

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Thursday, 25 January 2018

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1. Parents demand Aung San Suu Kyi is cut from children's book of role models

The Myanmar leader should be cut from Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls, critics insist

The Guardian
Jane Merrick
Sun 24 Dec '17 11.05 AEDT

It is one of the most popular children's books of 2017, a collection of stories about female role models from Amelia Earhart and Marie Curie to Hillary Clinton and Serena Williams, inspiring girls to aim high and challenge the status quo.

But Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls, likely to be in many Christmas stockings, has run into controversy because of one of the 100 women included in its pages. When the book was written last year, Aung San Suu Kyi was deemed a worthy subject: winner of the Nobel peace prize and epitome of courage in the face of oppression. But her fall from grace over her response to violence against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, described by the UN as possible genocide, has triggered calls for her to be taken out of future editions. In response, the authors, Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo, are considering removing her from reprints.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/24/good-night-stories-for-rebel-girls-aung-san-suu-kyi>

2. Sexual harassment and assault rife at United Nations, staff claim

Exclusive: Guardian investigation points to culture of impunity as UN employees allege offences including rape

The Guardian
Rebecca Ratcliffe
Fri 19 Jan 2018 03.00 AEDT

The United Nations has allowed sexual harassment and assault to flourish in its offices around the world, with accusers ignored and perpetrators free to act with impunity, the Guardian has been told.

Dozens of current and former UN employees described a culture of silence across the organisation and a flawed grievance system that is stacked against victims.

Of the employees interviewed, 15 said they had experienced or reported sexual harassment or assault within the past five years. The alleged offences ranged from verbal harassment to rape.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jan/18/sexual-assault-and-harassment-rife-at-united-nations-staff-claim>

3. Same-sex marriage sparks push for Australian bill of rights

Canberra Times
December 27 2017 - 12:00AM
Eryk Bagshaw

The Greens will use Phillip Ruddock's review of religious freedoms to build momentum for an Australian bill of rights and with Labor's support it could be put before a Senate inquiry as early as next year.

The Coalition, the Greens and the Opposition will clash over religious freedoms when Parliament resumes in February after Treasurer Scott Morrison vowed to defend Christianity from discrimination following the passing of same-sex marriage legislation.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/samesex-marriage-sparks-push-for-australian-bill-of-rights-20171226-h0a4yx.html>

4. Cate Blanchett urges Davos to give refugees more compassion

Actor uses WEF speech in Switzerland to accuse politicians of pandering to populist voices

The Guardian
Graeme Wearden in Davos
Wed 24 Jan 2018 02.14 AEDT

The actor Cate Blanchett has condemned the shameful way in which refugees are treated, and accused politicians of pandering to populist voices.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Tuesday, Blanchett called for renewed compassion to help the 65 million people who have been displaced worldwide, including 22 million refugees.

Blanchett told a session at WEF that the world has reached “a fork in the road”.

“I think it’s shameful. There’s so much misinformation about refugees,” she said. “They are forced to flee, and then they are vilified in the media.”

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/23/cate-blanchett-urges-davos-to-give-refugees-more-compassion>

5. Australia's human rights record attacked in global report for 'serious shortcomings'

Human Rights Watch criticises Indigenous incarceration rate, counter-terrorism laws and detention centre abuse

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Thu 18 Jan 2018 19.30 AED

The Australian government must act on the “serious shortcomings” in its human rights record if it wants to be a credible leader on the global stage, Human Rights Watch has said in its annual world report.

The Australian chapter of the HRW world review said that despite a strong tradition of protecting civil and political rights, “Australia has serious unresolved human rights problems” and a concerning track record on assessing other nations.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/jan/18/human-rights-watch-attacks-australias-serious-shortcomings>

6. Declassified government documents: Refugee status reforms

Canberra Times
January 1, 2018
Damien Murphy

The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Nick Bolkus, gained cabinet support for stopping repeat applications for refugee status to stop the removal of non-citizens and circumvent immigration requirements.

He told cabinet in December 1994 that the previous year, 1631 people had application for refugee status granted while 11,121 were rejected and the ill-founded applications were clogging up the system, preventing genuine refugees being dealt with expeditiously.

Mr Bolkus, in a censored report, said 34 per cent of boat arrivals lodged repeat applications.

Cabinet agreed to amend the Migration Act 1959 to place a complete bar on repeat applications for protection visas.

Mr Bolkus noted such legislation would be criticised by refugee interest groups for putting Australia in breach of international obligations with regard to refoulement.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/refugee-status-reforms-20180101-h0c0qp.html>

7. Second group of Manus Island refugees depart for US under resettlement deal

Fifty-eight men leave ‘hell that the Australian government made for us’ months after 54 refugees sent to US

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Tue 23 Jan 2018 11.24 AEDT

The second group of refugees to be accepted for resettlement in the United States from Australia’s offshore immigration regime has left Papua New Guinea for America.

Fifty-eight refugees will fly from PNG on Tuesday – most after more than four years held on Manus Island. They will fly to the US east coast, from where they will be resettled, individually and in groups, across the country.

Last year, 54 refugees from Australia's two offshore immigration islands, PNG's Manus Island and the independent Pacific state of Nauru, were resettled in the US.

Another group of 130 refugees on Nauru has been accepted for resettlement and is expected to leave the island in the next days or weeks.

About 2,000 refugees and asylum seekers remain in Australia's offshore system.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/23/second-group-of-manus-island-refugees-depart-for-us-under-resettlement-deal>

8. Second group of refugees leave Manus bound for the United States

Canberra Times
January 23 2018 - 12:18PM
David Wroe

A second group of Manus Island refugees – a planeload of 40 men mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan – have left Papua New Guinea bound for the United States under the resettlement deal with Washington.

The men left aboard a Philippine Airlines flight on Tuesday morning and will land in Manila ahead of a flight to the United States. They bring to 94 the total number of US-bound refugees who originally sought asylum in Australia by boat but ended up in detention camps on either Manus Island or Nauru.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/second-group-of-refugees-leave-manus-bound-for-the-united-states-20180123-h0mq5j.html>

9. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauru refugees petition against delays and exclusion from the US

Monday January 22, 2018
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Around 500 Nauruan refugees have signed a petition (Nauru resettlement petition) directed to Australian Border Force demanding a timetable for refugee resettlement; to be immediately resettled in Australia pending any further resettlement options and to reunite families that have been separated by Border Force and offshore detention policies.

Around 130 refugees are expected to fly to the US later this month. Forty refugees are scheduled to fly from Port Moresby (via Manila) to the US tomorrow (Tuesday, 23 January). Refugees from Nauru are scheduled to fly in February.

But no Iranians or Somalis are amongst those flying from Nauru or Manus Island.

There has been no formal announcement, but Iranians and Somalis have been excluded from the flights because of Trump's latest ban on entry of individuals from certain countries.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6554>

10. MEDIA RELEASE: Hunger strike over detention visit restrictions continues

Refugee Action Coalition
Thursday January 18, 2018

Around 160 detainees at Villawood in Sydney are continuing their hunger strike – now in its fourth day. (Thursday, 18 Jan), over the draconian restrictions to visiting.

In an attempt to break the hunger strike, Border Force has locked down the striking compounds. All visits have been banned. Activities and appointments have been suspended. Border Force has also threatened to cut medications because 'you are not eating.'

On Tuesday night (16 January), a Fijian diabetic detainee was rushed to hospital after collapsing inside the centre after 48 hours of hunger strike and lack of medication.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6547>

11. Immigration detainees launch hunger strike

Hundreds of people being held in immigration detention centres in Sydney and Melbourne have gone on a hunger strike over changes to visitation.

SBS News / AAP
Tuesday January 16, 2018

Hundreds of detainees being held in onshore immigration centres have launched a hunger strike over a crackdown on visiting restrictions.

From next week, visitors to Villawood in Sydney and Maribyrnong in Melbourne will have to give five days notice, complete lengthy forms, provide 100 points of identification, and only meet detainees one-on-one.

Lawyers, migration agents and consular officials must give one day's notice of a visit.

Visitors will also need to disclose prior criminal convictions and consent to their information being used to "maintain good order, peace and security" at the centres.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/immigration-detainees-launch-hunger-strike>

12. Malcolm Turnbull, Jacinda Ardern at odds over claim New Zealand is fuelling people smuggling

Canberra Times
January 23 2018 - 6:51PM
David Wroe

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and his New Zealand counterpart are at odds over whether New Zealand's offer to take 150 refugees from Manus Island and Nauru has driven a rise in people-smuggling operations.

When Mr Turnbull was asked on Tuesday whether New Zealand's offer to take 150 refugees had pushed up the number of people smuggler boats captured by Australia's border protection system, Mr Turnbull appeared to confirm the claim, saying "a number of" people-smuggling boats intercepted by Australian authorities stated they were ultimately aiming to settle in New Zealand.

He said "ruthless" people smugglers had been "very busily marketing and promoting New Zealand as a destination recently".

"New Zealand benefits from our Operation Sovereign Borders," he said.

The Australian newspaper cited intelligence officials on Tuesday as saying the New Zealand offer had pushed up people-smuggling activity and that at least three recent boats had been trying to reach Australia through the "back door" of New Zealand.

But Ms Ardern rejected this claim, saying: "I am advised that none of the activity that we've seen in recent times is unusual."

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/malcolm-turnbull-jacinda-ardern-at-odds-over-claim-new-zealand-is-fuelling-people-smuggling-20180123-h0n2kl.html>

13. John Birmingham: There are votes in race-baiting and that's a stain on us all

WA Today
January 8 2018 - 8:11PM
John Birmingham

About 10 years ago, we spent some time living in Moorooka while our old Queenslander was renovated. There were a lot of African families living out there too. I don't know what part of the continent they came from, but chances are a fair number had arrived as refugees from the civil war in Sudan.

They were good neighbours. Quiet people, even shy.

There was a real problem with crime in the neighbourhood, but they weren't the source. It was drunken bogans tearing around the streets at high speed, and junkies turning over houses for anything they could sell for a hit. The bogans and the junkies were white. Our dog chased a few of them off. I chased a couple more.

Peter Dutton had left the Queensland Police Force by then, so we didn't need his help securing the homestead, and maybe that's a pity. Maybe if that potato-headed munter had been forced to work that beat for a while he'd know what a disgusting travesty the race-baiting of the last week has been.

But then again, why would he care?

John Howard didn't care when he fitted up the Vietnamese in the 1980s, or the more generic brown people of his later years in government. Stirring up fear and loathing works. That's why they do it.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.watoday.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/there-are-votes-in-race-baiting-and-that-s-a-stain-on-us-all-20180108-p4yybs.html>

14. Joumanah El Matrah: The feared other: Peter Dutton's and Australia's pathology around race

Dutton wants to persuade us that those who are most disempowered in our society are our greatest threat. It widens the divide between us and them

The Guardian
Mon 8 Jan '18 04.00 AEDT
Joumanah El Matrah

In David Marr's book *Panic* he came to the realisation that he had been writing about panic, Australian panic in particular, all his career. If we are a fearful nation, we are also a compulsive one. We aggressively return to our fears, stoke our hatreds, and obsessively and routinely project everything that is disturbing within us onto others.

As a nation, we return again and again to the feared other. First it was the Italian mafias, then the unemployed youth gangs (AKA white boys) terrorising our suburbs, then the focus turned to Vietnamese gangs, moving then to Lebanese and Middle Eastern gangs, and most recently the Sudanese gangs. All the while, we are perpetually the victim of a perpetrator whose identity only shifts in class and race. It is a partnership we seem unable to do without.

From a psychological perspective, compulsions evolve in part from a failure to resolve a deeply rooted pathology. In this case it would be about our collective national delusion and the consequent obsession with gangs, specifically those with a racialised and class profile, were it not also about power and persecuting an already disenfranchised community.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/07/the-feared-other-peter-duttons-and-australias-pathology-around-race>

15. Labor lambasts Dutton for 'playing to the crowd' over Melbourne crime comments

Anthony Albanese pours scorn on Peter Dutton's claim people are too scared of African gangs to go to restaurants

The Guardian
Amy Remeikis
Thu 4 Jan '18 13.31 AEDT

Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese has fired back at Peter Dutton for "playing to the crowd" over the home affairs minister's comments that Victorians were too scared to go out to restaurants at night because of youth gangs.

On Wednesday Dutton said politicians needed to identify Melbourne crime problems as "African gang violence". "The reality is people are scared to go out to restaurants of a night time because they're followed home by these gangs," he said, without providing any evidence.

On Thursday Albanese accused the minister of dog-whistling. "I think Peter Dutton has a serious office as the minister for home affairs," he said. Albanese added he had seen no evidence of "reluctance" from the public to venture outside their homes.

"He needs to treat that great honour with the dignity and with respect and with the gravitas that it deserves. And playing to the crowd on Sydney radio, about Melbourne, doesn't make much sense.

"It doesn't actually do anything to address the real issues of crime that needs to be addressed, but we also need to put these things in perspective.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/04/labor-anthony-albanese-lambasts-peter-dutton-playing-to-the-crowd-melbourne-comments>

16. Legal body says rule of law threatened after Dutton's criticism of judiciary

Law Council says criticisms undermine judiciary's independence following home affairs minister's comments

The Guardian
Paul Karp
Mon 15 Jan 2018 15:09 AEDT

Recent attacks on Victorian judges have eroded confidence in the judiciary, threatening its independence and the rule of law, the Law Council of Australia has said.

The peak law body has issued a statement strongly backing the Law Institute of Victoria over its concerns on judges' independence after the federal home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, blamed the state's street crime on the appointment of "civil libertarians" to the courts.

Neither statement explicitly refers to Dutton's remarks but the Law Council's warns against "warring words". Last week the Victorian premier, Daniel Andrews, criticised Dutton for claiming that Victorians were "scared to go out to restaurants" because of "African gang violence".

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/15/legal-body-says-rule-of-law-threatened-after-duttons-criticism-of-judiciary>

17. Greg Barns: Time to challenge the type of politics that plays the fear card

Greg Barns
The Hobart Mercury
January 14, 2018 9:36am

IS Peter Dutton a politician cut from the same cloth as the emerging neo-fascist trend sweeping the US and Europe today? This is a serious question and one we should confront.

Let us consider Mr Dutton's statements made on the alleged African gang problem in Victoria.

By the way, there is no "gang problem" in Victoria. It is a political ruse. In fact, Victoria has just recorded the lowest crime rates in 12 years.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/talking-point-time-to-challenge-the-type-of-politics-that-plays-the-fear-card/news-story/15a8189419bca7d94981bdd4288ab2e2>

18. Dutton refuses Senate order to release details of refugee service contracts on Manus

Home affairs minister says disclosing information risks relations with PNG as standoff continues over use of local labour for security contract

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thu 18 Jan 2018 13.35 AEDT

The federal government has refused an order from the Senate to release documents on the health, construction and security services for refugees on Manus Island, saying it would "cause damage to Australia's international relations with Papua New Guinea" for the details of the offshore immigration regime to be made public.

Little is known about the remuneration and obligations of contracts signed by the Australian government with companies such as Paladin, JDA Wokman, Toll Group, NKW and International Health and Medical Services (IHMS).

One of the contracts causing controversy is that signed with the security firm Paladin Solutions, which is earning \$72m for providing security on Manus Island for four months – about \$585,000 a day. The contract amount was nearly doubled – from \$39m – but extended by a month just before it was due to expire. But Paladin staff have been kicked out by a local security firm, Kingfisher, which says it should have the lucrative contract.

In December, the Senate supported an order for the production of documents made by the Nick Xenophon Team senator Stirling Griff and the Greens senator Nick McKim requesting documents and parts of contracts detailing the health, construction and security services to be provided at the Australian-built and controlled immigration centre at West Lorengau.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/18/dutton-refuses-senate-order-to-release-details-of-refugee-services-contracts-on-manus>

19. Dutton's attacks on the judiciary are anything but conservative

Sydney Morning Herald
January 15 2018
Michael Stanton

In the midst of last week's tabloid-driven frenzy on so called "African gangs", Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton decided to attack judicial officers on talkback radio. This included a pot shot at another of Dutton's favourite targets, civil libertarians, including those who had been appointed to the bench. According to Dutton such appointments have somehow contributed to a law and order crisis in Victoria.

This forms part of a regular pattern of attacks by "conservative" politicians and commentators on the judiciary. Such attacks threaten the rule of law and the independence of judicial officers – they undermine, and are calculated to undermine, public confidence in the courts.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/duttons-attacks-on-the-judiciary-are-anything-but-conservative-20180115-h0ieqq.html>

20. Intelligence watchdog fears Home Affairs bill undermines its independence

Canberra Times
January 19 2018 - 11:00PM
Doug Dingwall & Sally Whyte

The national intelligence watchdog fears new laws following the creation of the Home Affairs mega department could open its probes to accusations of political influence and expose the Attorney-General to perceived conflicts of interest.

Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Margaret Stone has told a parliamentary inquiry that new legislation governing her agency following the portfolio's emergence will undermine her office's independence.

Under laws yet to pass federal parliament, Ms Stone argues the Attorney-General in taking responsibility for the IGIS from the Prime Minister's portfolio would join Malcolm Turnbull as one of two government figures who can compel the agency to investigate a security matter. Ms Stone told the parliamentary inquiry into the bill that the new power would likely open the Attorney-General, who authorises warrants requested by ASIO, to a perceived conflict of interest.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/intelligence-watchdog-fears-home-affairs-bill-undermines-its-independence-20180119-h0kv78.html>

21. MEDIA RELEASE: Hunger strike starts over immigration detention visits restrictions

Tuesday January 16, 2018
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Over two hundred detainees at two detention centres, Villawood in Sydney and Maribynong in Melbourne, have declared a hunger strike in protest at visiting restrictions recently announced by Border Force. The detainees have been on hunger strike for more than 24 hours, since the morning of Monday 15 January.

Posters declaring the changes would apply after 22 January went up unannounced in the centres, last week. Detainees only found out about the policy when told by their visitors.

Under the restrictions, visitors will have to give five days' notice of any visit, fill in a five-page form, with actual visits will be restricted to one on one. Visitors will also be required to have 100 points of ID when they attend the detention centre to visit.

The restrictions will hit families especially hard. Visiting minors will also now need identification.

These restrictions come on top of recent moves by Border Force to restrict what food can be brought into the detention centre and the attempt to ban mobile phones.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6539>

22. BEYOND THE WIRE: The refugees brought to Manus Island and the local people share their stories

Produced by the Australian Council for International Development and Guardian Australia

Unvarnished and unscripted, here are the stories of the people of Manus Island – those sent there against their will by the Australian government and who are waiting for their interrupted lives to restart, and Manusians for whom the island has always been home

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2018/jan/16/beyond-the-wire-the-manus-island-refugees-and-the-local-people-share-their-stories>

23. Manus Island security contract dispute leaves asylum seekers feeling 'unsafe'

ABC Radio CAF - AM
By Papua New Guinea correspondent Eric Tlozek
Wednesday January 17, 2018

Asylum seekers on Manus Island fear a dispute over a multi-million-dollar security services contract has left them without protection and vulnerable to attack.

A local security company this week stopped Paladin Solutions guards — contracted by the Australian Government — from entering new refugee accommodation, because it wants a slice of the lucrative contract.

Paladin Solutions is getting \$72 million to provide "garrison services" on the island for just over four months.

The contract value was almost doubled — from \$39 to \$72 million — in December, one month before it was due to finish.

Iranian refugee and journalist Behrouz Boochani said men from a firm called Kingfisher Security claimed they would be providing security from now on.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-17/manus-island-security-contract-dispute-refugees-feeling-unsafe/9334316>

24. MEDIA RELEASE: Mentally ill Manus asylum seeker needs urgent help

January 22, 2018
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island have raised serious concerns about the mental health of a 28-year-old Iranian man they say has become delusional.

After the man seriously self-harmed late last week (19 January), he was taken to the Lorengau hospital for his physical injuries but there is no mental health treatment available on the island. He self-harmed again the following day.

His roommates have been moved to another detention area, because of fears for their safety.

“We are extremely concerned for the Iranian man’s welfare; he has a critical mental condition and is at serious risk. All the attempts by asylum seekers on the island to get serious help have failed,” said Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition. “Since the refugees were forced out of the detention centre, the mental health crisis on Manus has escalated.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6551>

25. Refugees needing medical care told to leave children alone in offshore detention

A refugee who needs to travel for heart surgery has been told by Australian Border Force she must leave her son alone on Nauru

The Guardian
Ben Doherty and Saba Vasefi
Sat 20 Jan 2018 08.00 AEDT

Refugee parents are being told they must leave their children alone in offshore immigration detention in order to access life-saving medical treatment overseas.

An Iranian refugee held on Nauru has been told she needs heart surgery overseas, but is refusing to leave her young son unaccompanied on the island.

The Australian Border Force has told Fatemeh they will fly her to Port Moresby for the operation, but that her 16-year-old son cannot travel with her. She fears for her son’s safety if he is left alone on Nauru.

“Death and separation from my son is the same for me,” Fatemeh told Guardian Australia. “I would not go anywhere without him. All we have is each other.”

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/20/refugees-needing-medical-care-told-to-leave-children-alone-in-offshore-detention>

26. Tribunal criticised after rejecting asylum seeker’s appeal over homosexuality

Federal court finds Administrative Appeals Tribunal relied on ‘unwarranted assumptions’ and showed ‘extreme illogicality’ in rejecting Sikh man’s appeal

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thu 18 Jan 2018 16.30 AEDT

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal showed “extreme illogicality” and its decision lacked “an intelligible foundation” when it rejected the appeal of an Indian asylum seeker seeking protection in Australia because of his homosexuality, the full bench of the federal court has found.

And the judge who heard his appeal – formerly accused but cleared of apprehended bias over his extraordinary record of refusing migration appeals – “fell into error” when he also rejected the claim in an ex tempore decision, without retiring from the bench to consider it.

The AAT, and subsequently Judge Sandy Street, heard appeals from an Indian man who was seeking protection in Australia, claiming he faced persecution in his homeland because of his homosexuality.

The asylum seeker, from a conservative Sikh family in India, argued he would be persecuted because of his homosexuality if he were forcibly returned to his home country.

In support of his claim of being homosexual, he tendered evidence from 16 witnesses, including men he had met on gay dating app Grindr and with whom he had had casual sex.

But the Administrative Appeals Tribunal did not believe he was gay, finding he was not homosexual and would not “pursue a homosexual lifestyle upon his return to India”.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/18/illogicality-shown-by-tribunal-in-rejecting-protection-appeal-over-homosexuality>

27. Tim Costello: 'Help us': the Australian-made purgatory of Manus drains the refugees of hope

The government's cruelty has cut the refugees off from the countries of their birth but left them unable to reach the countries of their dreams

The Guardian
Tim Costello
Tue 16 Jan 2018 04.00 AEDT

Towards the end of last year, I travelled to two very different sites of refugee despair. The first was the vast congested refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, bloated by more than 600,000 people who identify as Rohingya Muslims who had fled their burning villages in Myanmar. In almost 15 years of international aid work, I have rarely been confronted by such misery and vulnerability.

The following month, I went to Manus Island, as part of a fact-finding mission under the auspices of the Australian Council for International Development, to witness the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers who have been stalled there for more than four years under Australia's border protection policies.

In terms of physical suffering, fear and desperation, there was no comparison. But if Cox's Bazar brought to mind the gates of hell, then Manus was a purgatory – made in Australia.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/16/help-us-the-australian-made-purgatory-of-manus-drains-the-refugees-of-hope>

28. Manusians living near detention centres say sewage running on to their land

Fearing for their health, those residing near the West Haus and Hillside Haus centres have blocked road access to the two camps

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Sat 13 Jan 2018 15.28 AEDT

Landowners on Manus Island have again blockaded the entrance to the Australian-run immigration centres, protesting over what they say is untreated sewage running from the centres on to their land, and the foul smell.

The asylum seekers and refugees inside the centres have been told by security not to venture outside the fenced area for safety reasons.

Pakistani refugee Ezatullah Kakar said the protest began, without warning, early on Saturday. “Around 6am this morning, the local landowners blocked the West Haus and Hillside camps road. No one is allowed to use the road,” he said.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/13/manusians-living-near-detention-centres-say-sewage-running-on-to-their-land>

29. Locals protest after video purportedly shows sewage flowing down hill near detention sites

ABC News
By Papua New Guinea correspondent Eric Tlozek
Saturday January 13, 2018, 12:23pm

Asylum seekers on Manus Island say local residents have blocked access to their accommodation in a protest over sewerage problems at the site.

Sri Lankan refugee Shamindan Kanapadhi said between 10 and 15 neighbouring residents had barricaded the road and were complaining about the smell of sewage and the fact it overflows onto their land.

"So they're saying that the sewerage, it's smelly and there is no proper drainage system," he said.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-13/manus-island-video-purportedly-shows-sewage-flowing-down-hill/9326664>

30. Manus Island: Sewage protesters' road block removed by police

ABC News

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Eric Tlozek

Sunday January 14, 2018, 9:59am

Police on Manus Island say they have cleared a roadblock by residents outside new asylum seeker accommodation.

Neighbouring residents blocked access to the West Haus and Hillside Haus compounds yesterday in a protest about leaking sewage.

Manus Province Police commander David Yapu said police were forced to clear the barricades and allow access to the sites.

"The locals have no authority to set up road block and hinder service into the area. What transpired yesterday was unacceptable and an illegal road block," he said.

"Last night I had to use my authority and got my mobile squad into the Hillside and physically removed the road block."

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-14/police-lift-manus-island-blockade-over-sewerage-problem/9327744>

31. UN calls on Australia to resolve plight of Manus Island asylum seekers

Reuters/ABC

Saturday December 23, 2017

The United Nations refugee agency has called on Australia to find a humane solution to the plight of hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers living on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

Speaking at a UNHCR briefing at Geneva, Cecile Pouilly described the situation as critical.

"In light of the continued perilous situation on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island for refugees and asylum seekers abandoned by Australia, UNHCR has called again this week on the Australian Government to live up to its responsibility and urgently find humane and appropriate solutions."

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-23/un-urges-australia-to-resolve-plight-of-manus-island-detainees/9283884>

32. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus asylum seekers expel ex-Wilson guards from Hillside Camp

Thursday December 28, 2017

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Asylum seekers at the Hillside Camp, Manus Island have expelled all ex-Wilson Security guards from their camp area.

Former Wilson's guards, who used to work at the detention centre, are now employed by Paladin, the company contracted to provide security for the new camps, since asylum seekers and refugees were forcibly evicted from the Lombrum detention centre.

But the Wilson guards are also among those who brutalised the asylum seekers and refugees during the 24 days of siege of the detention centre, when food, water and power was cut off.

Twice, yesterday (Wednesday, 27 December) afternoon, ex-Wilson guards turned up at Hillside. The first two left after being confronted. Later, that afternoon, when four ex-Wilson guards turned up, all the Hillside detainees turned out to run them out of the camp.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6507>

33. 'Every day I am crushed': the stateless man held without trial by Australia for eight years

A UN body says Said Imasi should be released and compensated. But he still faces a potentially limitless detention

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Mon 15 Jan 2018 04.00 AEDT

Said Imasi is a man without a past: a man, it seems, without a future.

He doesn't know where he was born, or when. He has few documents to demonstrate who he is or where he comes from.

He believes, but cannot prove, he was born in Spain's Canary Islands, to a mother from Western Sahara – a barren, contested wedge of land in north-west Africa. He knows nothing about his father.

Orphaned as a child, he was trafficked into mainland Europe where he was kept as a house slave in Belgium before escaping, living on the streets of Paris and Frankfurt, and falling in with criminal gangs in Norway.

He has lived a life on the peripheries of every society he has known and concedes that includes an existence sometimes outside of the law. He admits to travelling on false passports, he says, because it is impossible for a person without a country to gain one legitimately.

Imasi arrived in Australia – by plane and intending only to pass through – in January 2010.

But he has been detained in this country – without allegation, charge, or trial – for nearly eight years. It has cruelled his physical health and sent him plunging into depths of suicidal depression.

Imasi is stateless – there is no country on earth that accepts him as their citizen – and his case appears to have confounded Australian authorities.

In five separate reports to parliament, the commonwealth ombudsman has urged the immigration department, in increasingly strident terms, to consider releasing him into the community. Each time Imasi has been refused.

Now, the United Nations human rights committee's working group on arbitrary detention has told Australia its ongoing detention of Imasi is unlawful, indefinite and arbitrary and he has been denied his right to challenge his incarceration before a court.

"Seeking asylum is not a criminal act; on the contrary, seeking asylum is a universal human right," the working group said.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/15/every-day-i-am-crushed-the-stateless-man-held-without-trial-by-australia-for-eight-years>

34. 'I need my family': how a refugee held on Nauru is struggling to make a new life in Cambodia

Abdullah hoped that moving to Cambodia under Australia's refugee deal would allow him to be reunited with his family. But that has not happened

The Guardian
Per Liljas
Sun 14 Jan 2018 08.05 AEDT

Abdullah leans against a scooter on a Phnom Penh backstreet and blows kisses into his smartphone.

"Be patient, soon we'll be together again," he tells the video image of his wife and three children. But as soon as he hangs up his smile flickers away. He was detained for two-and-a-half years in an Australian-run detention centre on the island nation of Nauru and hoped that moving to Cambodia would enable him to be reunited with his family. That has not happened.

Since he arrived in Cambodia in November 2016, he has settled down in the capital, opened a restaurant, started working out and looks ready to put a “hellish” chapter of his life behind him. Still, the prolonged insecurity weighs heavy on his already frail nerves.

“I think I can have a good life in Cambodia,” he says. “But without my family I’m just drifting along, with no real control of my life.”

Cambodia’s agreement to take refugees from Australian-run detention centres predates Australia’s deal with the US – the one agreed by the Obama administration that Donald Trump protested against. In 2014, Australia and Cambodia reached a \$55m deal to transfer people whose refugee status had been determined. Three-and-a-half years later, only seven detainees have taken up the offer. Four of them left Cambodia within a year. Abdullah is focused on making Cambodia his home.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/14/i-need-my-family-how-a-refugee-held-on-nauru-is-struggling-to-make-a-new-life-in-cambodia>

35. Refugee in 'medical emergency' stranded on Nauru for more than a year

Doctors believe man’s transfer stalled because he may never be well enough to return to Nauru and Australian has a policy of returning refugees once medical treatment complete

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thu 11 Jan '18 10.32 AEDT

A refugee suffering an acute mental health crisis and a broken ankle that requires surgery has been waiting more than a year to be transferred from Australia’s offshore immigration centre on Nauru for medical treatment.

But doctors fear Zamal – a pseudonym – has now become “too sick to transfer” because he may never be well enough to return to Nauru.

Australian Border Force has not made a decision on Zamal’s transfer despite Nauruan authorities twice approving his transfer, and repeated warnings from doctors that he presents a “medical emergency” and cannot be cared for on the island.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/11/refugee-in-medical-emergency-stranded-on-nauru-for-more-than-a-year>

36. Asylum seeker advocates claim 'fast track' process is unfair

ABC Radio CAF
By Natasha Robinson on AM
Duration: 3min 4sec
Broadcast: Fri 5 Jan 2018, 8:09am

Featured:
Sam, Afghani asylum seeker
Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia
Jana Favero, director of advocacy, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Thousands of asylum seekers who arrived by boat under the former federal Labor government remain in limbo, as authorities struggle to clear a large backlog of refugee claims.

The Turnbull Government was inundated with claims recently when it set a deadline for refugee applications to be lodged.

Asylum seeker advocates claim the process, known as fast tracking, is unfair.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/asylum-seeker-advocates-claim-fast-track-process-is-unfair/9305806>

37. MEDIA RELEASE: Iranian asylum seekers protest in Jakarta: Aust must lift the ban

Thursday January 4, 2018
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul - mobile 0417 275 713

A group of Iranian asylum seekers stranded in Jakarta held a protest outside the Iranian embassy yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon.

Another group of asylum seekers in Makassar were denied permission to hold a protest; authorities even threatened to arrest any asylum seekers who held a demonstration.

“We wanted to hold a peaceful gathering to allow us to support our fellow Iranians, our friends and relatives who are being murdered by the regime in Iran,” one of the organisers in Indonesia told the Refugee Action Coalition.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6519>

38. Immigration paid out \$230,000 in compensation claims last year, FOI documents show

ABC Radio CAF - AM
Exclusive by Sarah Whyte
Friday January 12, 2018, 11:41am

More than 20 compensation cases brought against the Immigration Department for wrongful imprisonment or personal injury have been paid out in the past financial year, costing the Federal Government \$230,000.

In documents obtained under freedom of information by the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the Department of Finance settled 23 cases relating to immigration detainees and staff between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017.

In one case in Indonesia, \$32,313 was awarded for personal injury in detention, while in Australia two cases were paid the total of \$69,508 for wrongful detention.

Nine cases involved detention staff, including two claims from workers on Manus Island were also compensated \$69,108.

These cases do not include what is thought to be the largest human rights settlement in Australian legal history last year, when the Commonwealth was ordered to pay \$70 million, plus \$20 million in legal costs.

FULL STORY AT [http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-12/immigration-paid-\\$230,000-in-compensation-claims,-foi-reveals/9318552](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-12/immigration-paid-$230,000-in-compensation-claims,-foi-reveals/9318552)

39. Union denounces outsourcing of home affairs department call centre

Public Sector Union says deal with Datacom puts sensitive personal information at risk, reduces transparency and will degrade the quality of service

The Guardian
Christopher Knaus
Wed 10 Jan 2018 15.44 AEDT

The Australian government will pay multinational corporation Datacom to run the Department of Home Affairs' call centre, the latest in a string of critical government services to be privatised.

Under the deal Datacom will handle 1.5m visa and immigration queries a year through an Adelaide call centre, which will replace a Sydney-based operation.

The decision has provoked a furious response from the Community and Public Sector Union.

The union's acting deputy secretary, Brooke Muscat-Bentley, said it put sensitive personal information at risk, reduced transparency and would degrade the quality of service.

“This is a devastating decision for the 250 dedicated staff currently doing this work, along with their families,” Muscat-Bentley said. “But also for the people who are so reliant on their assistance to navigate Australia's complex immigration rules and processes.

“Outsourcing this kind of work to a private company like Datacom means paying more and receiving less in return.”

The decision follows a similar privatisation at the Department of Human Services last year.

The government announced multinational corporation Serco – a business that has attracted significant controversy in Australia and abroad – would take over the Centrelink call centre to improve wait times.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/10/union-slams-outsourcing-of-home-affairs-department-call-centre>

40. Partner of man due for deportation begs Dutton not to make her a single mother

Exclusive: Vietnamese man asks minister to avoid separating him from partner and daughter on New Year's Day

The Guardian
Calla Wahlquist
Sat 30 Dec '17 14.05 AEDT

The partner of a Vietnamese man who is scheduled to be deported from Australia on 1 January has pleaded with the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, to let him remain and help raise their 10-month-old child.

HPN arrived in Australia by boat as a 12-year-old in 2010 and has lived for the past seven years in community detention in Perth with other asylum seekers who travelled as unaccompanied minors.

He met his partner, Kesinee Kingrak, when they both attended Greenwood College high school and they began dating in 2014. Their daughter, Lily, was born in February and they planned to announce their engagement in the new year.

His application for refugee status and subsequent review were rejected in 2011 and then reviewed again after a data breach.

He was taken from community detention to the Perth immigration detention centre on 22 December, the day before his 20th birthday. On Thursday his lawyers lodged a federal court application requesting a judicial review of his refugee application on the grounds that the initial rejection failed to consider all the relevant protocols.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/dec/30/partner-of-man-due-for-deportation-begs-dutton-not-to-make-her-a-single-mother>

41. Tortured by police, separated from his family for years, but Tamil refugee still says nandri – thank you

Rescued after 22 hours in freezing water, Para Paheer applied for asylum in Australia. An extraordinary friendship with a Victorian woman helped ease the pain of waiting eight years to see his wife and son

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Mon 25 Dec '17 10.02 AEDT

The word nandri comes easily and often to Para Paheer: to the bishop who rescued him from torture, to the ship's captain who plucked him from the ocean after 22 freezing hours in the water, to the Victorian family who adopted him in his adopted land, and to the Australian community at large for his family's second chance.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/dec/25/tortured-by-police-separated-from-his-family-for-years-but-tamil-refugee-still-says-nandri-thank-you>

42. MEDIA RELEASE: Refugee advocates call on Canstruct not to evict distressed family on Nauru

Tuesday January 2, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Canstruct, the Australian company contracted to provide services to refugees on Nauru, has told a distressed Nepalese family that they will return this afternoon (Tuesday) to forcibly remove the family from the medical centre in RPC 1.

The family was placed in RPC 1, on doctors' orders, in early December for treatment, care and observation of their 14-year-old mentally ill daughter.

Despite experiments with changes in medication, there has been no improvement in their daughter's condition. Yet, Canstruct now say the family must return to the tents of the detention centre in RPC 3.

The daughter has a history of attempted suicide in RPC 3, and will be at serious risk again. There is no proper supervision available in RPC 3.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=6514>

43. Border Force boss Roman Quaedvlieg clocks up seven months' paid leave while under investigation

Canberra Times
December 28 2017 - 1:01AM
Michael Koziol

Australian Border Force head Roman Quaedvlieg will on Friday clock up seven months of paid leave – funded by taxpayers – while under investigation for possible abuse of power.

Frustrations are mounting within the newly formed Home Affairs Department, as well as the corruption watchdog, about the length of time the investigation is taking.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/border-force-boss-roman-quaedvlieg-clocks-up-seven-months-paid-leave-while-under-investigation-20171226-h0aewn.html>

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/border-force-boss-roman-quaedvlieg-clocks-up-seven-months-paid-leave-while-under-investigation-20171226-h0aewn.html>

44. Immigration worker sacked for tweets takes compensation fight to tribunal

Canberra Times
December 29 2017 - 12:00AM
Doug Dingwall

An Immigration Department decision to sack a public servant for tweeting criticisms of Australia's detention policies will be put to the legal test again after the government refused to compensate her for post-traumatic stress.

Michaela Banerji is taking the government to an appeals tribunal after federal workplace insurer Comcare refused to compensate her for the psychological condition that developed after she was sacked in 2013 over tweets from a pseudonymous Twitter account.

The former public servant was working in the Immigration Department when co-workers learnt she was behind the tweets railing against the government's treatment of asylum seekers.

She lost a high-profile attempt to stop her dismissal in the Federal Circuit Court in 2013, a decision seen as likely to curtail other bureaucrats' use of social media when judge Warwick Neville found Australians had no "unfettered implied right (or freedom) of political expression".

After Comcare denied Ms Banerji compensation for her post-traumatic stress, she took the workplace insurer to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal last month where her lawyers hope the case is referred to the full bench of the Federal Court for a fresh round of arguments over whether her sacking was lawful.

In a case that Ms Banerji's lawyers say could have implications for other public and private sector employees, her legal counsel says Comcare's refusal was based on a dismissal that was unlawful because it intruded on her right to free political expression.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/immigration-worker-sacked-for-tweets-takes-compensation-fight-to-tribunal-20171228-h0avfe.html>

45. Alleged SIEV-X people smuggler's new life in New Zealand

December 24, 2017
Canberra Times
Craig Hoyle

Maythem Radhi's wife whispers a prayer, hands pressed together beneath her face in supplication. Her dark eyes retreat even further into shadow beneath a soft black cap.

She strokes the back of her husband's neck; he runs his hand through his curly black hair before leaning one arm forward on the boardroom table of an Auckland law office.

They shiver. The air conditioning is running strong, and the solid leather chairs and dark panelling feel cold to the touch.

Or perhaps it's apprehension. Radhi and his wife know they may have only 48 hours before he's ordered to surrender for extradition and taken to the airport.

"Today my life will change," he says.

Radhi is accused of trying to smuggle asylum seekers on a boat which sank south of Indonesia, resulting in the death of 146 children, 142 women and 65 men. Australian Federal Police allege he was part of a smuggling group, along with Abu Quassey and Khaleed Daoed, who sent hundreds to their death on the SIEV-X in 2001.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/alleged-sievx-people-smugglers-new-life-in-new-zealand-20171222-h099yy.html>