Australia had to promise in return because this deal won't come without a cost.

"The question you should be asking yourself is pretty obvious: what are the real details of the deal?"

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/30/scott-morrison-trump-travel-ban-world-is-catching-up-to-australia-border-protection>

9. Donald Trump's immigration ban: Australian refugee and migrant communities react angrily

ABC News Online

By Danuta Kozaki and Jackson Vernon

Monday January 29, 2017

Community groups and individuals have rejected US President Donald Trump's temporary immigration ban against seven Muslim dominated countries.

Among them is 2017 NSW Australian of the Year Deng Adut.

The criminal and refugee lawyer based in Sydney's west was a former child soldier in Sudan and came to Australia as a refugee in 1998.

Mr Adut is a dual Australia-South Sudan citizen who has not been affected by the ban, which is directed at the Muslim-dominant Republic of Sudan — but he has nevertheless condemned it.

"The culture of punishing the innocent and weak countries has got to stop.

"It is not stopping wars; it is creating them.

"It is creating economic deprivation for the local people; the victims are the poor, the ones that have no skills, the refugees.

"If Mr Trump succeeds with this ban and it stands up in court, the countries on the list should exclude Americans. America should be forced to leave Iraq and Syria and any other countries on the list where their military personnel and civilians are present. The hypocrisy is too much.

"There are homegrown threats in America that Mr Trump should be focusing on, instead of the perceived threats of foreigners."

Confusion as families 'torn apart'

A Western Sydney woman says her Iranian family has been torn apart by the travel ban imposed by Mr Trump.

Farzaneh Ahmadi is an Iranian citizen who has been working and living in Homebush for several years.

Her mother and father flew to Australia from Iran in October, and were set to fly to the United States last Saturday with Ms Ahmadi's sister Fahimeh, who has a dual Australian/Iranian passport.

They were meant to be visiting their son Mousa who is studying in the United States on a single entry student visa, meaning he cannot leave the country and return.

But their trip on Saturday was halted, after Mousa spoke to immigration staff at JFK airport.

"They said if someone comes with an Iranian passport, we wouldn't let them in," she said.

"I looked at my dad he was crying, my mum she was crying."

Worried about their brother's safety, they took a gamble and got Fahimeh onto her flight.

"If President Trump wants to tear our family apart we won't go home without a fight," she said.

"So I called (the airline) and said we should fight for my sister. She's a dual citizen (Australian and Iranian) maybe we can get her in."

Fahimeh arrived in the States this morning but Farzaneh says the experience has scarred her family.

"It just came as a very unclear ban with no clear margin, people with green cards, my sister had a multiple entry visa to the US for five years, even that wasn't any point of certainty for us," she said.

Professionals shocked by Mr Trump's move

Dr Ahmed Alrubaie is a Sydney-based gastroenterologist who has been in Australia for more than 22 years.

He is also a dual citizen, holding both Australian and Iraqi passports.

Dr Alrubaie is also part of the Iraqi Australian University Graduates Forum and said the community was shocked by the ban.

"We cannot understand this decision coming from such a superpower, with all the ideals of freedom and democracy," he said.

"What about those waiting for a safe haven? It clashes with all the principles of the American constitution and their international laws."

Dr Alrubaie said it will also impact the many dual citizens like himself who travel between countries for their work.

"For professionals like myself, for example, who attend medical conferences on a regular basis in Europe and the States, this will be a blockade. I cannot understand it. There are people in Australia trading between the two countries or have family in the US."

Dr Alrubaie said people must speak out.

"The Australian Government needs to do something. There are other ways to deal with terrorism - this will fuel things up. We need a strong stand from Australia, using its good relationship with the US." said Dr Alrubaie.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-30/australian-refugees-and-migrants-react-to-us-ban/8223626>

10. 'It's time for leadership': Bill Shorten slams 'appalling' Donald Trump immigration ban

Sydney Morning Herald
January 30 2017 - 4:53PM
Michael Koziol

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has slammed US President Donald Trump's ban on immigration from seven predominantly-Muslim countries as "appalling", arguing Australia should not stay silent on the decision that has shocked the world.

After Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull refused to condemn the immigration ban, which has seen visitors and visa-holders thrown off planes as they try to travel to the US, Mr Shorten said to remain silent could be "interpreted as agreement".

"Wherever possible, I want the United States to be able to go about its business without interference from Australia. And I would expect the reverse to be true," the Labor leader wrote on his official Facebook page.

"However, there are some issues where silence will be interpreted as agreement. For that reason, I need to say Mr Trump's ban on refugees based upon their religion or country is appalling and ought to be ended as soon as possible."

The 90-day ban, enacted by executive order at the weekend to immediate effect, declares the admission of immigrants and non-immigrants from seven predominantly-Muslim nations could be detrimental to the interests of the US.

The order applies to citizens of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, but does not include several other states from which terrorist actors have previously originated, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Earlier on Monday, Mr Turnbull differed from his counterparts in much of the western world by refusing to criticise the ban. "It is not my job, as Prime Minister of Australia, to run a commentary on the domestic policies of other countries," he said.

But Mr Shorten called on the PM to "reconsider" his rhetoric, following widespread condemnation by advocacy groups, including Amnesty International, which said the Turnbull government's response "beggared belief".

"I urge Malcolm Turnbull to reconsider what our nation's position ought to be and rethink what he should be saying on our behalf. It's time for leadership," Mr Shorten wrote.

Labor MP Maria Vamvakinou, whose Melbourne electorate of Calwell contains the second-highest number of people born in the affected countries of any federal seat, also criticised the ban.

"It's very unfortunate," she told Fairfax Media. "I would never support such an action. And I don't believe the majority of the Australian community would either."

Ms Vamvakinou said she had not yet been contacted by any constituents who might be affected by the travel ban, but expected several to suffer inconvenience over the next three months.

"He's obviously sent the whole system into disarray and I'm baffled. It's not something we would expect a country like the US to do," she said.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop told Fairfax Media she would instruct Australian diplomats to seek the same exemptions for Australian dual nationals as the Trump administration has granted Britons and Canadians.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/its-time-for-leadership-bill-shorten-slams-appalling-donald-trump-immigration-ban-20170130-gu1lbd.html>

11. Starbucks vows to hire 10,000 refugees after Trump travel ban

Coffee chain unveils plan to hire staff first in US and then across its global operations amid 'deep concern' over president's controversial order

Adam Vaughan

Monday 30 January 2017 21.23 AEDT

Starbucks has promised to hire 10,000 refugees over five years in response to Donald Trump's executive order temporarily barring refugees access to the US and banning entry for anyone from seven majority Muslim countries.

Howard Schultz, the coffee chain's chief executive, said that he had "deep concern" at the president's order and would be taking "resolute" action, starting with offering jobs to refugees.

"We are developing plans to hire 10,000 of them over five years in the 75 countries around the world where Starbucks does business," he told employees.

Schultz said the initial focus would be in the US and for refugees who had served as interpreters for the US military, but it is not yet clear when the five-year period would begin, or whether people would be employed direct by Starbucks or by suppliers. Schultz added that the Seattle-based company had also contacted employees who had been affected by the immigration ban.

Technology firms were prominent among US businesses voicing concern at the executive order.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, said that as an immigrant himself, he would "continue to advocate" on the issue. "As an immigrant and as a CEO, I've both experienced and seen the positive impact that immigration has on our company, for the country, and for the world," he wrote on LinkedIn, the business networking site owned by the group.

Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, said 76 employees had been affected by the 90-day ban on entry for citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen

In an email to Microsoft staff, he said: "We believe that immigration laws can and should protect the public without sacrificing people's freedom of expression or religion. And we believe in the importance of protecting legitimate and law-abiding refugees whose very lives may be at stake in immigration proceedings."

On Sunday, the Google co-founder and Alphabet president, Sergey Brin, was photographed among people protesting at San Francisco International Airport over the immigration measures. He said he was there in a personal capacity, but reportedly told one journalist: "I'm here because I'm a refugee."

A Google spokeswoman said: "We're concerned about the impact of this order and any proposals that could impose restrictions on Googlers and their families, or that could create barriers to bringing great talent to the US. We'll continue to make our views on these issues known to leaders in Washington and elsewhere."

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jan/30/trump-travel-ban-starbucks-hire-10000-refugees>

12. US could resettle zero refugees from Manus and Nauru and still 'honour' deal

Terms of agreement do not commit US to taking a single refugee, and Trump's ban on travel from seven Muslim-majority countries exclude majority of Australia's detainees

The Guardian

Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty

Tuesday 31 January 2017 06.00 AEDT

The United States could resettle zero refugees from the Australian-run immigration detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru and still be upholding the deal it has struck with Australia, according to publicly known details.

The terms of the agreement reached last November between the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and then US president Barack Obama do not commit the US to taking a single refugee, and the terms of new president Donald Trump's executive order would appear to exclude the majority of Manus and Nauru detainees being accepted.

At the weekend, Trump signed an executive order which immediately placed wide restrictions on the travel and migration of people from seven Muslim-majority countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – to the US even if they have a valid visa or green card.

It also included a 120-day suspension of the US refugee admissions program, and an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees. After 120 days the refugee admissions program will resume for nationals whom US intelligence authorities have said can adequately be assessed under new security procedures. Authorities can also prioritise applicants based on religion.

After a phone call with the new US president, Turnbull refused to condemn Trump's executive order, and said the Trump White House had indicated it would "honour" the deal struck between the Australian government and the former US administration.

However, based on the available information, it appears the US could resettle zero refugees from Manus Island and Nauru and still be "honouring" the deal it has struck with Australia.

The secretary of Australia's immigration department, Mike Pezzullo, told a Senate inquiry in November the number of refugees resettled was up to the US to determine, and there was no "numerical" commitment.

"There is, within the arrangement that we have struck, an agreement that all the persons who fall within the definition can express an interest. Then the American government will decide, once they have reviewed the cases, how many people they will take. So it is a process-driven arrangement rather than a numerical arrangement."

John Kerry, the US secretary of state at the time the deal was struck, said America's commitment extended to considering applications from refugees on Manus and Nauru, and the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration said it had only "agreed to consider" refugee referrals from the UNHCR.

Despite the largest group of Australia's offshore asylum seekers being from Iran, and many others from the other banned nations, there appears to be no exception for them in Trump's executive order.

Questions remain as to whether all those on Nauru and Manus are subject to the 120-day suspension, and whether those from the seven countries will be part of the expected tougher screening processes once the suspension is lifted.

The shadow immigration minister, Shayne Neumann, said the unanswered questions left refugees "in limbo".

"We have Iranian refugees on Manus and Nauru, but they are currently banned from the United States," he told Guardian Australia.

"Has the prime minister sought assurances that they will be considered outside the executive order or will they be automatically excluded because they are Iranian? While president Trump says he will honour the agreement, does his executive order overrule some refugees and has the prime minister actually asked that question?"

At the end of last year there were 866 people detained on Manus Island and 380 people living in the Nauru regional processing centre.

According to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 510 positive initial refugee assessments and 669 positive final refugee assessments have been granted on Manus Island, and 983 on Nauru, where many former detainees now live in the community.

A specific breakdown of nationalities among those determinations is unavailable, but according to the Australian parliamentary library, by far the largest group of detainees in Australia's offshore centres are from Iran – one of the seven listed countries.

In figures from 2014 and 2015, Iranians were the dominant cohort on both Manus and Nauru. On Manus there was also a large portion from Iraq and a number from Somalia, both among the seven "countries of concern".

Human rights groups called for Turnbull to clarify the details of his government's resettlement deal with the US.

Graham Thom, refugee coordinator at Amnesty International Australia, said there was little clarity around how those on Nauru and Manus would be effected.

"All [Turnbull] has said is the deal is going ahead, which makes you speculate those refugees are not part of the suspension," he said.

"But then after the four months it's what happens to people from those countries ... and whether or not by that time the US will say people from those countries can come but these additional security checks are in place."

Thom noted that while Iranians were part of the suspensions, other nationalities were not and it wasn't clear how that would affect resettlement times.

“That will also be devastating, if we see some nationalities going to the US quicker than others,” he said.

Thom said US refugee processing has grown increasingly rigorous and was now among the longest in the world.

“Refugees can wait two years while they’re been accepted by the US, and essentially they’re stuck because they’re in the US pipeline,” he said.

“It becomes very complicated ... That’s one of the fears we have – even if they are lucky and are considered by the US, this could still mean they spend the next two years stuck on Manus and Nauru.”

Thom called for those on the islands to be brought to Australia in the interim, or at the very least allowed to go to other countries which might take them, such as Canada or New Zealand.

GetUp also called for them to be brought to Australia. “We need more from the government than ‘wait and see and she’ll be right’,” said Matthew Phillips, the group’s human rights campaign director.

“There must be a clear timeline for the implementation of the deal. After being detained for over three years in unsafe and abusive conditions, the prime minister must immediately evacuate the camps and offer a clear pathway to safety for nearly 2,000 men, women and children, and their families.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/31/us-could-resettle-zero-refugees-from-manus-and-nauru-and-still-honour-deal>

13. White House confirms US will take 1,250 refugees under Australian deal

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Wednesday 1 February 2017 07.53 AEDT

The US government has confirmed it will resettle 1,250 refugees from Australia’s offshore detention islands of Manus and Nauru, but stressed they will all undergo “extreme vetting” before being accepted.

Sean Spicer, White House spokesman for the new president, Donald Trump, confirmed the deal – brokered by Trump’s predecessor Barack Obama – would be honoured, and for the first time, confirmed the number that would be accepted under the plan.

“The deal specifically deals with 1,250 people, they’re mostly in Papua New Guinea, being held,” Spicer told a White House briefing. “Those people, part of the deal, is that they have to be vetted in the manner that we’re doing now.

“There will be extreme vetting applied to all of them as part and parcel of the deal that was made, and it was made by the Obama administration with the full backing of the United States government. The president, in accordance with that deal, to honour what had been agreed upon by the United States government ... will go forward.”

Currently, there are about 1,600 people, refugees and asylum seekers, on Australia’s two offshore detention islands. Only refugees – those recognised as having a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country – will be considered for resettlement.

The future of the deal has been the subject of intense speculation following Trump’s sweeping travel and immigration bans, which targeted seven Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Iranian refugees make up the largest cohort in both of the Australian-run offshore detention camps, there are also significant Iraqi, Sudanese and Somali populations. There are a small number of Syrians.

The resettlement process is expected to take between six and 12 months. US authorities have visited both Nauru and Manus to outline the interview and vetting process.

Previously, neither the US nor the Australian government had committed to a number of refugees being resettled. Under questioning from the Senate when the deal was announced last November, the secretary of the immigration department, Mike Pezullo, said the US commitment had been only to allow refugees on the offshore detention islands to “express an interest” in being resettled in the US under their established Resettlement Assistance Program.

“There is, within the arrangement that we have struck, an agreement that all the persons who fall within the definition can express an interest. Then the American government will decide, once they have reviewed the cases, how many people they will take. So it is a process-driven arrangement rather than a numerical arrangement.”

Both Australian-run detention camps have been the subject of sustained criticism by the UN, human rights groups and other nations over systemic sexual and physical abuse of those detained, including rapes, beatings and the murder of one asylum

seeker by guards; child sexual abuse; chronic rates of self-harm and suicide; dangerous levels of sustained mental illness, harsh conditions and inadequate medical treatment.

The latest government statistics indicate there are 871 men in detention on Manus Island and 373 people living in the regional processing centre on Nauru, a total of 1,254 people. However, that figure excludes the roughly 700 refugees who have been moved into the Nauruan community. The total number of people sent to offshore detention islands by Australia – and still on those islands – is currently about 1,900. (The numbers are difficult to ascertain definitively as refugees and asylum seekers are occasionally brought to Australia for serious medical issues, die, or choose to return to home countries).

Representatives of the US government have visited both Nauru and Manus in recent months. They are expected back on the islands this month to begin the interviewing and vetting processes.

Documents distributed to those held on the islands say the application process is free for refugees and open to all “eligible individuals of any age, regardless of disabilities or other limitations”.

Refugees will be considered as family groups. People found not to be eligible for the resettlement program by the US Department of Homeland Security will have 90 days to appeal.

Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said the US resettlement deal was a “band-aid solution” for Australia’s offshore processing problem.

“On the one hand we now have some detail on the deal that the Australian government has refused to release. But it is only 1,250 people, far short of what’s going to be needed to resettle the people on Nauru and Manus. This has raised as many questions as it’s answered.

“There will be many, many people left behind by the US resettlement deal, the ball is squarely in the Australian government’s court.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/01/white-house-australian-refugees-deal-resettle-extreme-vetting>

14. White House says refugees subject to 'extreme vetting' under deal struck with Australia

ABC News Online

By Washington bureau chief Zoe Daniel

Wednesday February 1, 2017

The White House has confirmed it will honour the refugee deal struck between the Obama administration and the Turnbull Government, however the refugees involved will be subjected to "extreme vetting".

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said the deal involves 1,250 people mostly being held in Papua New Guinea.

"There will be extreme vetting applied to all of them, that is part and parcel of the deal that was made and it was made by the Obama administration with the full backing of the United States Government," he said.

"The President, in accordance with that deal to honour what had been agreed upon by the United States Government and ensuring that vetting will take place in the same manner we are doing it now will go forward."

According to the latest statistics from the Immigration Department, there are 871 people on Manus Island and 383 people on Nauru.

The ABC understands most of the refugees are from Iran with some also from Iraq and Somalia, three of the countries on the Trump Administration’s travel ban list.

At a briefing today Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly said "we are looking at various options right now" with regard to "extreme vetting".

"There are many countries — seven that we are dealing with right now — that we have, in our view, don't have the kind of law enforcement, records keeping that can convince us that one of their citizens is indeed who that citizen says they are and what their background might be," he said.

"So we are developing what additional vetting, extreme vetting might look like and we will certainly work with countries on this."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-01/white-house-confirms-aus-refugee-deal-subject-to-extreme-vetting/8228336>

15. Confusion as White House backtracks after saying Trump will honour Malcolm Turnbull's US refugee deal

Canberra Times

February 1 2017 - 10:40AM

Josephine Tovey, Tom McIlroy

New York: The White House appears to be backing away from a commitment to honour a deal to take more than a thousand refugees from Australia's offshore detention centres, reportedly saying President Donald Trump was "still considering" the plan.

On Wednesday, press secretary Sean Spicer said the deal struck by the Obama administration would go forward and that 1250 people held on Manus Island and Nauru would be subject to "extreme vetting" and potentially resettled by the United States.

Later, ABC reporter Zoe Daniel received clarification from another administration official that Mr Trump was "still considering whether to actually go ahead" and if he does decide to do so it would "be only because of the longstanding relationship with Australia".

The initial comments came during the daily White House press briefing on Tuesday afternoon, just days after Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the new President had confirmed he would honour the deal in a 25-minute phone call.

"Part of the deal is they have to be vetted in the same manner that we are doing now. There will be extreme vetting applied to all of them," Mr Spicer said in the briefing.

"That is part and parcel of the deal that was made. It was made by the Obama administration with the full backing of the United States government."

"The President, in accordance with that deal, to honour what had been agreed upon by the United States government, and ensuring that that vetting will take place, in the same manner that we're doing now, will go forward."

The apparent backtrack has again raised fears that a recent executive order signed by Mr Trump, placing a temporary ban on refugees entering the United States as well as travel restrictions for people from seven Muslim-majority countries, would prevent the asylum seekers being accepted for resettlement.

Fairfax Media is seeking clarification from the White House.

Mr Trump has faced pressure from senior Republican politicians to stop the Australian resettlement effort, including from the chairs of the powerful House and Senate Judiciary Committees and outspoken Tea Party members.

The numbers align with federal government figures showing 380 people are held on Nauru and 866 on Manus Island, but refugee advocates say hundreds would be left in limbo if they are found not to meet US security standards.

Both Papua New Guinea and Nauru have moved some former immigration detainees into the community.

Some of the group being considered for the US deal are from the seven countries named in the executive order, including Iran, Iraq and Somalia.

The new Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, John Kelly, gave some details on what the administration's new "extreme vetting" process could look like in a separate press conference on Tuesday.

Mr Kelly said that, while his department was still looking at their options, the DHS was considering "an accounting of what websites they visit, telephone contact information so that we can see who they're talking to, but again all of this is under development".

He added that a person's social media use could be part of the process.

"We have to be convinced that people that come here, that there's a reasonable expectation that we all know who they are and what they're coming here for and what their backgrounds are," he said.

The Turnbull government has previously indicated it is talking to regional partners about finding a permanent home for refugees not settled in the US.

Processing for the deal by US immigration and Homeland Security officials is more advanced in regard to Nauru, with application interviews and security vetting continuing last week. No interviews have taken place on Manus Island.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the announcement would add to anxiety for those people held by Australia.

"This is a number that is not going to guarantee resettlement of all those people who have found to be refugees on Nauru and Manus, so the government has been rather loose with the truth," he said.

"There is now a very serious question over the length of time this process will take. It looks like even people who have been found to be refugees will wait for another year or even longer."

He said there was no transparency on Nauru about how selection for secondary interviews was made.

"Almost everyone on Nauru has put in applications but not everyone is being spoken to. There's already a very high level of anxiety about how that process is playing out," Mr Rintoul said.

Mr Turnbull is expected to face questions about the uncertainty at a speech at the Press Club in Canberra on Wednesday.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/extreme-vetting-white-house-says-trump-will-honour-malcolm-turnbulls-us-refugee-deal-20170131-gu2nzl.html>

16. White House backtracks on refugee deal, says it is still under consideration

ABC News Online

By Washington bureau chief Zoe Daniel, staff

Wednesday Febr 1, 2017

The White House has backtracked on a promise to honour a refugee deal with Australia, saying President Donald Trump is still considering whether it will go ahead.

The clarification came soon after White House press secretary Sean Spicer said the deal was going ahead provided the refugees were subjected to "extreme vetting" procedures.

In a follow-up phone call to the ABC, a White House source said if the President did decide to honour the deal, it would only be because of America's "longstanding relationship with Australia".

The ABC has spoken to Australian officials who say the resettlement refugee deal was confirmed in the conversation between the President and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

The officials said Mr Trump had instructed Homeland Security officials to "get on with it", and said that was reinforced today by Homeland Security officials in meetings with Australian officials in Washington.

When pressed on the deal today, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the Trump administration remained committed to the deal.

"That was the assurance the President gave me when we spoke on the weekend," he said.

Mr Turnbull defended the vetting process underway offshore, saying he expected that it would be "very, very rigorous".

"We don't cut corners or compromise on keeping Australians safe, and the United States government has exactly the same attitude," he said.

"So, vetting will always be rigorous and that has always been part of the agreement. Naturally, it's the United States Government determines who goes into the United States. The Australian Government determines who comes into Australia. And they will do their own extremely rigorous vetting of people that are the subject, or potentially the subject, of the agreement."

Deal covers more than 1,000 people

Earlier Mr Spicer had said the deal, struck between the Obama administration and Turnbull Government, would include approximately 1,250 refugees, many from countries covered by the new administration's bans on entry to residents from seven majority Muslim nations.

"There will be extreme vetting applied to all of them," he said.

"That is part and parcel of the deal that was made, and it was made by the Obama administration with the full backing of the United States Government."

According to the latest statistics from the Immigration Department, there are 871 people on Manus Island and 383 people on Nauru.

The ABC understands most of the refugees are from Iran, with some also from Iraq and Somalia, three of the countries on the Trump administration's travel ban list.

At a briefing earlier, US Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly said "we are looking at various options right now" with regard to "extreme vetting".

"There are many countries — seven that we are dealing with right now — that in our view don't have the kind of law enforcement, records keeping that can convince us that one of their citizens is indeed who that citizen says they are and what their background might be," he said.

"So we are developing what additional vetting, extreme vetting might look like, and we will certainly work with countries on this."

Deal had been called into question by executive order

The deal had come into question after Mr Trump signed an executive order suspending his country's refugee program.

On Saturday the President put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the US and temporarily barred travellers with passports from seven Muslim-dominated countries.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull spoke with Mr Trump by phone on Sunday, during which time it is understood the President agreed to honour the deal.

Before the call, Mr Turnbull said there was a section in Mr Trump's executive order which stated officials could still admit refugees under pre-existing international agreements.

The ABC understands that section was included in the final version of the executive order after the Prime Minister's office intervened.

"We are very confident and satisfied that existing arrangements will continue," Mr Turnbull said before the call.

"It's quite clear that the administration has set out in the order the ability to deal with existing arrangements."

Last week senior Australian Government sources said they were confident the orders would not impact the deal to resettle refugees currently on Manus Island and Nauru, entered into late last year with former president Barack Obama.

Authorities had hoped to begin moving people to the US at the start of this year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-01/white-house-backtracks-on-australia-refugee-deal/8228336>

17. Trump told Turnbull refugee agreement was the 'worst deal ever' – report

Washington Post says US president told Australian prime minister that phone conversation was 'worst call by far' he had had with world leaders

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy and Ben Doherty
Thursday 2 February 2017 12.25 AEDT

Donald Trump told Malcolm Turnbull the US-Australia refugee resettlement agreement was "the worst deal ever" and warned he was going to "get killed" politically during their one-on-one call last weekend, according to a detailed account of the conversation in the Washington Post.

The Post reported on Thursday that Trump had fumed during the phone call, and told the Australian prime minister he'd spoken to other world leaders on the same day, and this was "this was the worst call by far".

Trump, according to the report, accused Australia of seeking to export the "next Boston bombers."

The report says the friction between the two leaders "reflected Trump's anger over being bound by an agreement reached by the Obama administration to accept refugees from Australian detention sites even while Trump was issuing an executive order suspending such arrivals from elsewhere in the world".

The "one-off" deal was announced in November with former president Barack Obama agreeing to take an unspecified number of refugees from Australia's offshore detention centres.

The report on the phone call says Turnbull insisted the new administration honour the agreement, and allow refugees to enter the country on the normal vetting arrangements, which prompted Trump to declare they would be subjected to “extreme vetting”.

The call, scheduled for an hour, was terminated after 25 minutes, the Post said. The source of the account is attributed as a “senior US official”.

Turnbull declined to comment on the report, saying the resettlement deal remained on track, and it was best that conversations between leaders remained private.

“I’m not going to comment on the conversation. During the course of the conversation as you know and it was confirmed by the president’s official spokesman, the president assured me that he would continue with, honour the agreement we entered into with the Obama administration, with respect to refugee resettlement,” Turnbull told reporters in Melbourne.

Asked whether Trump had hung up on him, Turnbull again declined to comment, but he suggested he had argued Australia’s corner. “Australians know me very well. I always stand up for Australia in every forum.”

The new report significantly intensifies the government’s woes over the refugee deal, which has been the subject of confusing accounts out of Washington over the past few days.

The Turnbull government has been at pains to stress the deal is on track despite the contradictory statements out of Washington, and Turnbull has not referenced any tension between the two leaders, despite the fact the deal clearly contradicts Trump’s anti-immigrant messaging throughout the presidential campaign.

On Wednesday, Turnbull told the National Press Club: “The Trump administration has committed to progress with the arrangements to honour the deal ... that was entered into with the Obama administration, and that was the assurance the president gave me when we spoke on the weekend.”

He repeated the formulation again on Thursday. “I received the assurance that I did [on the resettlement deal] from the president himself.”

Confusion over the deal has rolled on for days. A statement from the White House spokesman Sean Spicer said the US had agreed to consider resettlement of 1,250 of the refugees held in Australia’s offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru. Most have been on the islands more than three years.

“The deal specifically deals with 1,250 people, they’re mostly in Papua New Guinea, being held ... there will be extreme vetting applied to all of them as part and parcel of the deal that was made” Spicer told the White House press corps.

“The president, in accordance with that deal, to honour what had been agreed upon by the United States government ... will go forward.”

However, Spicer’s comment was almost immediately undermined when the ABC’s Washington bureau was telephoned by a White House source insisting the agreement was still under consideration and the president had not made a final decision.

On Thursday the state department issued a separate statement saying that the deal was going ahead.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/02/trump-told-turnbull-refugee-agreement-was-the-worst-deal-ever-report>

18. Australia struggling to save refugee agreement after Trump's fury at 'dumb deal'

Malcolm Turnbull adamant that resettlement of up to 1,250 refugees detained by Australia will take place, but some officials say privately deal now ‘can’t survive’

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy in Canberra and Ben Doherty in Sydney
Thursday 2 February 2017 17.13 AEDT

Australia is scrambling to save its agreement to resettle refugees in the US after Donald Trump raged publicly at “a dumb deal” and told the country’s prime minister Malcolm Turnbull in private it was the “worst deal ever”.

The US president took to Twitter late night in Washington to condemn the refugee swap and brand the asylum seekers held in camps on Nauru and Manus Island “illegal immigrants”.

His intervention came after the Washington Post reported that Trump had despaired of the deal when talking to Turnbull on Sunday (Australian time), told him that the conversation was the worst of his phone calls with world leaders that day, and then abruptly brought the 25-minute call to a close.

Trump's pledge to "study" the agreement sparked immediate concern in Canberra. But Turnbull dug in, saying in radio interviews he had a personal commitment from the president "confirmed several times now by the [US] government".

"We have a clear commitment from the president," Turnbull told Melbourne radio station 3AW. "We expect that the commitment will continue."

But a departmental source with knowledge of the deal acknowledged: "It's over. It can't survive ... it was never going to survive Trump's immigration ban."

Details of the angry Trump call came only hours after it was reported that a leaked transcript of a call between the US president and his Mexican counterpart had Trump saying he could send troops south of the border to take care of "bad hombres".

The Associated Press, which cited the leaked transcript, said Trump told Enrique Peña Nieto: "You aren't doing enough to stop them. I think your military is scared."

The hombres (men) in question are believed to be the drug cartels.

Trump's fury over the Australian deal appeared to be mostly directed at the former president Barack Obama rather than Turnbull. But some US politicians expressed dismay that the new president was threatening the close relationship between the two countries.

Trump, according to the Post report, accused Australia of seeking to export the "next Boston bombers".

The report said the friction between the two leaders "reflected Trump's anger over being bound by an agreement reached by the Obama administration to accept refugees from Australian detention sites even while Trump was issuing an executive order suspending such arrivals from elsewhere in the world".

The Post's report said Trump abruptly ended the call with Turnbull but the Australian prime minister denied that element of the report, saying the conversation had ended courteously.

While he declined to be drawn on other details, saying Australia had "very strong standards" about confidentiality when leaders spoke to other leaders, and followed diplomatic protocols, revealing only what had been mutually agreed – Turnbull acknowledged the conversation had been "frank and forthright".

The deal brokered between Obama and Turnbull last November originally forecast the resettlement of up to 1,250 refugees from Australia's offshore detention islands of Manus Island and Nauru.

Both Australian-run detention camps have been the subject of sustained criticism by the UN, human rights groups and other nations over systemic sexual and physical abuse of those detained, including rapes, beatings, and the murder of one asylum seeker by guards; child sexual abuse; chronic rates of self-harm and suicide; dangerous levels of sustained mental illness, harsh conditions and inadequate medical treatment leading to several deaths.

The majority of the refugees held on the detention island by Australia – most for more than three years – are Iranian, one of the nationalities named under Trump's sweeping immigration bans announced last weekend.

There are also significant cohorts of Iraqis, Somalians and Sudanese, also banned from entering the US.

On the detention centre island of Manus Island and Nauru, refugees report widespread disenchantment after more than three years of detention without trial or charge, and another dashed hope of resettlement.

Following Trump's executive order banning refugee intakes from seven Muslim-majority countries, an Iranian teenage refugee on Nauru attempted to hang himself at the processing centre on the island. He was taken by police and held in jail.

One refugee on Nauru, who did not wish to be named for fear of repercussions, told the Guardian: "Everyone has the same feeling: tired and disappointed – no hope and no more patience – for the guys specially, women and the children."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/02/australia-struggling-to-save-refugee-agreement-after-trumps-fury-at-dumb-deal>

19. White House suggests US may still accept Australia refugees despite clash

Press secretary Sean Spicer implies Obama's agreement with Malcolm Turnbull remains in place after testy phone call between Trump and Australian leader

The Guardian
Lauren Gambino in Washington
Friday 3 February 2017 07.56 AEDT

The White House has condemned the "horrible" deal struck by Barack Obama to resettle refugees from Australia, but indicated the US may still take them despite an angry phone call between Donald Trump and Australia's prime minister.

The deal brokered between Obama and Malcolm Turnbull last November originally forecast the resettlement of up to 1,250 refugees from Australia's offshore detention islands of Manus Island and Nauru.

But the plan inherited by Trump has blown up into a diplomatic incident after it emerged that a first call between the two allies degenerated into acrimony.

Trump used Twitter to deride the "dumb deal" and even made reference to the call during a traditionally tranquil address at the annual National Prayer Breakfast.

"When you hear about the tough phone calls I'm having – don't worry about it. Just don't worry about it," Trump told the crowd of faith leaders, diplomats and members of Congress in Washington on Thursday. "They're tough. We have to be tough. It's time we're going to be a little bit tough, folks. We're taken advantage by every nation in the world, virtually. It's not going to happen any more."

The remarkable political spat continued at the White House daily briefing, where the press secretary, Sean Spicer, attempted to pass off the tenor of the call as "cordial" despite reports that it was anything but.

The Washington Post reported that Trump had abruptly ended the call, scheduled for an hour on Saturday afternoon, after just 25 minutes. Trump reportedly told the prime minister: "This was the worst call by far." Trump had spoken earlier that day with four world leaders, including the Russian president, Vladimir Putin.

News of the phone call, followed by Trump's tweet, led to immediate fears that the deal to resettle refugees from countries including Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan could not survive Trump's travel ban.

However, speaking on Thursday at his daily briefing, Spicer did not go so far. The refugees, he said, would be subject to an "extreme vetting" process to ensure that they came with "peaceful intentions" and did not pose a threat to US security. The remarks indicated that the resettlement deal had not been scrapped despite the president's outrage.

"He has tremendous respect for the prime minister and for the Australian people and has agreed to continue to review that deal and to ensure that as part of the deal – which was always a part of it – that we would go through a very extreme vetting process to ensure that every single person that is coming here with peaceful intention and poses no threat to the US."

Spicer said the president was "unbelievably disappointed" about the "horrible deal" negotiated by Obama and Turnbull last year. He added that Trump was "extremely, extremely upset with it – he does not like it".

It is not clear why Obama cut the deal to take refugees from the Australian camps. However, last year Turnbull announced that his country would take some Central American refugees from a Costa Rican camp as part of a US-led effort. That deal was announced in a speech when he attended Obama's leaders' summit in September 2016.

Turnbull has stated emphatically in radio interviews that he secured a personal commitment from Trump, saying the deal had been "confirmed several times now by the [US] government".

"We have a clear commitment from the president," Turnbull told the Melbourne radio station 3AW. "We expect that the commitment will continue."

The prime minister added: "I can confirm the report the president hung up on me is not correct."

During a lunch with Harley-Davidson executives and union representatives in the White House's Roosevelt Room on Thursday, Trump reaffirmed his view of the resettlement deal.

"I love Australia as a country but we had a problem," Trump said. "For whatever reason, President Obama said we'd take probably well over 1,000 illegal immigrants who were in prisons and take them into this country and I just said why? ... Why are we doing this? What's the purpose? We'll see what happens. Previous administration does something, you have to respect that, but you can also say: why are we doing this?"

News of the call prompted Senator John McCain, one of the Republican party's leading foreign policy experts, to call Australia's ambassador to express "unwavering support" for the countries' alliance.

"I asked Ambassador [Joe] Hockey to convey to the people of Australia that their American brothers and sisters value our historic alliance, honor the sacrifice of the Australians who have served and are serving by our side, and remain committed to the safer, freer, and better world that Australia does far more than its fair share to protect and promote," McCain said in a statement.

Details of Trump's punchy call with Turnbull came hours after a report of a leaked transcript of a call between the US president and his Mexican counterpart, Enrique Peña Nieto, in which Trump reportedly said he would send troops south of the border if the Mexican president didn't control "bad hombres".

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer said Trump's apparent rhetoric during the calls was an indication "of an administration deeply incompetent on matters of foreign policy and national security" and said he too had called Hockey to reiterate the US-Australia alliance.

"I urge the president to apologize both to Prime Minister Turnbull and to President Peña Nieto for his childish behavior, which embarrasses our country and hinders America's ability to lead in the world," Hoyer said in a statement. The refugees will be subject to the "extreme vetting" process to ensure that they come with "peaceful intentions" and do not pose a threat to US security, Spicer said, indicating that the resettlement deal had not been scrapped despite the president's outrage.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/02/donald-trump-australia-refugees-malcolm-turnbull-phone-call>

20. Donald Trump pulls the rug out from Malcolm Turnbull's 'dumb deal'

The New Daily
10:30pm, Feb 2, 2017
Paul Bongiorno

Forget the unsourced stories in the US media. Donald Trump himself has tweeted what he really thinks about taking refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru off our hands. In this most unconventional of presidents we have his Twitter word for it.

"Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!"

It sounds a long way from the Prime Minister's assurances that he was personally told by the President last weekend that he would "honour the deal".

Malcolm Turnbull clearly over-egged it. He omitted to tell us that Trump merely had "the intention to honour it".

The Australian public was given nothing of the phone conversation's atmospherics. Now, we can see it would have been more accurate to say the agreement has 'a snowball's chance in hell' of ever being completed.

Mind you, our Prime Minister was not alone in misreading the President. His press secretary Sean Spicer and the State Department, all on the record, made the same mistake.

Privately, the Australian government is furious, flummoxed and incredulous.

"Clearly the White House is a shambles," one senior Turnbull staffer told The New Daily through gritted teeth.

Supporting that view were the "off the record" briefings given within hours of Spicer's on-camera briefing. Someone in the West Wing, almost certainly the President, thought he had gone too far.

Throughout the Trump tantrum – two US outlets CNN and The Washington Post report the President was yelling at Turnbull and cut the call short – the Prime Minister kept his cool.

"He was utterly professional," I was told, clearly in complete contrast with his interlocutor.

The real danger for Turnbull here is that the US media has jumped on the story. Trump's shock jock friends are sure not to be far behind urging him to kill it off.

Their logic would be lamentably irrefutable: "You won't take these people, why should we?"

Trump wants something

Trump's view, according to the Washington Post, was the deal was the "worst he had ever seen". Apart from the possibility that we might be sending him "the next Boston bomber" it wasn't a deal because he was getting nothing in return.

Even now the Australian government insists there was no people swap. Somehow the suggestion we would take refugees from camps in Puerto Rico is lost in a fog of confusion or obfuscation.

Turnbull and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop will have to further calibrate their rhetoric around this "agreement".

Not that Bishop will need much convincing. Recently returned from the United States she has no illusions about the unpredictability, if not the outright flakiness, of the new outfit in Washington.

If even one refugee makes it to America after the "extreme vetting", Trump will want something in return. What? The mind boggles. Our navy testing Beijing in the South China Sea? More troops in the Middle East?

Labor's Bill Shorten says the Trump version of the weekend phone call is very different from the Turnbull one. He's calling for the PM to come clean with the Australian people.

Turnbull wisely isn't saying very much. He refuses to confirm or deny the American reports.

He told reporters: "I'm not going to comment on a conversation between myself and the President of the United States other than what we have said publicly, and you can surely understand the reasons for that."

He says he always represents Australia's national interest, but "it's better these conversations are conducted candidly, frankly, privately. If you'll see reports of them, I'm not going to add to them".

The Turnbull deal with President Barack Obama was a humanitarian breakthrough. But in President Trump we have a leader more than willing to take a leaf out of our "deterrence through cruelty" playbook.

Australia has more than met its match. It's time for our humanitarian sentiments to be repatriated. The 2000 hapless souls on Nauru and Manus cannot be allowed to languish indefinitely in our name.

<http://thenewdaily.com.au/news/world/2017/02/02/trump-refugee-dumb-deal/>

20. 'Although we are alive, we are dead inside': Refugees despair at on-off US resettlement deal

Sydney Morning Herald
February 2 2017 - 8:00PM
Michael Koziol

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian refugee and journalist on Manus Island, had Donald Trump pegged. As confusion reigned on Thursday morning about Australia's refugee deal with the US, he tweeted: "I don't know why Aus gov insists on refugee deal with America. Trump will humiliate you, you will see."

A few hours later the US President did just that, tweeting that the deal he had supposedly agreed to honour was "dumb", and deriding those on Manus Island and Nauru as "illegal immigrants".

For the refugees stuck in Australia's offshore processing centres, the relationship between Mr Trump and Malcolm Turnbull is about much more than diplomatic protocol or political wrangling. It's about their future, their very lives.

"It feels like someone is stabbing a knife in our chest when we hear different stories every day," says Imran Mohammed, a Rohingya refugee on Manus. "We have no expectation, as well as no dream."

Mr Mohammed is among the 871 men in Papua New Guinea awaiting resettlement. He had hoped the arrangement struck with the US would put an end to his three years in detention.

That prospect is fading as the deal made with Barack Obama appears to unravel under the Trump administration. Reports that a furious President Trump berated Mr Turnbull over "the worst deal ever", and bluntly told him "I don't want these people", have plunged the already-desperate group of asylum seekers into even deeper despair.

"It makes me feel we are not welcomed into his country," Mr Mohammed said on Thursday. "It is excruciatingly hard to fight against the words like refugees subject to 'extreme vetting'. There is no glimpse of hope left in this environment. Many of us [have] lost faith in life and don't want to live in this world."

There are growing calls from refugee advocates in Australia to abandon the US arrangement entirely. The Greens called on Mr Turnbull to scrap the deal, saying "only a fool would take Trump at his word", while Daniel Webb at the Human Rights Law Centre said "enough is enough" and that "it's not good enough to just sit back and hope for the best from Donald Trump".

There have been conflicting messages from the White House about whether Mr Trump will proceed with the arrangement, culminating in President's tweet about 3pm Thursday (Australian time) announcing he would "study" what he called the "dumb deal" struck by Mr Obama.

For the 2000 men, women and children stuck in the middle of this extraordinary stoush between foreign leaders, each twist in the tale is a blow to their fragile sense of hope. Other than the US, there are no options on the table - the Turnbull government will not allow them to come to Australia, and although it says it is discussing resettlement deals with other countries, no offers have yet emerged.

"People are very worried. We still have a lot of questions about the deal, and most people don't trust the answers they're getting," Mr Boochani said on Thursday.

"People are following the news closely but day by day they are getting more worried. Most people would be really happy to go to America but each day we hear different news."

Mr Boochani said the Washington Post's explosive account of the Trump/Turnbull phone call had been doing the rounds on Manus Island on Thursday. He had always been sceptical of the deal and is now finding his cynicism was well-founded.

"Really, it's hard to trust in Trump or Turnbull," Mr Boochani told Fairfax Media. "Trump has an ideological problem with the deal and if he accepts the refugees it means he's not Trump. He will hurt himself by accepting them.

"I don't think the deal will happen, or if it happens the process will take a long time and will only be for a few people. It looks really illogical to insist on a deal with Donald Trump who is so against refugees.

"It's clear that their main policy for these islands is to waste time and keep people in such a hard situation for years . . . to pressure people to go back to their source countries. This is not only my thinking, it's my experience in this island."

At least one US official has visited Manus Island and Nauru to get the ball rolling, along with departmental staff from Australia. Refugees have been told the process could take six to 12 months, and interviews will be conducted by the US's Resettlement Support Centre East Asia.

Mr Mohammed has not given up, but is growing increasingly bleak about his prospects.

"We hope and pray that the President Donald Trump will honour the deal and we will be given an opportunity to work towards supporting his country and love its people deeply," he wrote to Fairfax Media this week.

"We have always been concerned about the deal and we still are. We have been told too many things, yet we are still stuck behind the same fence without any clear view of our future.

"We can't smile nowadays and can't find any joy in our lives. Although we are alive, we are dead inside."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/although-we-are-alive-we-are-dead-inside-refugees-despair-at-onoff-us-resettlement-deal-20170202-gu3un4.html>

21. Behrouz Boochani: Frightened by Trump? Spare a thought for us

Sydney Morning Herald
February 4 2017 - 12:00PM
Behrouz Boochani

Watching what has unfolded in the United States has been scary for many people around the world. But, for the refugees in Manus, it has been more scary. In the many years since we were exiled here we have closely observed the political evolutions in Australia and around the world, and the gradual shifts and sudden jolts further towards scapegoating, intolerance and bigotry. We saw with foreboding that we had had to flee our countries at exactly the wrong time, just as Australia, and the world, was turning its back more and more on the principles enshrined in the Refugee Convention after the horrors of fascism and the Second World War.

Two years ago I wrote that a dictatorship is like a cancer. If you don't stop it right away it will continue to grow until it takes over its host. In other words, when we tolerate injustice anywhere, it will raise its head in other places too. Many people this week are shocked and outraged by Donald Trump's actions. They are right to be outraged. But this is just the latest in a pattern across the Western world. Trump is talking about building a wall. Australia built its wall four years ago.

When I watched the recent women's march in Sydney against Donald Trump I was so proud that the feminist movement is powerful enough to bring so many people onto the streets, and such beauty to our world. Seeing that protest, no one could deny the power and creativity of women in our society. That rally, like the protests on January 26 and those breaking out spontaneously now across the US, are a source of hope. On the other hand, as a refugee in Manus prison I could not help feeling disappointed when I compared these huge protests with the rallies here for supporting refugees.

Civil society is like a chain and all of the elements are connected. You cannot be a part of the feminist movement and at the same time stand silent on the migrant crisis. You cannot struggle to protect the environment and at the same time ignore the enormous injustices against Aboriginal people, or fight against climate change but ignore the rights of LGBTIQ people. A year ago a refugee woman set herself on fire in Nauru prison, but the majority of the feminist movement have not stood up to investigate why she felt compelled to take such extreme action, or to demand change. Nor have they rallied enough against the injustice of denying medical care to women on Nauru who urgently need it.

The Australian government is refusing to criticise Donald Trump and his administration even as so many world leaders express their opposition to his actions. At the same time, these two governments that are so comfortable with bigotry have been making secret deals about our future. No one has been watching the events in the US more closely than us.

Maybe some Australians feel reassured we will be sent to safety. But with each development our worry has only increased. First we worried that Trump would win the election. Then we worried more as we waited until Trump took office. To throw us this idea of US resettlement without any details felt like a cruel trick. Now, the deal with the US is confirmed but our stress has only become worse. We still have no details and with each executive order we worry more. The main questions for us are how many people will they accept, and on what basis? Will we be accepted if we have spoken out against Trump? And will they accept people from Iran, Somalia, Iraq and Sudan? It seems that our fate is tied to the fate of the American people more than most. At this time, we can see clearly how this is a global threat. We are among the most exposed, but it is the same threat perceived by those many thousands of women marching just over a week ago.

Of course this fight is not only for women. Everyone who cares about justice has an important role to play. But we will be successful when the structures of political power understand deeply that civil society is united and cares about justice everywhere. In a democratic culture you cannot separate people and treat some as more worthy than others. We cannot forget that all human beings are the same and worthy of the same protection. At this historical moment when Donald Trump and populist politicians are trying to destroy social and democratic values around the world, it is our duty to be united and consolidate around justice, democracy and compassion. We all have our personal limits and cannot do everything on our own, but we can be successful if we work together.

---->>> Behrouz Boochani wrote this from Manus prison. It was translated by Dr Nina Jackson.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/frightened-by-trump-spare-a-thought-for-us-20170202-gu3wqq.html>

22. Azadeh Dastiyari: Trump's tweet leaves Turnbull with no option but to bring the refugees here

The Age
February 3 2017 - 3:10PM
Azadeh Dastiyari

Last Sunday a teenage boy, feeling trapped and hopeless, attempted to end his own life by hanging himself in a detention centre on Nauru. The Iranian born refugee was reacting to US President Donald Trump's executive order, which authorises a temporary travel ban against seven Muslim dominated countries, including Iran, and a suspension of the US refugee program. The teenager, who has spent more than three years of his short life on Nauru, feared that he would never be able to leave the island because the executive order would jeopardise a deal brokered by Australia with the previous Obama administration for the resettlement of refugees from Nauru and Manus Island in the United States.

Since the ban there have been confusing and conflicting messages from the Australian government and the White House on their fate. While the Australian government has attempted to reassure the public that the US will honour the resettlement deal, a tweet from the US President sent on Wednesday night DC time all but confirmed that the deal was in danger.

Even if the deal is to be honoured, there is confusion about what it will in fact achieve. The agreement between Australia and the US does not commit the US to taking any refugees. It simply requires that the United States allow refugees to express an interest in being resettled there. That is, even if the US deal was to go ahead, it may not result in any concrete outcomes for the men, women and children trapped on Nauru and Manus Island.

The refugee deal has had a significant impact on Australia's approach to the United States. In contrast with numerous world leaders, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has declined to criticise President Trump's executive order, presumably for fear that such criticism may threaten the refugee resettlement deal. This deal therefore, that may achieve little, is costing Australia its international reputation and Malcolm Turnbull his credibility.

Australia does not, of course, need this deal. Every single refugee and asylum seeker currently held in Nauru or Manus Island can be brought to Australia tomorrow if the Turnbull government would allow it. Resettling refugees selected, transferred, detained, paid for and overseen by Australia in Nauru and Manus Island would give Australia back its voice and its ability to stand up for the values held by Australians including racial tolerance and abhorrence for discrimination. It would also spare the refugees from being at the whim of an at times erratic US administration and months if not years of further waiting.

Sadly, despair of the kind witnessed in the teenage boy on Nauru after the signing of the executive order is not a rare sight on the embattled islands. Refugees, stripped of hope, subjected to documented sexual and physical abuse by those entrusted with their care and living in fear have little to hold on to. If the Australian government believes that these refugees, who have been vetted and have passed security checks, will not pose a threat for the United States, then there is no reason why they should not be resettled in Australia instead.

Turnbull's desperate attempt to secure this deal shows that he may understand the importance of getting the refugees out of where they are. Nothing is stopping us from offering the men, women and children Australia has held on Nauru and Manus a home and a future in Australia. There is no evidence that the resettlement of refugees in the US is any more of a deterrent for future boat arrivals than resettlement in Australia. The continuation of a policy that keeps vulnerable individuals on islands far from Australia despite the known harm to them is a travesty. The US-Australia deal is now little more than a distraction from what we know we must do. We do not need the United States to take people we are responsible for. We can and should resettle the Nauruan and Manus refugees ourselves.

--->>>> *Azadeh Dastyari is a senior lecturer in the faculty of law at Monash University.*

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/trumps-tweet-leaves-turnbull-with-no-option-but-to-bring-the-refugees-here-20170203-gu4osu.html>

23. The Saturday Paper: Manus refugees await US resettlement deal

With the US–Australia refugee deal in chaos, the real victims on Manus and Nauru live in anguished hope.

The Saturday Paper
Feb 4, 2017
Martin McKenzie-Murray

Ben Moghimi is an Iranian refugee. He has been on Manus Island for more than three years. He tells me his nightly ritual in the camp is to pray – for his “brothers and sisters” on Manus and Nauru, for his family in Iran, and for those traumatised in Syria. “I ask Jesus Christ to give them peace in their soul.”

This week, in the wake of Malcolm Turnbull’s announcements about the refugee settlement deal with the United States, he sent me a brief but uncertain note: “Let’s see what happens. I really want to go to USA because I love USA and I am Christian.”

In a long note he sent to me on New Year’s Day, Ben had written: “I have readied my mind for new things in the new year. I have made more space in my heart for people who truly care. I will never give up. Because 2017 is the year of my freedom and my brothers and sisters on Manus and Nauru. I truly believe new year will bring me luck and positive things.”

The note continued with an assessment of the year just gone: “I can honestly say this year – it’s enough for me, I can’t tolerate any more. This year more things have fallen apart, and with them little pieces of me... We are all political hostages. I have broken so much and sometimes I have cried in my single cell... But I will never give up. I trust with all my heart Jesus Christ has my back he will never let me break down. He is the only owner of my mind and body. New Year approaches me with new hopes, aspirations and commitments that I need to carry out to fulfill my dreams. ‘New Year’ – whenever I hear these words I remember about new year celebrations, gifts, parties, wishing people around us at this amazing moment with all their friends... But in this concentration camp our gifts are sleeping pills and antidepressants.”

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2017/02/04/manus-refugees-await-us-resettlement-deal/14861268004196>

24. Close Manus and Nauru, bring refugees here say 70 organisations

Coalition of charities, aid groups, unions and thinktanks says refugee deal with US in ‘serious doubt’ and call for bipartisan policy to evacuate camps

The Guardian
Michael Slezak
Friday 3 February 2017 16.13 AEDT

With the US-Australia refugee deal now in doubt, an unprecedented coalition of more than 70 organisations has joined forces to call for immigration camps on Nauru and Manus Island to be immediately closed, with all refugees and asylum seekers brought to Australia.

Noting the “humanitarian crisis” in the camps, a joint statement by the groups said the “situation has reached crisis point, and immediate action must be taken”.

Australia came to an agreement with the Obama administration to send 1,250 refugees from Manus Island and Nauru to the US for resettlement. But Donald Trump has indicated he may not honour the deal.

“Beyond the reports of physical and sexual abuse, including of children; inadequate medical attention; suicides and attempted suicides; even a murder; the extinguishment of hope has pushed people to the edge,” the letter said.

“Many of these people have been recognised as refugees. We owe them protection and safety now.

“With the US resettlement deal in serious doubt, the most obvious and humane solution is to clear the camps and bring these people to Australia until a safe long-term, appropriate outcome for them can be guaranteed.

“This is a crisis. We are calling on both major parties to form a bipartisan commitment to immediately evacuate the camps and bring these people to safety.”

Phil Glendenning, president of the Refugee Council of Australia, appealed to the country’s history of leadership in accepting refugees at a media conference in Sydney.

“Forty years ago when Australia faced a serious crisis with regards to refugees, we had a prime minister named Malcolm – Malcolm Fraser – and a leader of the opposition named Bill – Bill Hayden. Together they formed a bipartisan partnership to bring refugees to this country,” Glendenning said.

“Now we’re calling upon today’s Malcolm and today’s Bill to take a similar bipartisan stance and end this uncertainty of the refugees on Nauru and Manus Island.

“We’ve seen over the course of the last five days or so how this political ping-pong has played out between Donald Trump and our government. The unpredictability of the new president of the United States means that this deal is in jeopardy.”

Glendenning told Guardian Australia he worried that even if the US agreed to honour the deal, the policy of extreme vetting might mean it was worthless anyway.

“If extreme vetting means more cruelty, more limbo, more uncertainty, then that’s not tolerable,” Glendenning said.

“The thing that worries me about President Trump is he’s using extreme vetting as a way of doing what he really wants to do, and that’s scupper the deal.”

Elenie Poulos, national director of Uniting Justice, and a minister in the Uniting Church, said the abuse of people in detention needs to stop now: “The fact that there are people seeking asylum, and refugees who have been held on Manus and Nauru, that have been held for so long in situations that amount to state-sanctioned abuse is abysmally immoral. It has to stop and it has to stop now,” Poulos said.

Poulos also said that even if the deal was agreed to by the US, the “extreme vetting” process meant it shouldn’t be relied upon.

“The deal with the US is tremendously shaky. Not even in the US do they know what extreme vetting looks like. So even if the deal does hold up, there is the prospect that refugees will not be included in that deal.”

Organisations and community groups that signed the statement include charities, aid groups, unions and thinktanks, as well as community and campaigning groups.

Paul Ronalds, CEO of Save the Children, said in a statement: “We know from our time providing services on Nauru that uncertainty and a lack of hope has a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers.

“The Australian government’s focus on finding viable third country options for resettlement have been welcome, but those attempts have not resulted in an outcome that ends the uncertainty and provides a safe and secure home.

“These innocent people want what all Australians want – they want hope and a brighter future for their children. It’s time to stop punishing them for risking their lives in that search. It’s time to bring them here.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/03/close-manus-and-nauru-bring-refugees-here-say-70-organisations>

25. Protests held across Australia against Donald Trump's travel ban

Barrister and 13-year-old son walk from Adelaide to Canberra over 39 days to oppose offshore detention conditions

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Saturday 4 February 2017 16.22 AEDT

Australia's fragile refugee resettlement deal with the US has brought thousands of people on to city streets, decrying the US president's immigration ban and demanding an end to Australia's offshore processing policy of asylum seekers.

The deal, purportedly, is for the US to resettle up to 1250 refugees from Australia's offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru, where refugees have been held for more than three years, and which are the subject of sustained criticism over systemic violence by guards, sexual assaults, including of children, and deaths from murder, suicide and inadequate medical care.

The refugee agreement has spent the week in furious on-again, off-again debate. Trump has spent the week railing against the "dumb deal" and the "worst deal ever", followed by his officials then quietly rowing back his comments and promising the deal, struck with the Obama administration, would be upheld.

The president's fraught phone call over the issue with the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, briefly dominated the international news agenda.

But the deal does not oblige the US to actually accept a single refugee, only to allow them to "express an interest" in resettlement. All the refugees from the Australian-run camps will be subject to "extreme vetting", the US president said. Australia has legal responsibility for the refugees after they landed in its territory, but has moved them offshore and refuses to accept them for fear of encouraging more arrivals.

The deal, and Australia's continued support for offshore processing, has sparked protests across cities, including Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle and Hobart.

In Sydney on Saturday, protesters marched to the US consulate, chanting "Dump Trump".

The Adelaide barrister Adam Richards and his 13-year-old son Ned, walked from Adelaide to Canberra – a distance of 1194km – over 39 days to protest against the conditions in offshore detention.

They led a protest march to parliament house in Canberra that demanded the Australian government close the camps, and bring those held there to Australia.

"Our goal is to put increasing pressure on the government to close our offshore detention camps on Manus and Nauru," Richards said.

"Over 80% of refugees on these islands have been assessed as genuine, despite the government's new processing strategies which lean towards setting refugees up for failure. Australia is also not meeting its current international obligations."

In Melbourne on Friday, a peak-hour march brought city traffic to a standstill.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/04/protests-held-across-australia-against-donald-trumps-travel-ban>

26. Julie Bishop denies US officials paused Nauru asylum seeker interviews after deal confusion

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephen Dziedzic

Saturday February 4, 2017, 10:56pm

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop says US officials are continuing to interview asylum seekers in Nauru as part of the refugee deal with America, despite lingering uncertainty over the agreement.

Reuters has reported interviews on Nauru were suspended because US officials were uncertain about what security checks were going to be imposed on refugees under the agreement.

But Ms Bishop denied there had been a pause.

"My understanding is that interviewing and vetting is still taking place," she said.

"The agreement is to be honoured by the Trump administration [so] I'm pleased this agreement will continue."

A US Government source also told the ABC officials were pushing ahead with implementing the deal.

But US President Donald Trump's executive order cracking down on refugees has caused uncertainty and slowed down the approvals process.

Mr Trump also publicly denounced the deal and labelled it "dumb" after clashing with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on the issue.

Still, the Coalition was convinced Mr Trump's furious denunciations of the agreement were aimed at a domestic audience, and that he would not abandon it completely.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer again fielded questions about the deal during his daily briefing, and said the Trump administration would honour the agreement "in some way".

"We are going to continue to work through this. We are going to honour these commitments in some way, meaning we are going to vet these people in accordance with the agreement that happened," Mr Spicer said.

The White House had previously said any refugees accepted would be subjected to "extreme vetting" before being allowed into the United States.

But officials in both Australia and the US were uncertain about exactly what "extreme vetting" meant and unsure about exactly what additional security checks would be required.

US vetting process expected to be 'tough'

The Foreign Minister said both countries were still working through the details of the agreement.

"We remain in contact with the Trump administration and our embassy in Washington is also working with US officials and we expect that vetting process would be as tough as Australia's vetting process in terms of health and security checks," Ms Bishop said.

Refugee advocates said the persistent uncertainty over the deal was causing enormous anxiety on Manus Island and Nauru — and was doing further psychological damage to refugees on both islands.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten criticised the Government's handling of the deal, but on Saturday said Labor would back the Government "100 per cent" as it worked to get refugees to the US.

"I am completely supportive of the Government's efforts to see the refugee deal honoured with the United States," he said.

"I take what the Prime Minister said, that the deal will be honoured — Labor supports this full stop."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-04/bishop-denies-us-officials-paused-nauru-asylum-seeker-interviews/8241626>

27. Refugee sent to Manus Island as a child seeks asylum in Fiji

Ahwazi Arab Loghman Sawari says he was left homeless and destitute by Australia and Papua New Guinea

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Monday 30 January 2017 14.04 AEDT

An Iranian refugee – erroneously sent as a child to the adult men's only Manus Island detention centre – has fled Papua New Guinea after more than three years to seek asylum in Fiji.

Ahwazi Arab Loghman Sawari, who was 17 when Australia mistakenly sent him to the men's detention centre, said he was left homeless and destitute by Australian and PNG authorities, was beaten by guards, left without medical treatment and abused during more than three years within Australia's offshore processing regime.

Over months in PNG's capital, Port Moresby, Sawari was able to save money – and borrow some from several sources – for a plane ticket and used false papers to board a flight bound for Suva, landing late last week.

He is currently staying with a family in Fiji and will seek asylum in that country. Fiji is a party to the refugees convention and Sawari has already been granted refugee status during his time in PNG.

Sawari spoke to the Guardian from Suva, saying he had been welcomed and that a family member had given him accommodation.

"I told my story to them and they wanted to help me," he said. "They said, 'What we can do, we will do for you.' The people here have made me feel safe. I was never, not for one day, safe in PNG."

Sawari said he would formally apply for protection from the Fijian government this week, saying he faced persecution in PNG and that he could not live safely there.

Sawari had visited the Fiji high commission in Port Moresby after researching the country online but was told they could not help him from the diplomatic outpost.

“But I have reached Fiji now and I will tell them my story,” he said. “I have nothing to hide, I have done nothing wrong. I have only wanted freedom. I need freedom, I need to be safe wherever I live. If Fiji say, ‘Yes, you can be safe here,’ I will be very happy.”

But Sawari said that, despite reaching Fiji, he did not feel he had escaped offshore detention entirely.

“I do not feel safe from Australia or PNG,” he said. “I fear they will come get me and take me back. I cannot go back to those countries.”

Sawari said his time under Australia’s offshore detention policy had been marked by violence and deprivation.

Sawari fled Iran after his two brothers were imprisoned and tortured by the country’s theocratic regime and a cousin was publicly hanged for his opposition to the government. Sawari carries a picture with him of his defiant relative kissing the hangman’s rope as it is fastened around his neck.

Sawari was 17 years old when Australia forcibly removed him to Manus Island, where he was placed in the adult men’s-only detention centre. He was sent to Manus despite carrying a photocopy of his national identity document that showed his birthdate and telling immigration officials he was under 18.

Conceding the error, the Australian immigration department refused to repatriate him to Australia, instead holding him in an isolation room until he had turned 18.

Recognised as a refugee and moved to Manus’s secondary detention camp, the East Lorengau Refugee Transit Centre, Sawari was allegedly assaulted by a guard when he asked for more washing powder. The guard punched him to the ground and Sawari required hospitalisation.

An attempt to resettle Sawari in Lae, one of PNG’s most dangerous cities, collapsed after he was forced out of his accommodation and lost his job after a dispute with a housemate he says was motivated by his refugee status. Sawari ended up homeless and was forced to sleep on the steps of the police station.

Sawari tried to return to detention but was refused, and had spent the past few months living in Port Moresby, where he said he felt in constant danger.

“That place is not safe for me,” he said. “I was in danger every day. And my situation is the same for everyone in detention on Manus and Nauru. My voice is speaking for all of them, we are not safe there.”

The Guardian first met Sawari on Manus Island in 2015. During that meeting, he repeated constantly, almost like a mantra, that he sought only freedom.

“I don’t want money,” he said. “I don’t want go Australia. I want to go for a country for freedom. Freedom, only freedom. I need only freedom.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/30/refugee-sent-to-manus-island-detention-centre-as-a-child-flees-papua-new-guinea>

28. 'I know they'll kill me': refugee who fled PNG for Fiji arrested and deported

Human rights group condemn deportation of Loghman Sawari, who tells refugee advocate in desperate phone call: ‘This is the last time you’ll hear my voice’

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Friday 3 February 2017 11.52 AEDT

Loghman Sawari, the Iranian refugee who fled Papua New Guinea to Fiji, has been arrested and apparently deported back to PNG.

Sawari was sent to the adult immigration detention centre on Manus Island by the Australian government, despite being an unaccompanied minor at 17 years of age. He was granted refugee status and released in PNG but was soon homeless in the city of Lae. He was allegedly assaulted by a guard while in detention. Last week Sawari fled PNG to Fiji with false documents, saying he faced persecution in PNG and was not safe.

In a recorded message heard by Guardian Australia, Sawari told a friend in Farsi: “I’m in a plane and they are sending me back. They arrested me and beat me.”

Sawari said “dangerous people” were trying to hurt him, and he asked the friend to “tell everyone”.

Photos published by Fiji One news purport to show Sawari being detained by immigration officials and taken to Nadi international airport before he had a chance to make his claim for refuge in the country.

An Australian-based refugee advocate said she had heard from Sawari after he boarded a flight in Nadi, believed to be bound for Port Moresby. “He rang very quickly from the plane and the guards let him make one phone call,” Janet Galbraith told Guardian Australia.

“The lawyer picked him up, they had a meeting booked with immigration to present his refugee claim. They were driving to Suva when they were possibly stopped by police. It sounds like a very over-the-top reaction. They grabbed him out of the car and bundled him into the police car.”

Sawari’s lawyer attempted to follow but couldn’t keep up, Galbraith said, and by the time he reached the airport Sawari was already through to departures.

Sawari told her he’d been punched by a Fijian man. “He said there is no humanity in the world and it’s better to die in your own country. He said this is the end for me, this is the last time you’ll hear my voice and I know they’ll kill me,” she said.

“He was really positive the first few days. He said the Fiji people were beautiful people and he felt safe and that he could contribute. But when word got out and media started printing stories in Fiji which linked refugees and Arabic people with terrorism, that he’d entered illegally, things started to get a lot harder.”

In one Fijian news report which aired on Thursday prior to the arrest, Sawari’s lawyer said his client was banking on the kindness of Fijians. “Fiji is a signatory to the UN convention on refugees and it has been since 1972,” Aman Ravindra-Singh told Fiji One News.

“I am quite certain the Fijian government would be looking at its obligations under the convention. We are hoping for a positive result and I am quite certain the government would want to show it respects human rights.”

Catherine Stubberfield, spokeswoman for the UNHCR in Canberra, said the organisation was seeking further information from Fijian authorities, and had already sought assurances Sawari would have access to national asylum procedures before he was removed.

“All asylum seekers are entitled to have their claims for asylum considered fairly and in accordance with the 1951 refugee convention, to which Fiji is signatory. This should ordinarily take place on the territory of the state where protection is sought,” Stubberfield said. “We deeply regret that UNHCR’s interventions with the Fijian authorities to prevent Mr Sawari’s forced return were not successful.”

Amnesty International condemned Friday’s arrest.

“Loghman is a young man who fled persecution in Iran. He has been found to be a refugee. Australia didn’t respect his rights, and now Fiji is failing to do so,” said Kate Schuetze, Amnesty International’s Asia Pacific researcher.

“He came to Fiji seeking protection. He is entitled to a fair assessment of his claim. That process must run its course. At a time when the US and Australia are turning their back on refugees, this is a time for Fiji to show that it is different.”

Sawari did not immediately seek asylum when he arrived in Fiji but was working with a human rights lawyer, Aman Ravindra-Singh, and Fiji’s human rights and anti-discrimination commission.

“I told my story to them and they wanted to help me,” he told Guardian Australia on Monday. “They said, ‘What we can do, we will do for you.’ The people here have made me feel safe. I was never, not for one day, safe in PNG.”

He said he didn’t feel safe in PNG or Australia, and he feared they would come and get him and take him back.

Human Rights Watch Australia Director Elaine Pearson said Sawari’s deportation from Fiji was a “blatant violation of the refugee convention”.

“Under the convention, Sawari has a right to file a claim for asylum which did not happen – each case is then determined on its merits. Whether Loghman entered the country legally or not is irrelevant,” Pearson said.

“So long as Australia keeps flouting its international obligations to asylum seekers and refugees, it will give a green light to other countries in the region to do the same.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/03/refugee-who-fled-png-for-fiji-arrested-and-facing-deportation-to-manus-island>

29. Deportation of Iranian refugee from Fiji an act of thuggery, says lawyer

Loghman Sawari being held incommunicado in PNG, after being forced on to a plane by Fijian police

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Saturday 4 February 2017 11.36 AEDT

Loghman Sawari, the Iranian refugee summarily deported from Fiji, is being held incommunicado in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, more than 24 hours after he was snatched off the streets of Suva and forced on to a plane.

His Fijian lawyer, Aman Ravindra-Singh, said Sawari's forced deportation, in defiance of an agreement with the country's immigration director, was the illegal work of "hoodlum and thugs", while the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has said of Sawari that it was "profoundly concerned for his welfare".

Sawari, who was a child when he was erroneously sent by the Australian government to the adult men's only Manus Island detention centre, fled PNG after three years in that country, during which time he was beaten, abused, and left homeless.

He boarded a flight to Fiji last week under a false name, and had publicly declared from Nadi his intention to seek asylum in that country. But, driving with his lawyer to meet with Fiji's director of immigration, he was stopped and arrested by police, who forced him into a car and drove him to the airport. He was flown straight out of the country and disappeared.

Two backpacks belonging to Sawari – containing everything he owns – have been left behind in Fiji.

Landing in Port Moresby, Sawari was held inside the airport for more than five hours, before being driven out of the international terminal by immigration officers in a dark blue LandCruiser with dark windows. It is not known where he has been taken.

Behrouz Boochani, a fellow Iranian refugee and journalist on Manus Island, said no one had been able to contact Sawari since he sent a pleading message as he was being forced on to the flight from Suva.

"I'm in a plane and they are sending me back. They arrested me and beat me," Sawari said. He said "dangerous people" were trying to hurt him, and he asked his friend to "tell everyone".

Boochani told The Guardian that since that message no one had been able to speak to Sawari, or ascertain exactly where he was being held.

"I have tried to find out where he is and what's happened to him, but there is no news. Loghman has not been able to speak to anyone since he got back to PNG.

"I'm worried for his safety. They have probably sent him to jail. I know how prisons are dangerous in PNG."

Behrouz said hundreds of people were trying to contact Sawari, and no one could find him.

"I have to share my worry about Loghman and ask from Australian and PNG immigration where is he and what have you done with him? Australia and PNG are responsible for him and Fiji deported him back to a harsh condition that he fled."

The Fijian human rights lawyer representing Sawari, Aman Ravindra-Singh, told a press conference he had an agreement with Fiji's immigration director that Sawari would present his claim for asylum on Friday morning.

"We took the date as Friday, which was mutually agreed by the director ... I proposed Friday and it was accepted, in good faith, because I had to gather the documents to support his application.

"We had to bring in documents from PNG, we have to bring in documents from Australia and that was very important and we kept to our timeline, we did not ask for an extension and we were on our way this morning to Suva, to meet with the director to present our application for asylum."

Ravindra-Singh said six police officers stopped his car as he drove with Sawari to Suva to present Sawari's claim for asylum. They forcibly grabbed Sawari from the car, saying "we are taking him". The officers pushed Sawari into a car and drove off with him. Sawari was "frantically shaking" and crying as he was taken away.

Ravindra-Singh said the sudden arrest and deportation of an asylum seeker – without first assessing his claim for protection – was an act of thuggery.

"Dark things happened ... enforcers, hoodlums, and thugs, that's what we saw. No one could speak about the law today. The police were pathetic, they had no idea what the law was, the immigration department did not know what the law was, showing me the letter and pulling it away in five seconds. Is that how you behave? Is that how you legitimise your illegal activities?"

Fiji is a party to the refugees convention and is legally obliged to assess Sawari's claim for protection. It is unlawful, until the convention, for Fiji to return Sawari to a place where he faces harm.

In a statement, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said it had sought assurances from the Fijian government that Sawari would be allowed to seek asylum.

"All asylum-seekers are entitled to have their claims for refugee status considered fairly and in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Fiji is signatory. UNHCR deeply regrets that interventions to prevent Mr Sawari's forced return were not successful, and is profoundly concerned for his welfare.

"The UNHCR has long called for refugees and asylum-seekers currently in Papua New Guinea to be moved to humane conditions outside of the country. Equally, UNHCR has urged that no refugees or asylum seekers should be returned there."

The Guardian first met Sawari in 2015 on Manus Island. His time under Australia's offshore detention policy, he said, had been marked by violence and deprivation.

Sawari is an Ahwazi Arab, an ethnic minority in Iran that faces significant, often violent, political persecution at the hands of the Iranian state, as well as discrimination over employment, language, housing and civil rights.

Sawari fled Iran at his mother's urging after his two brothers were imprisoned and tortured by the country's theocratic regime and a cousin was publicly hanged for his opposition to the government.

Sawari carries a picture with him of his defiant relative kissing the hangman's rope as it is fastened around his neck.

Sawari was 17 years old when he arrived on Christmas Island and Australia forcibly moved him to Manus Island, where he was placed in the adult men's-only detention centre.

He was sent to Manus despite carrying a photocopy of his national identity document that showed his birthdate, and telling immigration officials he was under 18.

Conceding the error, the Australian immigration department refused to repatriate him to Australia, instead holding him in an isolation room until he had turned 18.

Recognised as a refugee and moved to Manus's secondary detention camp, the East Lorengau Refugee Transit Centre, Sawari was allegedly assaulted by a guard when he asked for more washing powder. The guard punched him to the ground and he required hospitalisation.

An attempt to resettle Sawari in Lae, one of PNG's most dangerous cities, collapsed after he was forced out of his accommodation and lost his job after a dispute with a housemate he says was motivated by his refugee status. Sawari ended up homeless and was forced to sleep on the steps of the police station.

He tried to return to detention but was refused, and had spent the past few months living in Port Moresby, where he said he felt in constant danger.

"That place is not safe for me," he said. "I was in danger every day. And my situation is the same for everyone in detention on Manus and Nauru. My voice is speaking for all of them, we are not safe there."

During his conversation with The Guardian, Sawari repeated constantly, almost like a mantra, that he sought only freedom.

"I don't want money," he said. "I don't want to go to Australia. I want to go for a country for freedom. Freedom, only freedom. I need only freedom."

Sawari is believed to be in police custody somewhere in the PNG capital, but he has not been able to speak to anyone.

The PNG foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, said Sawari was likely to face charges for leaving the country irregularly.

"Tendering false statements or documents as part of any application for a passport or travel document is a criminal offence in PNG. Breaches will be investigated and those breaking the law will be prosecuted."

He is likely to face charges for leaving the country under a false name, Pato told Fairfax.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/04/deportation-of-iranian-refugee-from-fiji-an-act-of-thuggery-says-lawyer>

30. Vulnerable' refugee who fled PNG could face criminal charges

Canberra Times
February 4 2017 - 1:41PM
Michael Gordon

An Iranian refugee who attempted to seek asylum in Fiji could face criminal charges after being forcibly deported back to Papua New Guinea.

PNG's immigration and foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, has also vowed to tighten border security after Loghman Sawari was deported from Fiji for travelling to Nadi on a false passport.

"We will receive him and take the necessary steps to ensure he is properly questioned and, if appropriate, brought before the courts, noting he is a refugee who has had mental health issues," Mr Pato said.

"Tendering false statements or documents as part of any application for a passport or travel document is a criminal offence in PNG. Breaches will be investigated and those breaking the law will be prosecuted."

The United Nations refugee agency has expressed grave concerns about the welfare of Mr Sawari, who was 17 when he was transferred to Manus Island after attempting to come to Australia by boat.

A spokesperson for UNHCR's Regional Representation in Canberra, Catherine Stubberfield said that the agency was "profoundly concerned for his well-being," stressing that "after almost four years spent in harsh and isolating conditions on Manus Island, Mr. Sawari's sense of helplessness and hopelessness is acute."

"UNHCR urges the Government of Papua New Guinea to ensure that he is treated in accordance with human rights law and standards," she said. "The need to extend much-needed care to this extremely vulnerable young man is critical."

Trauma worker Janet Galbraith has also appealed for Mr Sawari to be offered sanctuary in another country, saying: "Having spoken with Loghman many times since he arrived in Fiji, I believe that this is the end for him. He is unable to survive any longer in this brutal and abusive system. His emotional and mental health have been fragile for a long time and none more so than now."

Friends and supporters of Mr Sawari have not heard from him since he was taken from a plane at Port Moresby airport on Friday for questioning.

The director of Fiji's Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, Ashwin Raj, said the deportation was in clear breach of international law and had "the possibility of exposing him to inhuman and degrading treatment".

"The deportation of Mr. Sawari raises fundamental questions about Fiji's capacity to balance the imperatives of national security with its international human rights obligations," Mr Raj said.

Mr Sawari flew to Fiji under a false name last week, telling Fairfax Media it was his final attempt to be free. "If I go back (to PNG) they will make me crazy or they put me in the jail. I'm sure about that," he said.

He was 17 when he was transferred to Manus Island in August 2013.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/vulnerable-refugee-who-fled-png-could-face-criminal-charges-20170204-gu5i44.html>

31. Manus Island refugee charged over fake passport after Fiji deportation

ABC News Online
By Michael Walsh
February 4, 2017

A former Manus Island refugee who had intended to seek asylum in Fiji has been charged with falsifying passport documents after being deported and returned to Papua New Guinea, police say.

Iranian refugee Loghman Sawari was detained by Fijian immigration officials on Friday morning while travelling with his lawyer to meet the country's immigration director to discuss his asylum claim, which had not yet been lodged.

The 21-year-old refugee was placed on a flight to Papua New Guinea, where he was questioned for several hours by immigration officials at Jacksons International Airport in Port Moresby.

The deportation has been criticised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Fiji's own Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, which said the country had breached international human rights law.

Airport Police Station Commander Jerry Yawa told the ABC Sawari was charged with falsifying passport documents under the country's Passports Act, and was transferred to the cells at Waigani police station in Port Moresby.

Under the legislation, making false or misleading statements in order to obtain an identity document is punishable by an up to K10,000 fine (\$4,102), and can include a prison term of up to six months.

Mr Yawa said Sawari had been given the opportunity to contact a local lawyer, and is expected to face court on Monday.

Port Moresby's Metropolitan Superintendent Ben Turi confirmed the information, and said more details would be made available next week.

Sawari's Fijian lawyer, Aman Ravindra Singh, said he was concerned for his client.

"I am in complete shock and devastated for Loghman Sawari at what has taken place after his illegal and forceful deportation from Fiji, I'm absolutely shocked," he said.

"The fault absolutely falls on the Fijian Government."

UNHCR 'profoundly concerned' for Sawari's welfare

In a statement released on Friday afternoon, Fiji's attorney-general Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum said the decision to deport Sawari was made due to his failure to lodge an asylum application upon arrival in Fiji.

Sawari had been in the country for 10 days prior to his expulsion.

Mr Khaiyum said the Government was advised by the UNHCR that Sawari was "not recognised as a refugee under the UNHCR mandate", and that this was a factor in its decision.

However, the UNHCR said it was "profoundly concerned" for Sawari's welfare following his deportation, and that it had "sought assurances" from Fijian authorities that he would have access to asylum procedures.

"UNHCR deeply regrets that interventions to prevent Mr Sawari's forced return were not successful," it said in a statement.

"UNHCR has long called for refugees and asylum-seekers currently in Papua New Guinea to be moved to humane conditions outside of the country. Equally, UNHCR has urged that no refugees or asylum-seekers should be returned there."

Sawari, who had been living in the city of Lae in Papua New Guinea prior to travelling to Fiji, was one of the first Manus Island refugees to move onto the country's mainland for work.

In March last year, the ABC reported that he had left his building apprenticeship in the city and had been taken in by a church after becoming homeless.

Mr Khaiyum said Sawari had "flagrantly [violated] the law" by entering Fiji with false documents, adding the country remains fully committed to international refugee law.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-04/manus-island-refugee-charged-after-fiji-deportation/8241584>

32. Pregnant Nauru asylum seeker in critical condition flown to Australia: Doctor

A pregnant asylum seeker suffering from a serious condition has reportedly been flown to Australia to receive medical attention, after Doctors for Refugees advised that Nauru medical services cannot sufficiently treat her.

SBS News
31 JAN 2017 - 11:37AM
By Andrea Booth

Five independent doctors recently said that a 37-week pregnant Kuwaiti asylum seeker with pre-eclampsia, a condition that if left untreated can lead to serious complications for both mother and baby, needs an emergency caesarian.

They urged that she be brought to Australia to receive proper medical care.

In a statement, one doctor, who did not provide their name, said: "This is a critical situation now that requires urgent attention."

Doctors for Refugees' Dr Barri Phatarfod told SBS her colleague Dr David Burger, who conducted emergency medical evacuations, told her the woman was being flown to Australia this morning after he consulted with the Immigration Department's chief medical officer Dr John Brayley.

Dr Phatarfod said the move showed that the government "cannot defy medical expertise".

The Immigration Department had told The Guardian last week that the medical services at the Nauru detention centre and Nauruan government health facilities were "comprehensive".

However, Dr Barri Phatarfod disagreed, saying the Nauru detention centre and other Nauru medical services did not have the ability to treat the woman.

She provided the "recognised serious condition" of pre-eclampsia that the woman was suffering as an example.

When pre-eclampsia occurs in Australia, the woman is brought in as an inpatient for regular monitoring of her blood pressure. She receives blood tests, and the protein levels in her urine are checked once or twice a day.

She may receive blood pressure medications and her fetus is monitored almost around the clock.

"None of these facilities are available on Nauru," Dr Phatarfod said.

Nauru women with pre-eclampsia are often taken to medical services in Australia, Singapore or Fiji, "because it's well-known that Nauru doesn't have the capacity to deal with high-risk pregnancies".

However women asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru cannot depart for any of these countries.

The Australian government's policy stipulates that refugees and asylum seekers must deliver babies on Nauru.

"[The Kuwaiti woman is] not getting special treatment, she's at a significant disadvantage."

The Australian Government had previously invested in upgrading the medical facilities on Nauru, but Dr Phatarfod said the medical services were never improved.

"That money has simply has not gone there," she said.

The Immigration Department has been contacted for comment.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/01/31/pregnant-nauru-asylum-seeker-critical-condition-flown-australia-doctor>

33. Nauru overrules Australia over decision to transfer sick pregnant refugee

Island nation says 37-year-old Kuwaiti facing a life-threatening delivery does not need to go to Queensland, despite reluctant decision by Australia to move her

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thursday 2 February 2017 19.40 AEDT

The Nauruan government has said a heavily pregnant refugee – facing a potentially life-threatening, complex delivery on Nauru – does not need to be flown to Australia to give birth, defying the Australian immigration department which reluctantly decided she should be moved.

The 37-year-old Kuwaiti is more than 36 weeks' pregnant and, according to doctors who have examined her case notes, appearing to be suffering from pre-eclampsia.

Her baby is in breech position and she has a large fibroid or benign tumour on the wall of her uterus. She has previously had a miscarriage on Nauru.

Doctors for Refugees says five obstetricians in Australia, including the president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Michael Gannon, have reviewed the woman's case notes and said she faces a complex and difficult delivery, and that she should be urgently transferred to a hospital with appropriate neonatal facilities.

Nauru – a country of 10,000 people – has limited medical facilities and only one small hospital. Nauruan women facing complex delivery are regularly flown to Australia, Fiji or Singapore to give birth.

The Australian government, which controls the offshore detention centre on the island, initially resisted calls to transport the woman to Australia, saying it provided "comprehensive medical support services" to the country.

However, after significant lobbying from doctors in Australia, the Department of Immigration's chief medical officer, John Brayley, agreed the woman should be flown to a Queensland hospital for treatment.

But the Nauruan health department issued a statement Thursday saying those calling for the woman's transfer were "not on Nauru and not aware of the facts".

"All pregnancies on Nauru are treated with due diligence and care by both Nauruan medical staff and partner health service providers," the department said.

"Presented complex cases are carefully treated and medical evacuations are activated with priority if required. Such decisions remain that of health professionals based on patient medical evaluations.

"Both mother and baby continue to be monitored by skilled and professional medical staff, who have extensive experience in the delivery of babies and pre- and postnatal care. Our medical teams and specialists are available and prepared with patient care as our first priority. We will always recommend treatment in accordance with the best interest of the patient and will not hesitate to recommend a medical evacuation if the situation requires."

Since 2015, it has been Australian government policy that asylum seekers and refugees deliver babies on Nauru because of their "propensity" to exercise their legal rights in Australia's courts and seek an injunction against their removal from Australia.

The policy has led to extraordinary circumstances on the island for pregnant refugee women.

In 2015, a government health contractor advertised on LinkedIn for a neonatologist to fly the very next day to Nauru to oversee a complex birth. The ad even invited doctors to nominate their salary for a week's work. Doctors told the government the mother should be flown, with the baby in utero, to a tertiary hospital.

Last year, a Somali refugee and her newborn infant were medically evacuated from Nauru in a critical condition and placed on life support in a Brisbane hospital after she gave birth by caesarean on the island one-month prematurely.

In Australia, when the government sought to return the infant known as Baby Asha to Nauru, protesters surrounded the Lady Cilento hospital to stop her being removed. Doctors refused to discharge the baby from hospital, stating the Nauru detention centre was not a safe environment for her. Baby Asha was ultimately discharged to live in the community in Australia.

The government's policy around babies born to refugee women has led to an unusual legal sophistry.

Babies born in Australia to women moved from offshore detention are regarded by the department as "illegal maritime arrivals" to the country, despite having never been on a boat nor having left Australia.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/02/nauru-overrules-australia-over-decision-to-transfer-sick-pregnant-refugee>

34. Pregnant refugee to be flown from Nauru to Australia to give birth

Doctors lobbied on behalf of 37-year-old woman, who faces a complex and potentially life-threatening delivery

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Friday 3 February 2017 07.00 AEDT

A heavily pregnant Kuwaiti refugee – facing a potentially life-threatening, complex delivery on Nauru – will be flown to Australia on Friday morning to give birth, Nauru's government has said.

The decision ends more than a month of lobbying by doctors, lawyers and advocates to bring her to Australia.

The 37-year-old Kuwaiti is more than 36 weeks' pregnant and, according to doctors who have examined her case notes, appearing to be suffering from pre-eclampsia.

Her baby is in breech position and she has a large fibroid or benign tumour on the wall of her uterus. She has previously had a miscarriage on Nauru.

Nauru's health department said on Thursday the woman was receiving adequate care on Nauru: "Both mother and baby continue to be monitored by skilled and professional medical staff, who have extensive experience in the delivery of babies and pre- and postnatal care."

Doctors told the Guardian a caesarean-section delivery on the island was planned.

The department said Nauru would act in accordance with the patient's best interests, and "will not hesitate to recommend a medical evacuation if the situation requires".

It is unclear if the woman's situation changed, but in a statement issued just a few hours later, late on Thursday, the Nauru health department said it had received an order from Australia to move the woman there.

"Nauru has no control over decisions by Australia on who to transfer. Within the last 30 minutes we have received confirmation from Australia that the patient will be airlifted and this is expected to happen tomorrow."

The Guardian understands the woman's potentially complex birth has been the subject of intense lobbying – public and private – in Australia.

Doctors for Refugees says five obstetricians in Australia, including the president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Michael Gannon, have reviewed the woman's case notes and said she faces a complex and difficult delivery, and that she should be urgently transferred to a hospital with appropriate neonatal facilities.

Nauru – a country of 10,000 people – has limited medical facilities and only one small hospital. Nauruan women facing complex deliveries are regularly flown to Australia, Fiji or Singapore to give birth.

The Australian government, which controls the offshore detention centre on the island, initially resisted calls to transport the woman to Australia, saying it provided "comprehensive medical support services" to the country.

But after significant lobbying from doctors in Australia, the Department of Immigration's chief medical officer, John Brayley, agreed that the woman should be flown to a Queensland hospital for treatment.

The Guardian has been told by sources in Australia and on Nauru this was resisted by Nauruan health officials, who said the woman could deliver by c-section on the island.

The Nauruan health department's statement Thursday said those calling for the woman's transfer were "not on Nauru and not aware of the facts".

The order from Australia to transfer the woman came through a few hours later.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/03/pregnant-refugee-to-be-flown-from-nauru-to-australia-to-give-birth>

35. Government pays compensation to sacked Nauru Save the Children staff

Immigration department also expresses regret to nine workers who were deported amid false allegations they had coached asylum seekers to self-harm

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Tuesday 31 January 2017 12.45 AEDT

The Department of Immigration has issued a statement of regret and paid compensation to the nine Save the Children workers who were sacked and deported from Nauru amid false allegations they had orchestrated protests and encouraged self-harm among detained asylum seekers.

In a statement published on Friday afternoon, the department said it acknowledged "that at the time of the removal direction and subsequently, it had no reason to cause doubt to be cast on the SCA employees' reputation".

In October 2014 Save the Children was directed by the immigration department to sack 10 staff. The then immigration minister, Scott Morrison, told media his information was "there may have been a level of coaching and facilitation and coordination amongst people who are working for one of our service providers".

Nine were deported from the island. The tenth sacked worker had already left Nauru.

Two subsequent reviews by Philip Moss and Christopher Doogan exonerated the workers and criticised the government. Doogan determined the government had ordered the dismissals for political reasons "on no evidence or reliable information" and recommended compensation.

Last year the department came to a similar resolution with the Save the Children organisation. In May the government also expressed its "regret" to the organisation, and indicated the undisclosed financial settlement would put Save the Children "in the position they would have been in, had the removal letter not been issued".

The amount of compensation paid to the nine employees is unknown, and they are unable to comment, but this statement also indicated it would leave the employees "in the position they would have been in" had they not been sacked.

Save the Children's contract on Nauru continued for about a year after the nine were deported.

“The department also recognises that the SCA employees have suffered detriment for which – to adopt the words of Professor Doogan – the payment of money cannot be adequate compensation,” the statement said.

“In this regard the department regrets the way in which, until the department released Professor Doogan’s review in January 2016, the allegations relied on by the department to issue the removal direction may have led other NGOs and members of the public to question the integrity of the SCA employees. The department also regrets any hurt and embarrassment caused to the SCA employees.”

In January last year one of the nine workers, Natasha Blucher, told Guardian Australia their reputations had been “slurred” by the department.

“The other really distressing thing was having to leave our clients behind, and being really concerned about their wellbeing and what happened to them,” she said at the time.

Since the 10 were sacked the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has continued to accuse advocates of encouraging self-harm among detainees but has provided no evidence.

Mat Tinkler, the director of policy and public affairs at Save the Children, welcomed the deal with the organisation’s former employees.

“These were some of our hardest working and dedicated staff and this has been a traumatic event for them and we hope that settlement with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection can bring some degree of closure,” he told Guardian Australia.

“The notion they could somehow put children in harm’s way when they are trained child protection workers and teachers was always an absurd notion. I think we’re grateful this agreement has been reached. It has been a difficult time for the staff ... but it allows them to continue with their lives.”

Tinkler said at the time Save the Children’s contract on Nauru ended in 2015, asylum seekers and refugees on the island were “only just holding on”.

“What’s most important at the moment is they are given a genuine and rapid pathway to resettlement in a safe and prosperous country.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/31/government-pays-compensation-to-sacked-nauru-save-the-children-staff>