

THE WILFUL KILLING OF REZA BERATI

on February 17, 2014

inside the Manus Island detention centre

media reports and published opinion

1b. Media Reports 24 February – 7 March

FROM MORRISON SPIN TO A QUESTIONING SENATE

Home page for this document: <http://www.safecom.org.au/reza-berati.htm>



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Scott Morrison under fire from Labor, Greens over handling of Manus Island riot

ABC News Online

By political correspondent Emma Griffiths

First posted Mon 24 Feb 2014, 1:47pm AEDT

Updated Mon 24 Feb 2014, 4:34pm AEDT

The Federal Opposition is targeting the Immigration Minister and his handling of the Manus Island riot, with one Labor senator calling for Scott Morrison to resign and another accusing him of having "blood on his hands".

Last week, one asylum seeker was killed and about another 60 injured - some seriously - in a protest at the Manus Island detention centre.

Mr Morrison issued a statement late on Saturday to "correct the record" about the location of the violence after initially saying most of the trouble had occurred outside the centre.

He said new information indicated "the majority of the riotous behaviour" took place within the fences of the facility.

He said the new advice "casts further doubt" on the initial information he had that the man who was killed, 23-year-old Iranian Reza Berati, was injured outside the centre.

Mr Morrison said the man had severe head injuries, but an investigation is continuing into how he received those injuries.

West Australian Labor Senator Sue Lines says the Minister's handling of the issue has been disgraceful.

"He definitely has blood on his hands," she said.

"The more he tries to shirk the issue, the more he pretends to be the tough cop on the beat - hopefully the Australian public will see the truth behind this."

And Labor colleague Doug Cameron has joined the Greens in calling for Mr Morrison to resign or be sacked.

"I'd like to see Morrison step down," he said.

"I'd like to see someone with a bit of compassion in there as well. These are human beings that we're dealing with and ... people treat this as though it's some political game or it's some pub fight."

"There is a real problem there and I think Scott Morrison is just in attack mode all the time and that's not good enough."

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has stopped short of calling for Mr Morrison to be sacked, but says the incident is "as serious as it gets".

"The death of a young man and the implication that once he was outside the wire that he was taking the risk upon himself, this turning out to be false and he died within a facility run by Australian-

funded contractors, Australian Government-funded contractors, that's as serious as it gets," he told ABC Local Radio in Melbourne.

Abbott criticised for 'wimp' remark

The Opposition has also criticised the Prime Minister's defence of Mr Morrison as an "outstanding minister".

Yesterday, Tony Abbott knocked back Greens' calls for the Minister to be sacked by saying: "You don't want a wimp running border protection, you want someone who is strong, who is decent and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent."

Mr Shorten has criticised the "muscularity" of the statement.

"Tony Abbott says he doesn't want a wimp for a minister. I just want someone who knows what's going on," Mr Shorten said this morning.

Labor's Immigration spokesman Richard Marles says he is "appalled" by the language.

"These are comments which are more suited to a school yard than a statesman," he said.

"This is not a macho contest."

This morning, Mr Morrison continued to defend his handling of the issue and referred to inquiries by the PNG government and his department into the incident.

"There are still a lot of questions to be answered - I have a lot of questions that I want to be answered - just like I think the media does, but more importantly, the Australian people, and people in Papua New Guinea want answers, and that's what the reviews are about," he told AM.

Morrison launches counter-attack

In Question Time, the Minister responded to Opposition queries about the flow of information by saying that on Saturday it became "essential to correct the record".

He told Parliament the Immigration Department's inquiry into the matter will look at "all of the issues that relate to this incident", including those stemming from Labor's time in government.

"That will include how this centre was specified, and who set it up and how it was set up," Mr Morrison said.

"It'll go into the performance of the service contractors that those opposite contracted, it will go into the security arrangements that were put in place and left to the Opposition when we formed government.

"It'll go into all of those and it'll go into the conduct of myself and those on this side and our handling of these issues since we took over responsibility for these centres."

Mr Morrison also launched a counter-attack on Labor, criticising former immigration minister Tony Burke for his handling of last year's riot at the detention centre on Nauru.

"It took him a full week to front the Australian people to announce the review into the Nauru processing centre that burnt down on his watch - it was a melt down on your watch," he accused Mr Burke in Parliament.

Mr Burke, now Manager of Opposition Business, protested that it was not relevant to the question.

"There are no end of opportunities for political point-scoring - we are dealing with an issue where a man has died," he said.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-24/morrison-under-pressure-to-resign-over-manus-island-riot/5279714

Tony Abbott stands by Scott Morrison: 'You don't want a wimp running border protection'

The Age

February 24, 2014

David Wroe and Jonathan Swan

with James Robertson, Rory Callinan and AAP

Tony Abbott has defended his Immigration Minister Scott Morrison against calls for the minister to be sacked, saying the Australian people would not want a "wimp" defending their borders.

The Prime Minister's intervention on Sunday afternoon came on a day of mounting pressure on Mr Morrison after he was forced to admit he had misinformed Australians about the violence and death of an asylum seeker in the Manus Island detention centre.

The violent clashes at the detention centre a week ago - now the subject of an independent inquiry - will come under further scrutiny this week as Parliament resumes and senate estimates hearings begin.

The Greens and refugee advocates called for Mr Morrison's resignation after he admitted late on Saturday evening that most of the violence - including the death of 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Berati - had likely happened inside the centre, not outside, as he'd first claimed.

His admission raises serious questions about the management of the centre by private security firm G4S and doubts about the flow of information to the minister, who made his correction five days after the incident.

Nevertheless, Mr Abbott said his immigration minister was doing a "sterling" job in stopping the boats and had used the best information available to him at the time he made his original statements.

"You don't want a wimp running border protection," he said. "You want someone who is strong, who is decent and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent."

Mr Abbott added there had been "very little damage" to the centre itself in the riot. "Now, obviously you would rather not have riots, but if there are riots they have to be dealt with and this one was dealt with," he said.

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles said on Monday that he was "appalled" by the Prime Minister's "wimp" comment.

"These are comments which are more suited to a school yard than a statesman," Mr Marles told ABC radio.

"This is not a macho contest," he added. "When I hear the Prime Minister, my initial reaction is he just needs to grow up."

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said on Monday that Mr Abbott's defence of Mr Morrison for not being a "wimp" was irrelevant.

"We don't need people who are wimps or not wimps, we need people who know what they're doing," he told ABC radio in Melbourne.

Mr Morrison's statement underscored the fact that the spotlight is now on G4S staff, who are responsible for security inside the centre, while reiterating that detainees were putting themselves at risk by engaging in "riotous and aggressive behaviour".

He added that "in such circumstances, service providers [referring to G4S] must conduct themselves lawfully and consistent with the service standards set out in their contract".

Mr Morrison said last week that he could guarantee the safety of detainees if they "remain in the centre and act co-operatively".

He stood by that remark yesterday, though he was unable to say whether Mr Berati or any of the wounded detainees had been rioting or behaving aggressively.

Asked whether he had confidence in G4S's handling of the incident, Mr Morrison said: "Well I am going to wait for the review before I draw any conclusions on that front."

Mr Morrison said that he'd learnt only on Saturday that he'd been wrong in claiming most of the violence happened outside the centre.

In a statement on Sunday, G4S stepped back from its previous assertions that its staff had acted professionally.

"G4S will take the strongest disciplinary action against any employee found to have been involved in any wrongdoing against any person in our care, the laws of PNG and our strict code of ethics," it said.

Local workers have been kept out of the centre in recent days, with only foreign employees managing the workload. A worker told Fairfax Media that the situation highlighted the tension and fear now between asylum-seekers and locals.

David Manne, the refugee lawyer who scuttled the Gillard government's Malaysia Solution, said the government was in breach of the UN Refugee Convention and other obligations under international law.

"Australia's core obligation to asylum seekers is to protect them from harm - an obligation which cannot be met by sending them to Papua New Guinea," he said.

"The many people seeking protection in Australia are fleeing from the same forms of inhumanity unfolding on Manus Island. [These include] arbitrary incarceration, brutal harm and death."

One Liberal MP, who sits on the right-wing flank of the party, said it was not good enough that it took Mr Morrison the best part of a week to confirm to the Australian public a fact as central as whether the violence occurred inside or outside the detention centre.

"I don't know when Morrison found out," the MP said. "But something like this, it should not take the best part of a week to inform the public."

Manus Island member of Parliament Ron Knight said the violence could have been prevented had G4S been more open about what was going on inside the centre.

He said he'd sent two of his staff to the centre last Monday afternoon - hours before the riot erupted - to investigate but they had been turned away by an Australian security guard.

"If they'd told us what was happening, we could have had - in two or three hours - two more police squads in the base, and that would have been a serious deterrent," he said.

Mr Marles said on Sunday that Mr Morrison's admission of giving wrong information raised "enormous questions" about his ability to manage the issue.

"This is a man who has no idea what's going on at Manus Island," he said.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Mr Morrison had to resign. "As a country we failed those who asked us to keep them safe," she said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-stands-by-scott-morrison-you-dont-want-a-wimp-running-border-protection-20140223-33asx.html

Manus Island detention centre security staff allowed armed locals into facility, witnesses say

ABC-TV - 7.30

By PNG correspondent Liam Cochrane, staff

First posted Mon 24 Feb 2014, 10:22pm AEDT

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A witness to violence at the Manus Island detention centre last Monday night says guards from the security firm G4S allowed locals armed with makeshift weapons into the facility.

The Federal Government has backed away from its initial claims about what happened during the violence at its off-shore detention centre that killed one detainee and left dozens more injured.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison initially said 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Berati sustained a fatal head injury on February 17 while outside the detention centre, but on Saturday he said new information suggested the incident, along with much of the riot, occurred inside the centre's perimeter.

At the scene that night were expatriate G4S guards, most of them Australian, locally engaged Papua New Guinean G4S guards both in uniform and out of uniform, the Incident Response Team (IRT) and PNG's notorious police mobile squad - who were the only ones armed.

A Papua New Guinean guard employed by G4S has told ABC's 7.30 program - on condition of anonymity for fear of losing his job - that the unrest began when asylum seekers were taunting the local staff.

A large crowd of local residents had also gathered to watch a stand-off that continued for several hours.

The protests were concentrated in Mike compound, but as detainees in Foxtrot compound were taken to a nearby playing field for safety some escaped and joined in the riot.

A witness who watched the unrest from about 100 metres away - who would not be identified for fear of repercussions from security guards - said 10 to 15 locals armed with lengths of wood got involved.

He says asylum seekers were taunting local staff with highly offensive insults and G4S guards asked the locals to come inside the centre.

Staff let locals into centre

The only image to emerge from the night of February 17 appears to show the G4S riot team at the fence of the compound.

The witness says the G4S guards wanted to get inside.

"The police fire warning shots and that scared the clients and they went into their rooms. And that's when G4S went in," he told the ABC.

"And when the G4S get into the camp they belt, they fight with the clients and belt them very badly. Some are wounded, blood run over their face."

Witness and guards say some G4S staff were injured by stones or by asylum seekers fighting back but there have been conflicting reports about whether local residents joined in the brawl.

"The locals came to see what's happening, they were on the road to see what's happening," the witness said

"The G4S guards just break the fence down they told everybody to go in and stop them and hit them and fight them.

"Because the G4S guards want manpower to help them so they took them inside, the locals helped them."

Besides firing the shots, according to this witness, the police mobile squad played a limited role and he claims it was Papua New Guinean G4S guards who did most of the fighting.

Some of the asylum seekers, who tried to escape the violence by hiding in a gym were dragged out and brought assaulted, the witness says.

The expat guards reportedly stayed out of the violence for the most part trying to calm the situation and overseeing operations.

A spokesperson said the company supports the government review and it takes allegations that G4S staff were involved in violence "seriously".

"We as a company do not tolerate violent or abusive behaviour from our employees," the company said in a statement last week.

"We support the investigation of the incident that was announced by Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, and we will fully cooperate with that investigation."

Detainees sustained 'blunt trauma'

An Australian G4S guard - who requested anonymity because of his contract with the company - told the ABC that Mr Berati was hit with lengths of wood and metal poles taken from beds, and had his head or neck stomped on.

However, the ABC cannot verify the accuracy of this information.

Other seriously injured asylum seekers were rushed to the local hospital 20 kilometres away.

"Someone with a blunt, possibly a blunt trauma to the left orbit. It was grossly swollen, he couldn't look out the left eye," Lorengau Hospital acting director of medical services Dr Changol Amai said.

Dr Amai says almost all of those treated by medical staff were Iranian.

A local doctor, familiar with tribal violence, says asylum seekers underestimated what could happen when a group of Papua New Guinean men felt slighted.

"Once the first punch is thrown, it will go right until the end. That's one thing which I'm sure the refugees or even the Australian government hasn't taken into account, because this is the way we are," Dr Amai said.

Some locals on Manus Island believe the violence could be repeated if the processing of refugee applications is seen to drag on.

Following the deadly riot, the protests have stopped and security around the facility tightened.

Twice the ABC was forced by local police to delete footage, once under direct threat of arrest.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-24/armed-locals-let-into-manus-island-detention-centre-witness/5281012

Revealed: G4S guard says he invited in PNG police dog squad before Manus riot

- PNG police with dogs asked to enter detention centre on 17 February
- Guard's statement written morning after riot names Reza Barati
- Official incident log says G4S 'lost control' of local riot squad
- 'No Australian will tell us what to do,' one local said

Oliver Laughland

theguardian.com

Monday 24 February 2014

The Papua New Guinean police dog squad was invited into the Manus Island detention centre under instruction from a senior G4S guard before a riot erupted on 17 February, according to a graphic statement seen by Guardian Australia.

The statement of a guard, employed by the security contractor G4S which runs the detention centre for the Australian government, was written the morning after the violence and provides the most detailed description and timeline yet of how events unfolded in the Manus clashes, which left one asylum seeker dead and dozens injured.

Guardian Australia has also seen a page of what is understood to be the official "incident report" provided to the Immigration Department, which shows how G4S staff "lost control" of the local riot squad during Monday night's unrest.

The guard's first-hand account of the evening, of which Guardian Australia has seen a section, paints a terrifying picture of events in the buildup to the violence.

At 6.45pm, the guard writes, he saw 36 PNG mobile squad police, 10 police dog squad officers with four dogs, "12 to 15" PNG police and "a few" local maintenance staff outside the centre.

At the same time he overheard local maintenance staff just outside the centre, telling local police "this is our land and no EX-Pat Australian or New Zealander will tell us what to do on our land, if the transferees come outside of that fence line (as he pointed to Oscar [compound inside the detention centre] fence line) then we will do whatever we need to, this is our land we are in charge here ... "

The statement says the guard informed a senior G4S manager of the threatening conversation but at 9.44pm was instructed by the same manager to invite two PNG police dog squad officers into the compound.

The guard describes how events deteriorated after the PNG police entered the centre:

"As the two Police and dogs entered this area the Transferees from Mike Compound became aggressive and started throwing rocks at the dogs and Police handlers, the Police handlers and dogs attempted to stand their ground but due to the barrage of rocks they withdrew behind the fence at Gate Golf 2. The transferees continued to become more aggressive and armed themselves with pipes and covered their faces with 'T shirts' and continued to throw rocks at the Police and G4S Security Officers."

The guard then says a group of around five to eight detainees pushed over an internal fence within Mike compound, where it is understood the majority of the conflict took place.

The statement was written at 8.37am the morning after the riot. That same morning the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, said: “PNG police did not enter the centre and ... their activities related only to dealing with transferees who breached the external perimeter.” Five days later the minister conceded that the rioting and “response” occurred within the centre.

The guard’s statement also names Reza Barati as the asylum seeker killed during the rioting – indicating that personnel were aware of who had been killed immediately after the event. Morrison did not name Barati until four days after.

The page of the G4S incident report gives further details of how G4S managers lost control of the local riot squad. G4S confirmed to Guardian Australia that this incident log was created the day after the riot.

At 11.20pm, it says, the fence at Oscar compound was breached. “At this time,” the report says, “multiple code Greens [escapes] were reported in Oscar compound where transferees had armed themselves with improvised weapons.”

Seven minutes later guards witnessed “police units inside Mike compound”. It continues, “observation of ongoing violence between a) Police on transferee and b) transferee on transferee”.

According to the report, at 11.30pm, the police mobile squad withdrew from Mike compound and the evacuation of casualties began. But the report says that at exactly the same time the officer in charge of the local G4S riot team “lost control” and members of the team “dispersed into the immediate area of Mike compound”.

At 11.37pm the official annotating events and the radio operator were evacuated from the site, “due to the ongoing risk to personnel”.

At this time asylum seekers inside Mike compound were described as “frightened and distracted” and medical staff were brought in to deal with casualties.

By 12.05am on 18 February one compound, Foxtrot, which is next to Mike compound, was completely empty.

By 1am G4S officers began to push asylum seekers back into the central Oscar compound. At this point, the report states, an officer “starts mediation with transferees to bring an end to the protest”.

It continues: “All Oscar compound Transferees in the compound and things start to settle down and by 0120 the Transferees inform G4S SS0 [Safety Security Officer] that they have finished for the night.

An eyewitness account of scenes at the Hotel Bibby, the floating accommodation block used by contractors on Manus, published by Guardian Australia on Tuesday, describes wounded asylum seekers being taken by G4S personnel on ute to a makeshift hospital.

“They were just makeshift beds. Transferees were carried in on sheets. Blood everywhere, crying,” the contractor told Guardian Australia. “There were 30 or 40 clients down there. We had gunshot wounds, some with head injuries.”

The contractor said asylum seekers who were treated by medical staff all claimed they had not been involved in the protests and some reported being dragged out of their beds in darkness and beaten.

A spokesman for G4S said: “We cannot confirm the veracity of any individual witness statements at this time. We have received numerous witness statements and they will all be made available to the Cornall review.

“We do not wish to compromise the integrity of that review by commenting on individual statements at this time.

“It is not G4S’s role to provide incident reports to Minister Morrison. G4S provides these reports to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.”

A spokeswoman for the immigration minister said: “All relevant documents will be made available to the Cornall review. It will be a matter for the review to establish the facts of the incident on Manus Island. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt the findings of the review.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/revealed-g4s-guard-says-he-invited-in-png-police-dog-squad-before-manus-riot

Manus Island MP Ron Knight says detention centre unrest was avoidable

The Age

February 24, 2014

David Wroe and Rory Callinan

Manus Island MP Ron Knight says last Monday's violence could have been avoided if detention centre managers had not refused entry to Mr Knight's staff a few hours before the tinderbox ignited.

The tension that erupted into violent clashes a week ago and left 23-year-old Iranian Reza Berati dead, had been brewing for weeks, Mr Knight says. "People were texting me saying, 'It's going to blow up.' But [the detention centre's managers] tried to play it down."

If his staff had been able to see the centre for themselves, Mr Knight says, he could have arranged extra police squads as a deterrent to the melee that erupted.

"Things could have been done that stopped this thing from blowing up," he said.

There are still conflicting reports of how things unfolded that night - all of which will be scrutinised by parallel investigations. But Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's admission late on Saturday that most or all of the violence happened within the centre perimeter - not outside as he had previously suggested - bolsters witness accounts that locally engaged staff of the security company that runs the centre, G4S, were responsible for much of the violence meted out to asylum seekers.

The tension rose after asylum seekers handed the centre managers a letter last weekend detailing their grievances, largely about the lack of information on their asylum claims. Some sources say the asylum seekers were told they would not be given any help resettling in third countries.

On the Sunday afternoon, some asylum seekers began chanting in protest, feeling their concerns were being dismissed. That evening, about 35 broke out of the centre. They were quickly rounded up. There were some arrests and injuries.

Also that day, according to Mr Knight, asylum seekers had intensified their verbal taunts against locally employed guards, including threats to rape their mothers and sisters. This account has been backed up by other sources.

When the simmering anger flared again the following night, an unknown number are understood to have broken out of the centre. Those who did were quickly stopped by the police "mobile squad".

They were chased back into the centre. While the police were clearly involved in the response to the riot - gunshots were fired, and they are the only protagonists who carry guns - both Mr Morrison's statement and one by G4S itself seem to put the spotlight on the security firm's workers.

There are other questions remaining. Mr Morrison has been unable to say categorically that non-protesting detainees were not caught up in the violence.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-mp-ron-knight-says-detention-centre-unrest-was-avoidable-20140223-33ame.html

Sri Lankan military officer now Manus Island manager

Former Sri Lankan military officer Dinesh Perera now acting manager of Manus Island detention centre

ABC News Online

By Jeff Waters

First posted Mon 24 Feb 2014, 4:05pm AEDT

Updated Mon 24 Feb 2014, 4:06pm AEDT

Human rights and asylum seeker advocates are condemning a decision to employ a former Sri Lankan military officer as the acting manager of the Manus Island detention camp.

The ABC has confirmed that Dinesh Perera has been running the facility for the G4S security company.

The director of advocacy and research at the Human Rights Law centre, Emily Howie, says Mr Perera should be removed.

"It's completely inappropriate for anyone with links to the Sri Lankan military to be in charge of the welfare and well-being of vulnerable asylum seekers, including Tamils," Ms Howie said.

"There's a high likelihood that the Tamils being held there are fleeing persecution at the hands of the Sri Lankan military.

"This isn't about the activities of this one man. It's about way that Australia takes care of the asylum seekers who are in its custody.

"The placing of an ex-military commander from a source country for refugees like Sri Lanka highlights Australia's complete insensitivity to the very real risks and suffering that those asylum seekers are fleeing."

Activists say there are now about 30 ethnic Tamil Sri Lankan asylum seekers being detained at the camp, out of a total of about 1,300.

In a brief telephone conversation, Mr Perera confirmed to the ABC that he was currently the acting manager of the Manus facility.

He also confirmed that he had served as an officer in the Sri Lankan military.

Mr Perera refused to comment any further.

His page on the LinkedIn website says he has a "proven track records of operational command experience during employment of offshore detention services and security environment as a Company Commander in the Sri Lankan Army".

The page also says Mr Perera has experience in correctional services facilities in Victoria and New South Wales.

The Refugee Action Coalition's Ian Rintoul says there are international concerns about the role the Sri Lankan army played in the recent civil war in the country.

"I don't really think having a former Sri Lankan army commander running the detention camp where you've got Sri Lankan asylum seekers is appropriate," he said.

"It's not to say he's done anything inappropriate, but he would have access to all those records. He would have access to their details and those details could be so easily passed on with terrible consequences for other people left behind in Sri Lanka."

The ABC is seeking comment on the matter from both the Department of Immigration, and the office of the Immigration Minister.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-24/former-sri-lanka-military-officer-acting-manager-of-manus/5280412

Amnesty International says Australia's refugee stance hurts its reputation

Amnesty says failure to accept more refugees from Syria and other conflicts compares badly with that of other countries

Helen Davidson
theguardian.com
Monday 24 February 2014

Australia has been taken to task by Amnesty International for failing to take in more refugees fleeing crises around the world.

In its review of 2013's global humanitarian trends, Amnesty acknowledged Australia's leadership role at the United Nations, but said its record on accepting refugees from conflict zones reflected badly on its human rights reputation and compared unfavourably with that of other countries.

Amnesty's review of global developments, key moments and emerging trends in human rights around the globe found many countries taking enormous backwards steps, including "horrific" death tolls and displacements in the Central African Republic, Syria and Iraq.

Of the two nations in the review to have shown improvements – Burma and Papua New Guinea – there were nevertheless harsh criticisms of human rights abuses of Rohingya minorities in the former, and the reintroduction and expansion of death penalty sentences and methods in the latter.

Amnesty called on Australia to respond to the global refugee crisis and to human rights abuses in its region as a global leader, and for Tony Abbott to be "a goodie not a baddie". It said the nation should "address its own failings and re-establish its reputation for human rights it was once known for".

"Australia's been really inconsistent when it comes to human rights," Amnesty International Australia's national director, Claire Mallinson, told Guardian Australia.

"It has done some really great work in the last year in terms of playing a global leadership role, [such as] getting an arms trade treaty agreed to at the United Nations – which has got the potential to save millions of lives - and just this weekend with the UN security council, managing to get a long overdue humanitarian resolution on Syria through."

"But 2.3 million [people] had had to flee the conflict there, and yet we've said that we'll take 500 humanitarian refugees, and that's out of our existing intake. We're not even increasing our annual intake," she said.

Amnesty said Australia was capable of taking 7,500 Syrian refugees, taking into account various "per capita factors" and looking at Germany's recent decision to take 10,000.

"I would really expect the prime minister, as chair of the G20, to actually do something similar in relation to Syria," Mallinson said.

"If we step up to the plate and say we'll take 7,500 that will go a long way to encouraging the other G20 members to reach the 100,000 that the UNHCR have said is the minimum needed," she said.

“It’s actually countries that are not well off, and not within Australia’s league when it looks at World Bank tables ... who are actually taking the brunt of the situation,” she said, citing Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, who have sheltered almost 2m between them.

The report also repeated calls by Amnesty to close offshore processing centres for asylum seekers, and end their “deplorable and unlawful” mandatory detention on Nauru and Manus Island.

“One of the facts that really shocks ... is that we’ve put Syrians on Manus Island,” Mallinson said. “People who have fled the horrendous conflict that everyone is seeing on their TV screens, have managed to get their way to Australia, and then we’ve gone and put them on Manus Island.”

“Australia historically has had an incredibly proud record in terms of its refugees. It would be far cheaper to process people in Australia. Clearly it’s far more humane, and we would be fulfilling our human rights responsibilities and taking a leadership role.”

On Sunday it was revealed the Australian government had asked Cambodia take refugees off Australia’s hands, which Mallinson described as a wealthy nation “trying to outsource its human rights responsibilities”.

“It was only a few years ago that the UNHCR actually put forward to the UN that Cambodia was forcibly sending vulnerable refugees back to China,” she said.

The review also looked at key moments in global development, including the adoption of the arms trade treaty regulating the \$70bn global weapons trade, the death of Nelson Mandela and the work of young Afghan girl Malala Yousafzai to focus global attention on girls’ education.

Amnesty was critical of Australia’s “shockingly high” rate of indigenous incarceration, cuts to Indigenous legal aid, the secrecy of immigration minister Scott Morrison, and the silence of Australia when Indonesia resumed executions in March, despite politicians voicing their opposition to the practice.

“With a new year ahead, comes a chance for real and lasting change,” the review concluded.

“Amnesty International looks to prime minister Tony Abbott to, in his own words, be a ‘goodie not a baddie’. Australia has a chance to present itself as a genuine global leader, by taking a human rights-based approach to international security issues and domestic policies.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/24/amnesty-international-australia-refugees-reputation>

Morrison has blood on hands: Senator

Yahoo News / Channel 7 TV
February 24, 2014

A Labor senator has accused Immigration Minister Scott Morrison of having blood on his hands after a violent riot at the Manus Island detention centre.

But government MPs are standing by their colleague saying he is doing a tough and challenging job in a most honourable way.

The Greens and refugee advocates are demanding the minister's head after he admitted that most of the violence - including the death of 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Berati - had likely happened inside the centre, not outside, as first claimed.

"He definitely does have blood on his hands," Labor senator Sue Lines told reporters in Canberra on Monday.

It was inappropriate for Mr Morrison to jump the gun and give misleading statements about how the incident unfolded, she said.

"It shows how quickly the Abbott government wants to demonise asylum seekers."

But Senator Lines said Labor had some soul searching to do over its support for offshore processing on Manus Island.

Australian Greens leader Christine Milne says Prime Minister Tony Abbott is condoning thuggery and standover tactics by saying he did not want a wimp in charge of border protection.

"Far from strong, they show moral cowardice," she told reporters of Mr Abbott and Mr Morrison.

Senator Milne insists Mr Berati was murdered in the riot.

"How else can you describe someone's head being stomped on and people being dragged from their beds who hadn't been involved at all?" she said.

The Greens want the government to lift the gag order on detention centre staff at Manus Island.

"People are terrified to come forward because they've signed confidentiality agreements," Senator Milne said.

Senior Liberal Greg Hunt defended Mr Morrison, saying he was an outstanding minister.

"I want to express deep, strong, personal, absolute commitment to him," he told reporters, noting it had been 65 days since the last boat arrival.

That meant "dozens and dozens of lives" had been saved by stopping the people smugglers.

"He is doing the toughest, most challenging job in the most honourable way."

Labor MP Kelvin Thomson said the independent inquiry into the riot should also cover Mr Morrison's handling of the incident.

The minister was on "thin ice" after other controversies such as the navy's incursions into Indonesian waters.

Veteran Nationals senator Ron Boswell said being immigration minister was the hardest gig in parliament.

"Scott Morrison's doing it magnificently," he told reporters.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young was scathing of the prime minister's defence of Mr Morrison.

"This issue is a little more serious than the brutish behaviour of a night club bouncer," she said.

Labor senator Doug Cameron said the role of immigration minister required sophisticated analysis of serious geo-political issues.

"To have a prime minister who treats this as some kind of tough guy game at the end of the night drinking at the pub is crazy," he said.

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/21667520/morrison-has-blood-on-hands-senator/>

Manus Island employee says telling lies about resettlement was a factor in riots

Whistleblower tells SBS she was ordered not to tell asylum seekers about options for leaving Papua New Guinea

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Tuesday 25 February 2014

Staff at the Manus Island processing centre were told to “stick to the script” and lie to asylum seekers about their prospects of resettlement, which may have contributed to the violent disturbances at the facility last week, according to a whistleblower who was on the island.

In a revealing interview on SBS programme Dateline on Tuesday night, Liz Thompson – who worked for a claims assistance provider on Manus Island up until the violence that occurred last week at the facility – said she was instructed to tell asylum seekers they were going to be settled in Papua New Guinea, even though there were no real plans in place.

“We knew this was ridiculous. But we were lying to people and we were told to keep that message going, to keep it clear,” she said.

When asked whether this was one of the reasons that led to the dramatic escalation of events at the facility last week, Thompson said: “Yes, because what they realised – you know what they wanted was not just the interviews and a process, something to feel better about, something to be involved in ... they want to know where they are going.”

Protests on Manus Island last week escalated into violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. One asylum seeker was killed during the disturbance and several were seriously injured. The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been criticised after being forced to revise his account of where the events took place, conceding on Saturday night that most happened inside the perimeter of the centre.

Thompson also said they were under threat of removal from the island if they mentioned resettlement in a third country.

“It was made very clear to us, every day, sometimes even twice a day, under the threat of being removed from the island, we were not to talk about third country. We were not to suggest that there was any resettlement options. We were not to suggest that they were able to get off PNG. You need to stick to the script or you’ll be taken off the island,” she said.

“But we were informed when we went there very quickly this time around that resettlement – we were not to discuss resettlement. We were not to discuss third-countries options – third country meaning, not PNG and not your own country.”

Thompson said Manus Island was “designed as an experiment in the active creation of horror to secure the deterrence”. She said the death of the asylum seeker last week, Reza Barati, reinforced the deterrent value of the centre.

“That’s why I say again that Reza Barati’s death is not a crisis for the department. It’s actually an opportunity – it’s an opportunity to extend that logic one step further, to say: ‘This happens.’ But deterrence continues, Operation Sovereign Borders continue.”

Thompson’s comments about the uncertainty of claims escalating the situation on the island echo similar comments made in a review into the Nauru riot in July 2013. The review, which was released on Saturday, has blamed uncertainty about processing asylum claims and the Immigration Department’s lack of oversight as major causes of the incident.

The prime minister, Tony Abbott, defended Morrison’s handling of the Manus Island incident over the weekend, and said: “You don’t want a wimp running border protection.”

“You want someone who is strong, who is decent, and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent,” he said.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/26/manus-island-employee-says-telling-lies-about-resettlement-was-a-factor-in-riots

Scott Morrison knew he was wrong on brawl death

The Age

February 25, 2014

Mark Kenny, with AAP

Border Protection Minister Scott Morrison has confirmed he knew a week ago his initial statements about a fatal brawl at the immigration detention facility on Manus Island were likely to have been wrong but has refused to say why he waited to correct the record until Saturday night.

Instead he has advised that his own conduct will be subject to an internal review, which will also take in the role of his officers, the private company charged with security at the detention centre, G4S, and Papua New Guinea authorities.

But the move to get to the bottom of what occurred, including by examining the minister's own actions, did not assuage critics, with the Greens and some Labor backbenchers calling on Mr Morrison to resign or be sacked.

Under attack in Parliament over comments last Tuesday morning, which appeared to lay the blame for the violence at the detention centre on rampaging asylum seekers for pushing through the perimeter fence, Mr Morrison revealed he was told later that day that he had been given unreliable information. He said his initial claim that the death and much of the violence had taken place outside the centre was not correct.

As the day progressed he was advised there were alternative versions of what happened, putting in doubt many details. Yet it took five days for the evidence to mount to the point that he deemed it necessary to "correct the record".

In Parliament, the opposition demanded to know why the minister had not exercised appropriate caution in his first public statements, and why he had then chosen such a particular time to release the information - Saturday night after television news bulletins and after most newspaper deadlines.

Mr Morrison said information was never perfect in the wake of such incidents.

"Over the course of that week, I conducted five press conferences to update people on what was occurring at that centre," he said.

"It was a terrible tragedy, what occurred. But the other point I'd make about what occurred on that night is, despite that terrible tragedy, the centre opened the next morning and it continues to operate today."

The inquiry into the melee would, among other things, examine how the centre was established under the previous government, Mr Morrison said, flagging that Labor's hasty establishment of the facility would be laid bare.

"It'll go into the performance of the service contractors that those [members] opposite contracted, it will go into the security arrangements that were put in place and left to the opposition when we formed government.

"It'll go into all of those and it'll go into the conduct of myself and those on this side and our handling of these issues since we took over responsibility for these centres."

But Labor senators Doug Cameron and Sue Lines argued the minister had proved himself unfit for office. "He definitely has blood on his hands," Senator Lines said.

"The more he tries to shirk the issue, the more he pretends to be the tough cop on the beat - hopefully the Australian public will see the truth behind this."

Meanwhile, Australia has reportedly sent a group of asylum seekers back to Indonesia in a lifeboat, in the latest "turn back" under the Abbott government.

Senior Indonesian sources have told the ABC that the large orange lifeboat was discovered at about midday on Monday on the south coast of Central Java. It said local media had reported that about 26 asylum seekers were on board, but it was unclear whether that figure also included the boat's Indonesian crew.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/scott-morrison-knew-he-was-wrong-on-brawl-death-20140224-33d5f.html

PNG staff will keep security jobs on Manus

PNG staff to keep security jobs at Manus Island detention centre

The Age

February 25, 2014

Sarah Whyte, David Wroe and Ben Butler

The new operator of Manus Island detention centre will continue to use local security staff even though they are implicated in last week's deadly clashes with asylum seekers.

Transfield Services, which has been awarded a \$1.2 billion contract to run the Manus Island and Nauru immigration centres, confirmed it would hire local security staff, as required by the deal between Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Witnesses to last week's violence, which left 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Barati dead, say local security guards employed by contractor G4S were involved. G4S has admitted the possibility, saying it would "take the strongest disciplinary action against any employee found to have been involved in any wrongdoing".

G4S's contract ends on Friday. The management of the centre will be handed over to Transfield, which has also run the Nauru centre for the past year. The new, \$1.2 billion contract to run both facilities for the next 20 months appears to have been given to Transfield without a tender offer even though the value of the work has increased dramatically from the previous cost of running the facilities.

A week after the bloody clashes, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison faced pressure in Parliament over the alleged riot and the incorrect information he provided on it early last week.

He told the ABC: "There are still a lot of questions to be answered - I have a lot of questions that I want to be answered ... the Australian people, and people in Papua New Guinea want answers, and that's what the reviews are about."

The matter is set to dominate debate again in Canberra on Tuesday with the head of the government's border protection regime, Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell, set to appear before a Senate Estimates hearing.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said she would quiz government officials over the level of training and skills the locally recruited security staff had been given.

"All of the eyewitness accounts say G4S has their hands all over what happened," she said.

"This is precisely the type of thing an inquiry needs to look at."

G4S is being paid \$244 million to run Manus Island centre since October 2012. Transfield is earning \$302 million for managing the Nauru site for the past year.

The \$1.2 billion contract represents a considerable increase in the cost of offshore processing, partly because of the swelling numbers on Manus Island and Nauru as the backlog of asylum seekers is transferred off Christmas Island.

A Transfield spokesman said the costs were higher on Manus Island due to "security costs", more expensive travel costs and bigger taxes than Nauru.

The firm is required to hire locals on Manus Island and Nauru to ensure benefits to their economies.

Former Attorney-General's Department chief Robert Cornall is leading a government inquiry into the violence, in which 62 people were also injured, including eight who had to be evacuated for treatment.

An independent contractor who went into the detention centre last week said many detainees were still lining up at the clinic to receive bandages for their wounds - mainly on their heads and hands.

"I was quite stunned at the poor level of security at the camp," he said. "I could have climbed the fence, it was a very rickety structure."

Also on Monday, the ABC reported that a former Sri Lankan military officer had been heading the detention centre on Manus Island, even though it houses an estimated 30 Tamils who are seeking asylum from persecution in Sri Lanka.

Dinesh Perera's LinkedIn profile described him as "acting centre manager". But a G4S spokesman said Mr Perera was "operations manager" and an Australian citizen who had worked for G4S for years.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/png-staff-to-keep-security-jobs-at-manus-island-detention-centre-20140224-33d5e.html

Conroy accuses Angus Campbell of OSB cover-up

Stephen Conroy accuses Angus Campbell of political cover-up over Operation Sovereign Borders during fiery Senate Estimates

ABC News Online

By political correspondent Emma Griffiths

Posted Tue 25 Feb 2014, 5:13pm AEDT

The military commander in charge of the Government's asylum seeker boats mission has been accused of a "political cover-up" by Labor's defence spokesman.

Senator Stephen Conroy made the controversial comment - which he was later forced to withdraw - in a heated exchange in a Senate Estimates committee looking into Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB).

OSB Commander Lieutenant General Angus Campbell was asked to explain why he had placed strict controls on information about "operational" or "on-water" incidents.

Senator Conroy compared the level of secrecy with that surrounding SAS activities behind enemy lines during the 2003 war in Iraq.

"I can absolutely understand the need for operational secrecy when you have troops operating behind enemy lines blowing up airfields and scud missiles," he said.

"But what I'm intrigued by is your view that stopping a number of wooden boats with unarmed people on has the same level of secrecy requirement."

Lt Gen Campbell repeated his decision was based on "dealing with avoiding advantage to people smugglers, manipulation of potential clientele of people smugglers, the safety of our people and the management of regional and bilateral relationships and their sensitivities".

Senator Conroy then referenced a quote from the movie *A Few Good Men*, asking General Campbell: "Can't we handle the truth?"

He referred to Lt Gen Campbell as the character in the movie, Colonel Jessup, who utters the line: "You can't handle the truth."

"I mean seriously. You can't tell us the truth," Senator Conroy continued.

"You can't tell the Australian public the truth cause you might upset an international neighbour.

"That's called a political cover-up. That's a political cover-up. You're engaged in a political cover-up."

Committee chairman and Liberal Senator Ian Macdonald said Senator Conroy was bullying a witness and asked him to apologise.

He refused and Lt Gen Campbell responded.

"I just would like to put on the public record I take extreme offence at that statement you've made," the military commander said.

In the ensuing debate, Senator Conroy interjected that he was just trying to "call a spade a spade" and arguing that "we're not at war, are we?"

The committee was suspended for some minutes and when it resumed Senator Conroy withdrew the accusation.

Customs spent \$2.5m on boats

The angry charge came after hours of questions directed to the chiefs of Immigration, Customs and Lt Gen Campbell.

The federal Opposition and Greens have previously criticised the lack of information given to Senate Estimates hearings.

Earlier, the committee was told that Customs had spent \$2.5 million on lifeboats to be used during Operation Sovereign Borders activities.

The ABC has been told another orange lifeboat carrying asylum seekers arrived on the Indonesian coast after being sent back by Australian authorities.

But Australian authorities have not confirmed the information, with a spokeswoman for the Government saying it was policy to not comment on operational matters.

In the Estimates committee, the chief executive officer of the Customs department, Michael Pezzullo, would not reveal how many lifeboats have been purchased.

"Any disclosure of how we employ them, which includes the numbers that we have, how many that we have in stock, how many that are available on a monthly basis and the like starts getting into their operational employment," he said.

"That starts to unveil our concept for using them operationally."

Officials would also not reveal what plans were in place to retrieve the life boats from Indonesian shores and Mr Pezzullo rejected the description of them as "disposable".

"From an accounting point of view, the assets - the vessels or the lifeboats - are consumables - the sort of consumables that you'd have on the execution of any sort of operation," he said.

"They're consumables in the same way that we would consume or go through stores of any kind of any nature in conducting operations.

"They are not assets that are required to be counted as assets in the inventory of the Commonwealth, they are consumable stores."

Mr Pezzullo said Customs would buy as many as were required to make the mission a success.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-25/conroy-accuses-campbell-of-border-protection-cover-up/5283442

Manus Camp A Human 'Experiment': Staff

A migration agent who was employed at the Manus Island detention camp during last week's violence has told SBS Dateline the centre is not a processing facility - it's a deterrence mechanism.

New Matilda

25 Feb 2014

By Marni Cordell

The Australian government is maintaining a “charade” on Manus Island by pretending to process the claims of asylum seekers when in fact the detention camp is designed to be nothing more than a deterrent to others, a former staff member has told SBS Dateline in an interview to be aired tonight.

Migration agent Liz Thompson, who was working on the island during last week’s violent attack on detainees by G4S staff, locals and PNG police tells Dateline that she was part of a team of agents employed by the Australian government to assess the claims of detainees at the centre.

She says the process she was involved in was a “farce”.

“It’s not designed as a processing facility, it’s designed as an experiment in the active creation of horror, to deter people from trying in the first place,” she tells Dateline’s Mark Davis.

Tension came to head on Manus Island last week after detention centre staff were instructed to lie to asylum seekers to maintain an illusion that their claims were being processed and they would be settled in PNG, Thompson says.

“The script is a farce. We are told to... not talk about third country options, to keep them focused on resettlement in PNG – that resettlement in PNG is what’s going to happen.

“We all knew that this was ridiculous, but we were lying to people, and we were told to keep that message going, to keep it clear.

“But [the detainees] know that’s not the case. They know there is no decision from the PNG government on resettlement. So what that means is: you’re never getting out of this camp. This is indefinite detention. While we play this charade.”

Thompson was supposed to be assessing the asylum seekers’ claims on behalf of the PNG government, but her employment and all instructions were provided by Australia, she says.

She returned home late last week after resigning from her position in disgust at Australia’s handling of last Monday’s attack, which left Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati dead, another man in a serious condition with a slit throat, and dozens of others injured.

“The process ... cannot continue after an asylum seeker has been brutally murdered in the care of the people who were supposed to be looking after him,” she says.

Thompson says she nominated to work at the island because she thought she would be able to help the asylum seekers detained there.

“There are well-meaning people, including lawyers and migration agents, who think ‘the guys need us we can’t leave them now’. They believe they should be there, because they believe there’s a process.”

But she says she realised after last week’s violence that “we cannot assist them by lying to them about what’s happening and by feeding them Immigration’s fantasies, things that they know are not true”.

“These guys are smart, they know what’s going on, they know they’re being lied to, and having that stuff come to them from Immigration, from us, is just part of the active creation of horror.”

“That’s what Manus Island is: it’s the active creation of horror in order to secure deterrence. And that’s why Reza Berati’s death is not some kind of crisis for the [immigration] department – it’s actually an opportunity, an opportunity to extend that [deterrence] logic one step further, to say, ‘this happens’.”

“It was clear to us that we were being used as part of that logic... and we didn’t want to be part of it anymore,” she says.

Thompson believes that her team was sent to Manus Island so that the Australian government could say that processing had begun at the centre, but that the fake processing had in fact exacerbated tension at the camp.

“[The government wanted to be able to say] the interviews have begun, everything’s happening. But what’s not happening is any kind of clarification about where [the asylum seekers] are going to end up.

“We couldn’t give [detainees] any information that was useful other than: well, here’s your refugee status determination – we’ll give it to somebody, we don’t know where it will end up. It’s done, but we don’t know where you’re being settled.

“The process doesn’t lead anywhere except to indefinite detention.”

<https://newmatilda.com//2014/02/25/manus-camp-human-experiment-staff>

Manus riot flared after 'lies were told'

Riot flared as Manus Island refugees realised 'lies were told'

The Age

February 26, 2014

David Wroe, Sarah Whyte and Michael Gordon

The deadly clashes on Manus Island last week flared after asylum seekers realised the Australian government was "lying to them" about plans to resettle them in Papua New Guinea, a migration agent who worked on the island has said.

Liz Thompson, who was helping asylum seekers lodge their refugee applications on Manus Island when the alleged riot broke out, told Fairfax Media that the asylum seekers launched their protests when a Papua New Guinean official went "off script" and acknowledged there were no plans in place for their resettlement.

Her claims came as Australia's top immigration bureaucrat told a Senate hearing that the post-mortem on the body of 23-year-old Reza Barati, who was killed in last Monday's clashes, still had not been carried out. Martin Bowles, secretary of the Immigration Department, also said he could not guarantee that local security contractors who had inflicted injuries on detainees had been stood down.

Ms Thompson accused the Immigration Department of deceiving the detainees and said the system - which she branded "a farce" - was designed to force them to give up and return to their home countries.

"We were taking them through a process that goes nowhere," she said. "There is no visa for them to get. There's no legislation governing their resettlement.

"Manus Island is an experiment in the ultimate logic of deterrence, designed to frustrate the hell out of people and terrify them so that they go home. Your two options are indefinitely detention or to return to the country where you fear persecution."

She said asylum seekers had demanded answers from a senior PNG immigration official at a tense meeting on the Sunday afternoon before the Monday night violence. He had been "honest with the guys about the fact that there is no process on PNG for their resettlement".

Her claim is consistent with the account on the Sunday meeting given to Fairfax Media by whistleblower interpreter Azita Bokan and another employee at the centre.

Mr Morrison said asylum seekers said they had been told "a third country option will not be offered and that neither the PNG nor Australian governments will be acting on behalf of the transferees in seeking alternative settlement countries to PNG".

But insiders say there is no prospect of resettlement in PNG in the medium-term because PNG still had no legal framework to accommodate them, with no guarantees on work and other rights and no progress toward a pilot resettlement scheme.

Mr Bowles meanwhile told the hearing in Canberra on Tuesday that Reza Barati's body had been flown to Port Moresby but indicated it had not yet been examined.

"As of today, my understanding is still that the deceased has been moved to Port Moresby in anticipation of an autopsy," he said.

Both the PNG and Australian governments have said that a PNG police investigation is under way into Mr Barati's death.

Mr Bowles also revealed gas canisters were fired in the incident.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/riot-flared-as-manus-island-refugees-realised-lies-were-told-20140225-33ft3.html

Conroy accuses Campbell of camp cover-up

'Can't we handle the truth': Conroy accuses Campbell of camp cover-up

The Age

February 26, 2014

Sarah Whyte

A Senate estimates inquiry was brought to a dramatic halt amid furious scenes when senior Labor Senator Stephen Conroy accused Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell of a "political cover-up" over last week's fatal violence on Manus Island.

Riffing on the Hollywood film *A Few Good Men*, Senator Conroy asked General Campbell - the head of Operation Sovereign Borders - "Can't we handle the truth?"

"It kind of sounds like a movie, Senator," General Campbell coolly replied.

"It is a movie, and we're living it, Colonel Jessup," Senator Conroy said - referring to the name of Jack Nicholson's character in the film.

"I mean seriously, you can't tell us the truth, you can't tell the Australian public the truth because you might upset an international neighbour. That's called a political cover-up," he said.

General Campbell replied: "Senator, I feel I've explained the basis of my decisions ..."

Senator Conroy replied: "That's a political cover-up. You're engaged in a political cover up," while interrupting the General.

General Campbell said he took "extreme offence" at the comments.

Assistant Immigration Minister Michaelia Cash stormed out of the room and the estimates hearing was suspended by its chairman, Liberal Senator Ian Macdonald, who said: "I require you to apologise, Senator Conroy."

"You require me?" Senator Conroy asked.

"Yes. I am ruling if you don't apologise I will not call you any more," Mr Macdonald said before suspending the session for nine minutes.

Nine minutes later, Senator Conroy withdrew his comments, and calm was restored.

But the government has demanded that Opposition Leader Bill Shorten make Senator Conroy apologise for the accusation.

Defence Minister David Johnston said General Campbell was a professional performing a difficult task and Senator Conroy's comments were cowardly and defamatory.

He said Mr Shorten needed to show leadership and make Senator Conroy apologise.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/cant-we-handle-the-truth-conroy-accuses-campbell-of-camp-coverup-20140225-33fsv.html

Manus Victims 'Treated Better Than Australians': Cornall

The man who will review last week's violence on Manus has previously said sexually abused detainees on the island are treated better than Australian rape victims. Marni Cordell reports.

New Matilda

27 Feb 2014

By Marni Cordell

Robert Cornall, the man who last year investigated rape allegations on Manus Island, has said that sexually abused detainees at the Australian-run detention centre on the island receive better treatment than Australian rape victims, and has questioned whether rape isn't just a part of Iranian culture.

Cornall has now been commissioned by the Department of Immigration to review last week's violence at the camp that left a young Iranian man dead.

New Matilda has obtained a transcript of an interview with Manus Island whistleblower Rod St George that Cornall conducted as part of a previous review for the department into allegations of rape and torture at the centre.

St George, a former occupational health and safety manager at the Manus detention centre, blew the whistle about rape and torture between detainees at the camp to SBS Dateline in July last year. At the time he alleged that young men were being raped at the camp and then sent back to the compound to live among their attackers, and that Immigration Department staff failed to remove the victims, despite knowing that the abuse was ongoing.

According to the transcript, St George told Cornall during the interview that a guard and a social worker at the centre had taken it upon themselves to offer emotional support to a young Iranian man who had been raped by fellow detainees at the centre in March and April last year.

Cornall responded by asking whether an Australian victim would have received as much attention.

"Okay. It's interesting though. I mean... in Australia today, people are no doubt being sexually assaulted and there would be rapes occurring in Australia today, and what sort of support do they get? And what sort of assistance do they get," he asked.

"And a lot of those would, and I'm not saying that this justifies anything, it's just an observation, I don't think any of them would get that amount of attention in Australia."

Cornall also questioned whether rape was simply part of Iranian culture.

"...well people have said to me that in Iranian culture, male rape or male sexual intercourse is more culturally acceptable... And also that it is a way of more mature males dominating young men. Is that in accordance to your understanding," he asked.

When St George replied "But we are not in Iran", Cornall said, "No, is it just Iranians or is it Middle Eastern?" He then changed the topic.

There is very little other discussion of the circumstances leading up to rape in the hours-long interview, despite the fact that one of Cornall's tasks was to assess "the adequacy of arrangements for ... preventing incidents of sexual and other serious assaults at the centre".

Cornall, a former secretary of the Attorney General's department, was asked by the Immigration Department to investigate St George's claims after they were aired on SBS, and was paid \$94,200 to conduct the review. He will now be carrying out a similar review into the violence that led to the death of Iranian asylum seeker, Reza Barati, last week. Cornall has reportedly received \$1.49 million for government reviews and services in the last three years.

According to the interview transcript, St George told Cornall about the conditions facing detainees at the centre, including water and power shortages, leaky tents and their inability to cool themselves in the hot humid weather, to which Cornall replied:

"One of the interesting things about Manus is that everybody is in the same boat, aren't they? The departmental people, the consultants, the contract service providers."

When St George countered, "Oh no, the department never went without water", Cornall said:

"I'm not talking about water shortages, I'm just talking about the overall environment. Everyone is pretty much in the same circumstances. I mean I know the transferees are being held there and the other people come on their own volition and go of their own volition but when you are actually there, the facilities are very much the same."

St George replied: "Yes, they were very much mediocre. I suppose the fact that the rest of us were free did [count] for a lot."

Throughout the interview Cornall also repeatedly questioned the reliability of St George's account and defended the Australian government's offshore processing regime.

As I reported for Guardian Australia, St George was outraged by the Cornall review's findings when they were released in October last year. "I look at this report and I think there's just a blatant refusal on the part of the Department of Immigration to address these things," he told me at the time.

Another former staff member at the centre who also gave testimony to Cornall — a Salvation Army welfare worker who offered support to the rape victim during his ordeal — spoke to me of her disgust that the review did nothing to address the ongoing issues of rape and abuse at the centre.

Apart from my reports and a story by Oliver Laughland and Paul Farrell at Guardian Australia, there was very little media coverage of Cornall's review, which St George claims is a "whitewash" of what was really going on at the Manus camp.

In his interview with Dateline last year, St George predicted conditions at the camp were so dire that it was "just a matter of time" before the tinderbox exploded.

He was not asked by Cornall what he meant by this.

St George also told Cornall that there had been problems with PNG nationals employed by G4S as staff within the centre. PNG G4S staff have now been implicated in the violence that led to Barati's death.

The terms of reference for Cornall's latest review, "into the events of 16-18 February 2014 at the Manus Regional Processing Centre", were released on Wednesday night. As Farrell reports today, the key focus will be on management of security at the centre.

St George told New Matilda today that he is disappointed with the narrow focus of the inquiry, and that while he has no doubt the security personnel have a lot to answer for, there was a danger that the review would ignore the underlying causes of last week's violence.

"What the government is doing here is making the inferred statement that [the Department of] Immigration is not to blame, the policy itself is not the issue, the government has no fault in this — it is all security's fault and the contractor needs to pay the price," he said.

"Scott Morrison and Tony Abbott know that a truly independent review would lay bare the real causes for trouble on Manus — human beings will all react in the same way if they are treated the way those men were treated by the Department of Immigration."

<https://newmatilda.com/2014/02/27/detainees-treated-better-australians-cornall>

Manus Island review will focus heavily on security

Manus Island review into violence will focus heavily on security at the centre

Greens say terms of reference 'entirely inadequate' to fully examine role of Scott Morrison and Immigration Department

Paul Farrell

theguardian.com

Wednesday 26 February 2014

The terms of reference for a review into the unrest at the Manus Island processing centre will focus heavily on the management of security at the centre.

The terms were released on Wednesday night. They demand scrutiny of security, which is provided by the service provider G4S. Breaches of security, roles and responsibilities to manage incidents and the response from service providers involved will form a significant part of the review, which is to be headed by the former public servant Robert Cornall.

The review was commissioned after protests on Manus Island escalated into violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. Reza Barati, an asylum seeker from Iran, was killed during the violence on 17 February and many other asylum seekers were injured.

The Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the terms were “entirely inadequate” to fully examine the role of the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, and his department.

“A man has been killed and, rather than looking into what role the government and responsible minister played in the event, this review will only skim the surface,” she said.

“This was the government’s chance to show that it actually cared about Reza Barati and the other refugees in their care. The government has instead chosen to fail Reza for a second time.”

The review does leave it open to Cornall to focus on “any other issues deemed necessary”, but makes no specific reference to assessing the conduct of the minister or his department.

“The review may make recommendations to strengthen relevant arrangements at the centre and prevent recurrence of any similar incident in the future,” the terms of reference state.

In language that is similar to the previous review into sexual assault allegations at the Manus facility last year, the review will make available any evidence of criminal activity to “relevant authorities”. But unlike the previous sexual assault review, it will be undertaken “in co-operation with the PNG government”.

It will also seek to determine a clear picture of the facts and circumstances leading up to and during the disturbances. There have been strongly conflicting reports about what transpired there.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been criticised after being forced to revise his account of where the clashes took place, conceding on Saturday night that most had happened inside the centre’s perimeter.

An early police report into the death of Barati also appeared to blame asylum seekers for escalating the conflict, and defends locals and guards in an account that is at odds with other official reports.

It says the asylum seekers “overpowered” G4S guards and that “extra force” had been needed to contain the situation.

But official incident reports by G4S seen by Guardian Australia make no reference to asylum seekers escaping the compound, despite internal fence breaches.

They also note “ongoing violence” between police officers and transferees. A statement written by a G4S guard said a senior officer had invited PNG dog squad police into the compound, which led to a further escalation of the situation.

The review is to be provided to the department by April, with a progress report due by 31 March.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/27/manus-island-review-into-violence-will-focus-heavily-on-security-at-the-centre

PNG police report: officers and locals not responsible

Manus Island riots: PNG police report finds officers and locals not responsible for asylum seeker death

ABC News Online

By Karen Barlow and staff

First posted Wed 26 Feb 2014, 4:07pm AEDT

Updated Wed 26 Feb 2014, 4:36pm AEDT

Papua New Guinea's deputy police commissioner has cleared PNG police and locals of responsibility for the death of an asylum seeker during last week's Manus Island unrest.

The Royal PNG Constabulary has released the preliminary report into the death of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati.

Mr Berati was killed during violence at the immigration detention centre late on February 17.

The PNG report has found Mr Berati died of multiple head injuries that were most likely caused by a heavy object. Other details about his death are expected to be released later this week in a full report.

Deputy police commissioner Simon Kaubam has told the ABC he has cleared PNG police and locals of responsibility for Mr Berati's death. He says Immigration Minister Scott Morrison "came good" on Saturday night when he revealed Mr Berati had died inside the centre.

He added that PNG police knew that soon after the incident.

In initially announcing the news of last Monday's riot, Mr Morrison had said Mr Berati sustained the fatal head injury outside the centre.

But on Saturday he said new information suggests the incident, along with much of the riot, occurred inside the detention centre's perimeter.

Mr Berati arrived at Christmas Island with no family members on July 24 and was transferred to PNG one month later under the resettlement policy introduced by former prime minister Kevin Rudd.

The Greens and asylum seeker advocates have said that Mr Berati was "murdered" on the island.

More than 60 other people were injured in the violence, and Australia is also conducting an investigation.

Mr Morrison has warned the investigation, to be conducted by former Attorney-General's Department secretary Robert Cornall, will take "some time" to gather the facts about the "very serious incident".

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-26/png-police-hand-down-report-into-manus-island-death/5285856

PNG police: Reza Barati died from 'multiple head injuries'

Asylum seeker Reza Barati died from 'multiple head injuries', PNG police say

Police report states Barati's death could have been caused by a "heavy object" during rioting at Manus Island detention centre

Paul Farrell

theguardian.com

Wednesday 26 February 2014

A preliminary Papua New Guinea police report from the day after the Manus island disturbances into the death of Reza Barati, the asylum seeker killed during the unrest at Australia's detention centre on Manus Island, found that he died from "multiple head injuries".

The report, which was obtained by the PNG Post Courier, said that the cause of Barati's death could have been caused by a "heavy object" and was signed by Alex N'Drasal, the chief inspector of the Manus Island police. The report is dated to 18 February 2014, the day after Barati's death.

It also confirmed that eight asylum seekers were charged under PNG's criminal laws in relation to the riot and would be released back to the facility on bail.

Barati, a 24-year-old from Iran, died last week after protests on Manus Island escalated into violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers.

"The cause of the death of the Iranian is from the multiple head injuries, that could be cause by heavy object, as advised by the IHMS medical officer who did treated the transferee before they were transported to the hospital for treatment and also the police investigator," the report says.

The report says the investigation "still continues" to confirm the "real cause" of Barati's death.

The report also appears to blame asylum seekers for escalating the conflict, and defends locals and guards in an account that is at odds with other official reports into the incident.

"The G4S guards tried to stop the transferees from rioting and from damaging property. However the guards were confronted by the transferees, who hurled missiles at them. The detainees moved to the perimeter fence in a group of about 400, forcing the fence down to free them out," it said.

"The confrontation was between the management of the centre, G4S guards as one party and the transferees as another party. The G4S guards went to stopped the transferees from rioting at the compound and damaging properties."

It says the asylum seekers "overpowered" G4S guards and that "extra force" was needed to contain the situation.

But these comments are at odds with official incident reports on the unrest from G4S seen by Guardian Australia which make no reference to asylum seekers escaping the compound despite internal fence breaches. They also specifically note observation of "ongoing violence" between police officers and transferees. They say G4S guards invited PNG dog squad police into the compound, which led to a further escalation of the situation.

The police report appears to confirm that the mobile police squad fired shots in the air during the crisis, and strongly defended their actions.

“The situation could be worsen if it was not for the Mobile Unit at the centre,” it says. “They did actually fired some warning shots into the air ... because they saw the situation was getting from bad to worse so they had to do what they did, and that brought the whole scenario under controlled, but still tensed.”

In Senate estimates on Tuesday the secretary of the immigration department, Martin Bowles, said in response to questions about who fired the shots: “The police. Sorry, it is alleged at this stage that it was the police, again subject to the review.”

The PNG mobile squad have entered the Manus facility on at least two previous occasions. In May 2013 they demanded payment from immigration officials at the camp, and in October 2013 they became involved in a violent clash with other PNG police officers.

The PNG police report claims that guards were “seriously assaulted” by asylum seekers, but the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has made no references to any serious injuries sustained by G4S staff.

It says the asylum seekers put questions to the PNG immigration authorities regarding the status of their claims and were frustrated about the lack of processing.

“The transferees/asylum seekers did go on strike asking for freedom and question why there was a very long delay in the process of their status of refugee on Manus,” it says.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been criticised after being forced to revise his account of where the events took place, conceding on Saturday night that most happened inside the perimeter of the centre.

Barati arrived on Christmas Island on 24 July and was later transferred to the Manus Island processing centre. The unrest on Manus Island is now subject to an external review commissioned by the Australian Department of Immigration.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/26/asylum-seeker-reza-barati-died-from-multiple-head-injuries-png-police-say

Asylum seekers on Christmas Island start hunger strike over Manus death

Group of around 40 detainees begins protest over 'blood of Reza Barati, to prevent transfer to Nauru and freedom'

Oliver Laughland

theguardian.com

Wednesday 26 February 2014

Asylum seekers on Christmas Island have gone on hunger strike in protest at the death of Reza Barati, the 23 year old Iranian killed on Manus Island during unrest last week.

A group of around 40 people, including women and teenagers, began a hunger strike around two days ago, according to two asylum seekers who contacted Guardian Australia.

A representative from Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (Dassan) confirmed it had been told by three separate groups of asylum seekers on Christmas Island that a hunger strike had begun.

When asked why they were striking, one asylum seeker told Guardian Australia it was over "Reza Barati's blood".

He added: "We have three reasons. We don't want anyone to go to Nauru; Reza Barati's blood - we don't know who killed him; and freedom."

The asylum seekers said that around 100 asylum seekers, housed in the Construction Camp section of the Christmas Island detention centre, were meeting for protests every evening.

A source on Christmas Island also said that the two transfers of unaccompanied minors from Christmas Island to Nauru had begun two weeks ago. This involved mainly Afghan boys.

It is unknown which detention centre on Nauru the minors have been sent to.

The immigration department has been contacted for comment but has yet to respond.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/26/asylum-seekers-christmas-island-hunger-strike-manus-death

MEDIA RELEASE: PNG Manus report self-serving cover-up – there was no riot on Monday 17 February

PNG Police excluded from Manus detention centre

Thursday February 27, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Reports of the contents of the PNG report into the brutal attacks on asylum seekers on Manus Island continues the cover-up perpetuated by all authorities involved since the incident occurred.

While the report confirms that the attacks happened inside the detention centre, it lacks credibility.

While the police report attempts to shift the entire blame onto the G4S guards, it is clear that the PNG police were complicit in the attack -- euphemistically called "warning shots" .

Yet one asylum seeker was seriously wounded by a gunshot. Eye-witness accounts confirm the involvement of PNG police as providing cover - support and back-up - for the bloody assault and lethal force used by G4S guards.

Most shamefully, the report repeats the big lie that there was a "riot" on the night of 17 February and G4S "lost control" .

There was no riot on the night of February 17, when the brutal attacks occurred and Reza Berati was killed. Reza's room was on the second floor of building 1 in Mike Compound. There was no property damaged.

The fact that the Australian government has banned PNG national police from the detention centre indicates that the government has no confidence in the PNG police.

Similarly local PNG G4S guards are also being excluded from the detention centre.

Meanwhile, except for one or two minute monitored calls to relatives, the government has cut phones and internet access for the asylum seekers, ensuring that the voices of the victims cannot be heard.

"Impartial human rights observers are urgently needed on Manus Island. Those who killed Reza and who cut throats and bashed on the night of 17 February are still at large. An independent inquiry is also urgently needed. All of the authorities on Manus Island are implicated in the crimes committed last Monday night," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The victims of the attacks are sleeping on stretchers in the open inside Mike Compound. It is clear that the Australian government cannot guarantee their safety and that they have asylum claims on the basis of persecution in PNG itself. They will not be safe until they are brought to Australia."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Fatal violence occurred after G4S guards went in, PNG report finds

The Age

February 27, 2014

David Wroe and Sarah Whyte

The violent clashes on Manus Island that left an Iranian asylum seeker dead happened after local G4S descended on protesting asylum-seekers, a preliminary police briefing has indicated.

A Papua New Guinean police spokesman has told Fairfax Media that 23-year-old Reza Barati was killed by multiple blows to the head, probably from a piece of timber.

In a briefing to Fairfax Media, drawing on several police reports, the spokesman said the autopsy, carried out on Monday, found that the blows caused a blood clot on the man's brain.

"The object used we suspect was a heavy (piece of) timber or wood or some such object," the spokesman said. "There were no other wounds on the body."

The spokesman said the findings were preliminary but indicated that local G4S guards had carried out the violent suppression of the protest. PNG police and local villagers did not appear to be involved, he said.

He said that the Australian and PNG immigration chiefs on the island had on Monday "liaised with the heads of the service provider in the centre to organise the employers for police to obtain statements from them, especially from the local employees hired by the G4S security company".

But nobody was being ruled out, he stressed, as investigations were continuing. He said no arrests had yet been made.

The spokesman said that G4S management in the centre had stood down all the local security guards. The police had been forced to get them back to the centre for interviews, he said.

Those who came from outside Manus Island were currently prohibited from going home. The spokesman could not say whether they were currently working in the centre.

The situation was "tense, but under control", he said.

The police had begun interviewing local G4S workers on Monday and were still carrying out the interviews, the spokesman said.

Mr Kauba said about seven or eight officers were investigating "on the ground" and he expected the case to "take all week".

The police spokesman said reports had been submitted by the local police chief Alex N'Drasal on the events.

"Mobile squad" police officers were providing written statements and also being interviewed, the spokesman said.

But initial reports suggested they had not been involved in the violence.

"None of the transferees actually came out of the perimeter fence. The G4S guards and transferees were all fighting inside the compound," he said.

However, he did not explain how one of the detainees came to be shot in the buttocks. G4S guards are not armed but PNG police are.

Warning shots had been fired, the police spokesman said. These had likely calmed the situation, he said. "Otherwise, the place would have been burnt to the ground."

Deputy police commissioner Simon Kauba told Fairfax Media: "The investigation is ongoing. We've employed people in Port Moresby and Manus."

Mr Kauba said about seven or eight officers were investigating "on the ground" and he expected the case to "take all week".

There was confusion about the help being given by Australians. Mr Kauba said Australian assistance was "not necessary" and had not been requested.

But a spokeswoman for the AFP said the Royal Papuan New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) had asked for help with "the coronial of the deceased Iranian being conducted by the PNG authorities".

The spokeswoman said two Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine officers would travel to Port Moresby to support the PNG coroner with the autopsy.

The local PNG Post Courier reported that Mr Kauba had said that locals and PNG police had been "cleared" of the investigation.

In Parliament meanwhile, the House of Representatives passed a motion admonishing shadow defence minister Stephen Conroy for accusing Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell, the head of the government's Operation Sovereign Borders, of being engaged in a political cover-up following the death.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop demanded that Labor leader Bill Shorten sack Senator Conroy, describing him as "this dog of war", but Mr Shorten said the senator's withdrawal of the remark spoke for itself.

Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie, a former classmate of General Campbell, moved the motion, saying: "I think a line was crossed yesterday when the Opposition defence spokesperson called into question the integrity of General Campbell".

Senator Conroy defended himself, saying: "We've seen tragic circumstances arising on Manus Island as a result of the Government's actions and there needs to be a full account.

On Wednesday night it was reported that up to 60 detainees in the family compound on Christmas Island, including mothers and teenage boys, were staging a hunger strike following Reza Barati's death, refugee advocates say.

"It's been going for about three days now," Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, said.

"It started out of a vigil and a protest at the death of Reza Barati on Manus."

Mr Rintoul, who said he had spoken directly to two of the hunger strikers, had not been told how long the asylum seekers planned to refuse food.

Around 150 people were also staging a daily protest march around the compound each day, he said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-violence-fatal-violence-occurred-after-g4s-guards-went-in-png-report-finds-20140226-33ii8.html

Scott Morrison heads to PNG to iron out 'bumps' in Manus refugee deal

PNG foreign minister insists there is 'no intention to deviate' from agreement after unrest but acknowledges problems

*Lenore Taylor, political editor
theguardian.com
Thursday 27 February 2014*

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, headed to Papua New Guinea on Friday to discuss Manus Island violence and refugee resettlement and to iron out what the PNG foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, describes as “bumps” in an asylum policy partnership that is still intact.

Pato told Guardian Australia the agreement signed between PNG and the former Rudd government in August 2013, in which PNG pledges to resettle all genuine refugees among the asylum seekers sent to Manus “in accordance with the refugee convention” remained intact and unaffected by the recent violent clashes on the island.

“We have no intention to deviate from its terms,” he said.

He said PNG was “committed to the partnership” with Australia. It had initially allowed asylum seekers to be transferred for one year from the time it was signed in August 2013 but had now been extended to apply for a second year, he said.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Amnesty International have criticised slow processing and unresolved resettlement arrangements at the detention centre on Manus, and a woman who worked there helping to assess refugee claims up until the recent violent clashes has said asylum seekers’ inability to get clear answers about processing and resettlement contributed to the escalating tensions.

Pato said there were issues regarding the Manus Island centre and resettlement arrangements to iron out with Morrison when the pair meet on Friday night.

“There are issues we will address with the Australian government. Partnerships have their fair share of bumps and some problems have occurred. Appropriate action will be taken with the Australian government,” he said.

Pato said the PNG cabinet had decided to appoint a panel of eminent people to develop the “policy framework” for resettling refugees. The framework would then have to be approved by the government. Departments were working on selecting the panel, but it had not yet begun work.

“PNG is coming to this for the first time in its history. We want to make sure we get it right. We want to be a regional leader,” he said.

Morrison has said the original MOU had been “little more than a blank sheet of paper” with the incoming government forced to negotiate all the details.

Guardian Australia understands several cases on Manus are now at “draft decision” level, and Australia is urgently finishing more permanent accommodation, closer to the township of East

Lorengau, with the intention of resettling people there for the foreseeable future, while long-term resettlement arrangements are negotiated.

Former Manus employee Liz Thompson said uncertainty about resettlement had contributed to the violence because “what they realised – you know what they wanted was not just the interviews and a process, something to feel better about, something to be involved in ... they want to know where they are going”.

Australia has appointed former secretary of the Attorney General’s Department, Robert Cornall, to investigate the violence at the Manus Island detention centre last week, during which one asylum seeker, Reza Barati, was killed and several were seriously injured.

In a statement after Reza Barati’s death, the UNHCR said there were “significant shortcomings in the legal framework for receiving and processing asylum seekers from Australia ... including lack of national capacity and expertise in processing, and poor physical conditions. We also highlighted that detention practices are harmful to the physical and psychosocial wellbeing of transferees, particularly families and children.”

Morrison has been criticised after he had to revise his account of where the events took place, eventually conceding that most happened inside the perimeter of the centre.

A preliminary Papua New Guinea police report obtained by the PNG Post Courier found Barati had died from “multiple head injuries” and his death could have been caused by a “heavy object”.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/28/scott-morrison-heads-to-png-to-iron-out-bumps-in-manus-refugee-deal

Morrison in PNG for Manus talks

The Age

February 28, 2014

Mark Kenny

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has flown to Papua New Guinea for talks with some of the country's senior government ministers about conditions on Manus Island.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott's office confirmed Mr Morrison is meeting with the country's Immigration and Foreign Affairs Minister, Rimbink Patoo, and Attorney-General, Kerenga Kua, on the management of the Manus Island detention centre.

Mr Morrison was not contactable on Friday afternoon.

The meeting comes nearly a week after a riot in the Manus Island detention centre led to the death of an asylum-seeker and injuries to several others.

Mr Berati, 23, was killed and 62 other asylum seekers were injured in violent scenes at the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island last Monday.

On Friday, the federal government signed a new memorandum of understanding with the NT police to manage disturbances.

The MOU sets out the responsibilities of NT police in assisting with security and incident management at the territory's four centres.

A former arrangement with the Liberal National Party government has also been extended which will see an additional \$48 million handed over by Canberra to meet the costs of running the detention facilities and related services in the Top End.

Immigration and Border Protection Minister Scott Morrison signed the MOU.

Later he joined Prime Minister Tony Abbott at the Larrakeyah Barracks defence base in Darwin to thank navy and other personnel involved in the government's controversial Operation Sovereign Borders operation.

Mr Abbott told service personnel they were performing brilliantly in extremely difficult circumstances.

“This has been a difficult and dangerous job, but it's been carried out with great professionalism and skill by our Naval, Customs, Army and Air Force personnel,” he said after mingling with OSB staff at a lunch in the Junior Officers' Mess.

“All of them have been operating together very effectively to give us the quite extraordinary result of 71 days now without a successful illegal people smuggling operation to Australia.”

“So, from the Government to the Border Protection personnel, an enormous thank you; and from the people of Australia to our Border Protection personnel, a big salute – an extraordinary job being very professionally carried out right now.”

Mr Morrison said the task of stopping the boats remained significant and while ultimately it was hoped that detention facilities holding some 30,000 people nationwide could be closed, the Territory would continue to play a role.

“Now, we are reviewing all of those centres that are here in Darwin but that commitment through that MOU, I think, indicates very strongly that there will continue to be a detention footprint here in Darwin,” he said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/morrison-in-png-for-manus-talks-20140228-33r70.html

Autopsy carried out on body of asylum seeker Reza Berati who died on Manus Island

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 28 Feb 2014, 12:34pm AEDT

Updated Fri 28 Feb 2014, 1:00pm AEDT

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says an autopsy has been carried out on the body of an asylum seeker who died on Manus Island, but the results are a matter for Papua New Guinea police.

Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati, 23, died of head injuries during a night of violence at the detention centre early last week.

There are multiple investigations of the incident, including one by PNG police and another by the Australian Immigration Department.

Papua New Guinea's deputy police commissioner Simon Kauba has cleared PNG police and locals of responsibility for Mr Berati's death.

But Mr Morrison says the PNG police review of the situation is only an initial report.

"That investigation has not been completed - there will be a full review into this, including into the operations and activities of any of the service providers that were present on that night and anyone else who was present on that night," he said.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott says Mr Berati's death is tragic.

"Any death is tragic and deeply regrettable, but the important thing has been to stop the boats and end the deaths at sea," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-28/manus-island-death-asylum-seeker-autopsy/5290450>

Manus Island a 'war zone' on night of unrest, video footage reveals

Exclusive: At a makeshift hospital, the injured are brought in, one after another. At one point a staff member shouts out: 'gunshot wound'

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com

Friday 28 February 2014

Chilling footage has emerged of “war zone”-like scenes during last week’s unrest at the Manus Island detention centre, showing dozens of asylum seekers – most unconscious or semiconscious and many with serious injuries – receiving treatment from frantic staff tending to them by torchlight.

The video, obtained by Guardian Australia, was filmed at the makeshift hospital created on a concrete wharf next to the floating accommodation block used by Australian detention centre staff. It is the first footage to be seen from the disturbance that left one man, Reza Barati, dead, one shot, and dozens wounded, 13 seriously.

The footage, shot in the early hours of Tuesday, after G4S personnel “lost control” of their local riot squads and Papua New Guinea police were observed in violent altercations with asylum seekers, shows the injured brought in on a ute, one after another. The events occur in near darkness, with only a soft green light, torches and headlamps from the vehicles illuminating the makeshift hospital.

Some asylum seekers being treated at the scene can be heard groaning in pain. At one point a staff member shouts out the words “gunshot wound” and a body is rushed through.

No asylum seekers can be seen at any point resisting staff, and one witness told Guardian Australia that at least one patient was observed with a plastic handcuff on one hand during the night.

“It was like a war zone,” a witness to the filmed events told Guardian Australia. “People were covered in blood – so many people came in half an hour.”

The footage was filmed between 12.41am and 1.06am on Tuesday. Almost immediately afterwards, witnesses say, all staff on the floating accommodation block, Hotel Bibby, were asked to help, whether or not they had medical training. At this point the number of casualties increased. “The medics were short of staff. It was chaotic,” a witness said.

The wounded asylum seekers were separated into three areas: an assessment area, a critical area and a non-critical area, according to the witness.

At 12:58am one asylum seeker, a tall, muscular, young man can be seen being brought in for assessment and then moved instantly off for further treatment. His body is limp, hanging off the end of the stretcher. Guardian Australia has contacted a family member of Reza Barati, who said they could not identify the young man in the image.

“People were moaning, ‘Papu, Papu’ – meaning local people,” said the witness to the filmed events.

Frantic staff can be heard during the continual arrivals. One shouts to a group seemingly running with a body, “walking guys, walking”. Pools of liquid can be seen on the concrete. Blood and bruising is visible on many of the patients. A line of unused chairs rests in the assessment area, but all patients are treated on camp beds or blue mattresses.

On 18 February, the day after the unrest began, Guardian Australia reported witness accounts of the scenes at the staff accommodation block. One contractor told Guardian Australia: “They were just makeshift beds. Transferees were carried in on sheets. Blood everywhere, crying. There were 30 or 40 clients down there. We had gunshot wounds, some with head injuries.”

The contractor took notes on what patients told her. One Iranian said: “I did nothing, I wasn’t involved in the protests, I was in my room, being good, trying to sleep. They came in my room ... they dragged me out of my bed and beat me. They had huge rocks in their hands and they hit my head and my body with them.”

An interpreter working for the Immigration Department, Azita Bokan, also said she saw asylum seekers with “massive head injuries” at the makeshift hospital and said she saw one patient with a slashed throat.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/01/manus-island-a-war-zone-on-night-of-unrest-video-footage-reveals

Video emerges of deadly violence at Manus Island

ABC News Online

By Simon Cullen

Posted Sat 1 Mar 2014, 10:39am AEDT

Updated Sat 1 Mar 2014, 1:24pm AEDT

New video has emerged showing part of the aftermath of last week's deadly violence at the Manus Island detention centre.

The footage obtained by the Guardian Australia website shows a makeshift hospital where the injured are treated on stretchers by frantic staff.

At one point, someone can be heard calling out: "gunshot wound, gunshot wound".

Later, someone yells "triage!"

According to a Guardian report, the footage was filmed on a concrete wharf next to the floating accommodation block used by Australian detention centre staff.

It shows medical staff treating asylum seekers by torchlight although it is difficult to see how serious the injuries are.

A 23-year-old Iranian man, Reza Barati, was killed and dozens of others injured - some seriously - during the unrest at the centre on February 18.

An autopsy has been carried out on Mr Berati's body but Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says the results are a matter for Papua New Guinea authorities.

Mr Berati's family has told the ABC they believe he was murdered and are holding the Australian Government responsible.

In a statement, Mr Morrison has described the death as "tragic" and he appreciates that Mr Berati's family is feeling a very deep sense of loss.

"The Australian Government has made arrangements with the government of PNG to return Mr Berati's remains to his family in Iran," he said.

There are a number of investigations underway to determine what took place at Manus Island, including one into the involvement of Papua New Guinea police.

A preliminary report found that Mr Berati died of multiple head injuries, most likely caused by a heavy object.

Earlier this week, PNG's deputy police commissioner Simon Kauba told the ABC that officers and locals were not responsible for Mr Berati's death.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-01/video-emerges-of-deadly-violence-at-manus-island-detention/5292664

Manus Island's \$3.5m kitchen in a tent

A mysteriously costly field kitchen is a tiny part of the billions that the federal government spends on immigration detention, write Ben Butler, Rory Callinan and Georgia Wilkins.

The Age

March 1, 2014

Ben Butler, Rory Callinan and Georgia Wilkins

No one seems to know why it's so expensive to run a kitchen on Manus Island, a jungle-covered island off the north coast of Papua New Guinea where Australia operates a controversial, violence-plagued immigration detention centre.

But expensive it certainly is. Since October 2012, when the Department of Immigration reopened the centre, the government has paid Toll Holdings \$3.5 million for kitchen facilities.

Exactly what the department got for the money also isn't clear - Toll declined to comment and on Friday the department had yet to respond to questions.

But a photo posted to the department's website shows that two months after Manus Island reopened, the kitchen was housed in a tent. A contractor who works for the detention centre said he heard that a small but good kitchen was in place last year, before the government announced it would upgrade the centre. When the centre was upgraded the old kitchen was removed, he said.

Whatever it paid for, the \$3.5 million is only a tiny fraction of the billions the federal government spends on the immigration detention system, which now supports an ecosystem of contractors, sub-contractors, workers and suppliers.

Among them four big service companies - G4S, Serco, Transfield and Toll - have between them reaped contracts worth more than \$5.6 billion from the Department of Immigration.

"The policy of indefinite detention is a very expensive policy," said Greg Barton, the Herb Feith Research Professor for the Study of Indonesia at Monash University.

"It's expensive to put people in jail and to keep them there. From the point of view of those being detained, the conditions seem very harsh and the services very modest, but it still costs a lot of money."

While Transfield and Toll are listed on the Australian exchange, G4S and Serco are British-based multinationals. This week, Transfield staged a coup at G4S' expense by seizing from it the contract to run Manus Island. It was a much-needed victory for Transfield, which has been struggling to transform itself after taking heavy financial hits from its mining business.

For \$1.22 billion, Transfield adds responsibility for Manus Island to its existing job running the government's other offshore camp, in the tiny South Pacific island nation of Nauru.

The deal has the potential to transform Transfield. Investors certainly liked it, pushing company shares up 24.5 per cent when it was announced on Monday.

But it also carries hefty risks. A fortnight ago, an Iranian asylum seeker held at Manus Island was beaten to death and dozens more detainees were injured in violence PNG police allege was perpetrated by locally employed G4S guards.

Others have implicated PNG police in the rampage, which is under investigation by the Immigration Department.

The new contract is also four times the size of Transfield's previous deal to run the Nauru centre, prompting questions from analysts this week as to whether the company has the financial capacity to do the job.

Transfield chief executive Graeme Hunt is adamant: "We went into this having assessed the risk across all areas," he said.

"We have to deliver our service in line with what we have been asked to do and we believe we're good at it and that will assist the situation. The other thing we need to do is manage the stakeholders, and we have a very good track record of effectively engaging with the local community.

"We have been asked questions about will we just basically front up and change the logo and nothing else will change. Absolutely not."

A Business Day analysis of contract notes posted to the federal government's AusTender website shows a clear hierarchy among the four players.

While Toll has the multimillion-dollar kitchen and a key role flying planes between detention centres and the mainland, the \$68.7 million that the Australian-listed company has billed since 2008 puts it in the last spot.

Last July the company paid to fly Scott Morrison, who was at the time the opposition's immigration spokesman, and two News Corporation journalists to Nauru to announce new policies.

Morrison is now Immigration Minister but the jaunt appears to have done Toll no favours: the company said it had not since won any additional immigration contracts.

Serco, which runs the department's network of detention centres within Australia, is the clear market leader, winning more than \$3.2 billion in contracts since December 2009.

But this week's contract upheaval moves Transfield to second place, from a total of about \$350 million in immigration work since 2010 to about \$1.5 billion.

G4S, which has reaped \$828 million since 2003, was pushed down to third spot.

It's not just Transfield whose fortunes have been turned around by the torrent of government money pouring into Manus Island.

Despite allegations islanders took part in attacking the rioters, the local community has generally supported the detention centre, which has brought jobs and improved facilities.

The most obvious sign of change is the large football field-sized patch of swamp that has been cleared and levelled for the proposed permanent detention centre, being built in the island's capital, Lorengau.

Contractors regularly overbook tourist accommodation in Lorengau and several hire car businesses have sprung up, some charging close to \$450 a day for new Toyota LandCruisers or similar vehicles.

Older islanders, some of whom have land rights on properties where detention centre facilities have been built, have been awarded lucrative contracts to help with construction and maintenance.

And instead of young islanders having to leave the island to find employment, they are now working at the detention centre, many having found jobs with the Salvation Army and others with G4S or caterer Eurest.

Hunt said Transfield will continue to employ locals.

While he said Transfield won the new work because of its good work running Nauru, G4S regional managing director for the southern Pacific, Darren Boyd, said "the decision to change providers on Manus Island was not based on performance".

The loss of the contract is the latest in a series of blows for G4S, which has been under fire for bungling security at the 2012 London Olympics and, with fellow London-listed multinational Serco, failing to fulfil a contract to find housing for asylum seekers and allegedly overcharging for electronic tags.

In a report released in November, the British National Audit Office revealed G4S paid zero corporation tax in Britain in 2012. The same year the Australian Taxation Office paid G4S' local arm a cash refund of about \$2.2 million.

Boyd said G4S paid tax where it earned its income, "in full accordance with the taxation laws of the countries concerned".

He said a "significant proportion" of the company's network of subsidiaries in tax havens including the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Netherlands Antilles and Luxembourg were "normal operating or holding companies".

Transfield's offshore detention contract appears much fatter than the deal struck by G4S.

Under the old Transfield and G4S contracts, the government was paying about \$39 million a month to run the two centres.

The new contract increases that figure to about \$61 million a month, or about \$900 a day per prisoner - more than it costs to rent a harbour view suite at the luxury Shangri-La Hotel in Sydney.

<http://www.theage.com.au/business/manus-islands-35m-kitchen-in-a-tent-20140228-33qub.html>

\$3.5m spent on Manus Island detention centre's kitchen defended

The Age

March 3, 2014

Ben Butler

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has defended paying \$3.5 million to Toll Holdings for a tent kitchen at its Manus Island detention centre.

A spokesman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said the department "closely adheres" to Commonwealth procurement guidelines that "specify the need to obtain value for money for all expenditure of public funds".

The department rented the tent kitchen from Toll when the centre re-opened in October 2012, then bought it outright a year later.

"The lease of the kitchen included mobilisation, installation, the kitchen structure, kitchen equipment, power generation, refrigeration, water storage and airconditioning," the spokesman said. "The purchase of the kitchen was deemed better value for money than the costs associated with demobilisation when the lease concluded."

The department also defended increases in the amounts paid to contractors G4S and Transfield Services to run offshore detention centres. Transfield, which wrested the Manus contract from G4S last week, will be paid \$1.22 billion to run the Manus and Nauru centres for 20 months. This equates to about \$900 a day for each detainee.

"The value of the contract with Transfield reflects the cost based on current transferee numbers at Nauru and Manus OPCs [offshore processing centres] over the contract period," the spokesman said.

"Following the change in policy in July 2013, and the expansion of necessary infrastructure, the two OPCs have been gradually increasing transferee numbers to the current levels. The lower costs to date reflect this gradual increase and that transferee numbers have not been constant."

He said giving Transfield both contracts would "ensure continuity, consistency and integration of service delivery across both OPCs as well as maximising efficiency and value for money".

Transfield is to take full control of the Manus Island detention centre on March 28.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/35m-spent-on-manus-island-detention-centres-kitchen-defended-20140302-33u0x.html

Kevin Rudd says Manus Island was not 'perfect answer' but defends policy

In the wake of riots that left one asylum seeker dead and many injured, the former prime minister says the hardline policy was necessary on practical and moral grounds

Staff and agencies - AAP
theguardian.com
Saturday 1 March 2014

Kevin Rudd has admitted the hardline asylum-seeker policy he implemented in mid-2013 to send claimants to Manus Island was “not a perfect answer” but said his government had been facing a practical, moral and political dilemma.

Iranian man Reza Berati, 23, died at the detention centre in mid-February from injuries inflicted on him during a riot. Guardian Australia has since revealed exclusive footage of harrowing scenes during the unrest in which wounded people are treated by detention centre staff at a makeshift, open-air field hospital.

A former employee at the Manus facility has told SBS that staff were ordered to tell detainees lies about their resettlement prospects, leading to a deep sense of despair that contributed to the escalation of events.

In July 2013, with Australia on an election footage after Rudd retook the prime ministership from Julia Gillard, the Labor leader unveiled his so-called PNG solution. Under the policy, continued by Tony Abbott’s Liberal-National conservative government, Australia no longer accepts any asylum seekers arriving by boat and instead sends them to Manus, part of Papua New Guinea, for processing and possible resettlement in PNG.

Speaking at Oxford University in the UK on Saturday night, Rudd acknowledged the policy was controversial but said it was implemented in the context of 12 million refugees languishing in camps around the world, with another 40 million people internally displaced. He insisted Australia was the third most generous country when it came to resettling UNHCR refugees behind the United States and Canada.

Rudd said “a large slice” of people arriving by boat weren’t genuine asylum seekers.

“Where it got to by the end of 2013 was the number of folks coming by boat was overwhelming the whole (Australian) refugee intake,” he said at the Oxford Union.

“The lesson that sent out to people smugglers was ‘You come by boat, we’ll get you there quickly [but] if you stay in a camp somewhere around the world, in some hellhole, you’re never going to get anywhere’.”

“It’s not a perfect answer,” he admitted of the ALP policy, before adding all the facts had to be considered before judging if it was right or wrong.

An inquiry has been launched and Abbott has sent Scott Morrison, the immigration minister, to Papua New Guinea in the wake of the riots. The government in Port Moresby has said it remains

committed to the agreement on which the Manus camp was founded but acknowledged there have been “bumps” in the partnership.

Rudd, who retired from his seat of Griffith after the election, delivered a lecture titled On Politics at Oxford. He urged 300 students who he said would become future world leaders to meet five challenges: preserving peace, fighting for liberty, working for inclusive capitalism, facing the rise of China and taking seriously the “gargantuan challenge” of climate change.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/02/kevin-rudd-defends-not-perfect-manus-island-policy

Scott Morrison has 66 spin doctors

Sydney Morning Herald

March 2, 2014

Bianca Hall

The Immigration Department employs a 66-strong team of spin doctors, dwarfing the 39 media and communications staff employed by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the ministers on his frontbench.

Last August, immigration employed 72 media staff, but the 66 officers who now work in the department's media unit are supported by a further 33 personnel who work on media operations and events in the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

In 2011, the Immigration Department reportedly employed just 13 spin doctors.

Since taking the reins in September, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has come under fire for repeatedly refusing to inform the public about how Australia repels asylum seekers at sea.

Last weekend, Mr Morrison admitted he had misled the public about what took place during the Manus Island riot, which left one man dead and scores injured, when he was forced to retract earlier assertions that most of the violence took place outside the centre after asylum seekers broke down the fence.

Fairfax Media asked the Immigration Department to comment on staffing levels, but was referred to Mr Morrison's media team who did not respond to questions.

Details of staffing levels were quietly tabled by the department last week in response to questions posed by Labor senator Joe Ludwig during budget estimates hearings in November. The staffing figures were correct as at November 19.

The documents show Mr Morrison's office spent \$29,788 on media monitoring between September 7 and November 19.

The department spent a further \$11,476 on media monitoring in that period, including \$9056 for transcripts of Mr Morrison's weekly Operation Sovereign Borders briefings (which he has since abandoned).

Senator Ludwig said: "Scott Morrison's army of spin doctors must have gone AWOL.

"For a minister that refuses to answer even the most basic questions put to him by the media and the public, this is simply outrageous."

The media officers work on liaison, strategic communication, promotion and annual reports.

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/scott-morrison-has-66-spin-doctors-20140301-33sqv.html

Reza Barati family cancels memorial service over fears

Family of dead asylum seeker Reza Barati cancels memorial service over repatriation fears

The Age

March 2, 2014

Paul McGeough

Deeply suspicious of the outside world, the family of dead asylum seeker Reza Barati cancelled a memorial service that was to be held in their village in the far west of Iran on Friday - apparently fearing they could be punished by official decisions to block repatriation of the young man's body.

Torabi Barati, a 50-year-old construction worker, wept on meeting members of his clan who had made a nine-hour journey by road from Tehran, to attend the service for his son who was killed in an eruption of violence at the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Manus Island - but the father gave no reason for the cancellation.

At the same time, family friend Khalil Rezai Far was blunt when he spoke to Fairfax Media on the family's behalf. Explaining they appreciated that Papua New Guinea and Australia were separate countries, he said: "Their understanding is that he was murdered in Australian detention - security in the camp has to be an Australian responsibility.

"We want justice and we want human rights organisations to follow this killing," the 46-year-old teacher said in a phone interview facilitated by a translator.

"All he wanted was to have a better life - he was an intelligent young man with productive years ahead of him and he would have been good for the Australian economy."

Mr Far's comments in this regard will be read in some quarters as justification for the bipartisan political support for toughening of Australia's asylum policies in recent years.

Explaining that as many as 20 local men had taken the people-smuggler route to Australia in recent years, the teacher said: "People here are really worried for the men they know who are still on Manus Island - and nobody wants to leave for Australia now."

Asked if they were political refugees or, as Canberra insists, economic refugees, Mr Far opted for a third adjective, offering this explanation of family needs and youthful aspirations in rural Iran: "Reza was not a political refugee - he was a social refugee."

Explaining that Reza was the eldest of his siblings, Mr Far said the young man, who had trained as an architect, had particular responsibilities to his family. "He had a duty to look after them and this was why he went to Australia - to get a job to help them financially," he said.

More than a dozen condolence banners were affixed to the outside wall of the small compound enclosing the Barati home, in the village of Lumar, a farming community of about 1000 people in Iran's Ilam province.

The Barati home, in which the parents raised five children, was described as humble. And its construction on public land was read as a sign of the family's poverty.

Instead of the anticipated assembly with hundreds of locals on an open space at the front of the compound, a family delegation of about a dozen males met the travellers from Tehran, expressing fears they might suffer more.

"The father was very quiet, but the others were very afraid - they said they did not want Reza's death to become a political issue," one of the visitors said. "This was because the body has not been returned and buried locally."

Despite the father's reticence on Friday, a statement read on his behalf at a memorial service in Tehran on Thursday used strong language and an inexact understanding of the facts, as they are known at this stage, of the standing of the perpetrators of the attack.

Contrary to reports that the clashes happened after local G4S staff descended on the centre, a translation of the father's statement reads: "I strongly condemn this horrible crime committed by the Australian police force ... and express great hatred towards [the perpetrators]. I ask the Iranian and Australian diplomacy system, the supposedly pro-human rights media and the judiciary in Iran and Australia to identify the merciless criminals - and to take them to court immediately.

"We separate the kind sympathetic people of Australia, who got together and lit candles in different cities to commemorate Reza, from the criminals who committed such a ... crime. We truly appreciate the humanitarian acts of the Australian people."

Despite the family's insistence that Australia is responsible for the death, it seems Canberra is set to resist any claim for compensation.

It is understood that, for now at least, the government's position is a willingness to pay for the repatriation of Mr Barati's body to Iran.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/family-of-dead-asylum-seeker-reza-barati-cancels-memorial-service-over-repatriation-fears-20140301-33sqp.html

PNG judge to tackle Manus

AAP

News.com.au

March 2, 2014

ASYLUM seekers will be interviewed by a Papua New Guinea judge as he investigates their treatment at the Australian run detention centre on Manus island.

Justice David Canning has announced he will visit Manus to investigate whether asylum seekers are being afforded their rights under PNG's constitution.

The Judge ordered PNG's public solicitor to send lawyers to the detention centre to give legal aid to the asylum seekers before a hearing on Manus Island on March 10, the ABC reports.

The news comes as the Australian Greens prepare to get Labor support on Monday to set up a Senate inquiry into the February 16-18 riot on Manus Island.

Iranian man Reza Berati died and 62 others were injured in the protest. A PNG police investigation has cleared its officers of involvement.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the inquiry would have the independence that an immigration department review into the incident lacked.

"Senate inquiry hearings will give the workers who were in the centre on that night the legal protection that they need to tell their stories freely," she told AAP.

The PNG government has repeatedly pledged to introduce legislation making the detention centre exempt from legal challenge.

Over two days of hearings late last week, Justice Canning ordered the heads of PNG's departments of Attorney General, Migration and Foreign Affairs to appear in court.

He indicated a time frame of one month and said hearings will take place in Madang, Manus Island and Port Moresby.

PNG's National Broadcasting Commission reports the nation's Opposition Leader, Belden Namah, has indicated interest in joining the case.

Mr Namah has a separate action before the courts questioning the legality of the Australian and PNG's government's border agreement to set up the controversial centre.

In June 2013 Justice Canning dismissed Mr Namah's challenge in its then form, ruling it did not follow proper court procedure when he filed the challenge on March 1 this year.

Justice Canning previously launched proceedings against a group of police officers accused of using machetes to slash the ankles of 74 men just outside of PNG's international airport in May 2013.

www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/png-judge-to-tackle-manus/story-e6frfku9-1226842862926

Manus resettlement may require PNG to change laws, says Scott Morrison

Immigration minister says claims processing could take months and refugee resettlement could require PNG legislation

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Sunday 2 March 2014

Papua New Guinea may need to pass legislation before the resettlement of asylum seekers currently held at the Manus Island processing facility can be finalised, according to the immigration minister, Scott Morrison.

Morrison told ABC radio on Monday that while a number of asylum seeker claims were “decision ready” the processing of claims on the island could still take months, and resettlement could require changes to PNG law.

There have been ongoing protests for weeks at the facility, arising in part from uncertainty over processing. Two weeks ago the situation escalated into violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. One asylum seeker was killed and several were seriously injured.

“There may be some legislative changes, and they’re some of the details which are yet not completely nailed down. There are pilot arrangements which are under discussion and an expert panel of their own, which they’ve been seeking to advance over the last month,” Morrison told ABC radio.

“I do agree that we need to have all of these arrangements in place, and that is why we are doing exactly what we’re doing.”

Morrison also announced on Sunday that a monthly joint ministerial forum would be convened with the Australian and PNG governments to oversee resettlement arrangements.

The oversight forum appears to be similar to an oversight group that was supposed to meet under the previous Labor government’s memorandum of understanding with PNG. But Guardian Australia revealed last year that the earlier forum had never been convened several months after it was first supposed to meet. The PNG foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, also said last week that the expert panel Morrison referred to had not yet been appointed.

Morrison also said he did not know who killed Reza Berati, the asylum seeker who died during the unrest, but said he was confident the circumstances of his death would be uncovered. The minister has been criticised after being forced to revise his account of where the events took place, conceding last week that most happened inside the perimeter of the detention centre.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/03/manus-resettlement-may-require-png-to-change-laws-says-scott-morrison

Morrison: first Manus Island refugee claims decisions imminent

Scott Morrison says first decisions on refugee applications by Manus Island asylum seekers are imminent

The Age

March 3, 2014

Matthew Knott

Refugee applications by asylum seekers on Manus Island are being processed and in some cases are almost "decision-ready", according to Immigration Minister Scott Morrison.

Confusion about processing arrangements is believed to have played a key role in sparking the unrest on Manus Island that eventually led to the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati last month.

Asked on ABC radio on Monday morning when Papua New Guinea will begin processing asylum seekers, Mr Morrison said: "Well, they already have begun and there already are quite a number of cases which are almost decision-ready, and that's something we want to see progress.

"I mean, the key thing here is: we've got to get this processing moving and we've got to get the resettlement in place. After all, this was a resettlement arrangement, not just a processing arrangement."

Then-prime minister Kevin Rudd announced last July that the PNG government had agreed to resettle refugees, but seven months later no refugees have been resettled there.

Mr Morrison announced on Sunday that the foreign affairs and immigration ministers of both countries will hold monthly discussions to co-ordinate the Regional Resettlement Arrangement.

"The resettlement arrangements with Papua New Guinea were a blank sheet of paper when it came to the previous government," Mr Morrison said.

"All the details, all the hard work has had to be done over the last five months. And there's a lot of hard work ahead."

Mr Morrison said it could be months before PNG is ready to resettle refugees, but he does not believe it will take a year.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/scott-morrison-says-first-decisions-on-refugee-applications-by-manus-island-asylum-seekers-are-imminent-20140303-33xbw.html

PNG local working for Salvation Army accused of Manus death

The Age

March 3, 2014

Michael Gordon and Matthew Knott

A PNG local employed by the Salvation Army has been accused of being a key assailant in the attack that resulted in the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati, according to staff employed at the Manus Island detention centre.

"Everyone knows who attacked him and is surprised no one has been taken into custody," a well-placed source told Fairfax Media. A spokesman for the Papua New Guinea police confirmed on Sunday that no one has been taken into custody following the death of Mr Barati a fortnight ago.

The Salvation Army denies the allegation.

Sources on Manus Island said cleaning staff had scrubbed clean the detention centre - including the area where Mr Barati died - the morning after the fatal violence of February 17. There are concerns this could compromise the investigation into his death.

Bullet casings and bullet holes at person-height in the centre walls were also found, staff who work at the centre said.

It appears the attack that resulted in Mr Barati's death, and injuries to more than 60 asylum seekers, was an orchestrated response to a rolling protest that involved asylum seekers chanting "F--- PNG" and baring their buttocks.

An account pieced together from interviews with staff asserts that the lights were turned off in the area where the asylum seekers were injured shortly before local police and locals employed by security contractor G4S and the Salvation Army entered the centre.

The account of Mr Barati's death is consistent with the one related by relatives who have spoken with a cousin who witnessed the attack. It says Mr Barati was in the computer room when the violence began, made a return to what he hoped would be safety in his room, then was attacked - allegedly by a local employed by the Salvation Army. Mr Barati died after repeated blows to the head, most likely by a piece of timber, a PNG autopsy found last week.

Sources said tensions at the centre were fanned by a chaotic handover of contracting work at the centre from G4S and the Salvation Army to Transfield Services.

A Salvation Army spokesman said it had investigated claims that one of its employees was responsible for Mr Barati's death. "We found absolutely no evidence that it occurred," the spokesman said.

Following a visit to Papua New Guinea, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison announced that Australia and PNG would work to "synthesise" the various reviews into Mr Barati's death. Australia and PNG will also hold a monthly joint ministerial forum to oversee the implementation of the regional resettlement agreement signed between the two nations last year.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/png-local-working-for-salvation-army-accused-of-manus-death-20140302-33tzj.html

Leaked notes: New questions over Manus 'children'

Manus Island document mentions 14 alleged unaccompanied minors

Leaked notes raise more questions about whether children were present during February's unrest, which left one man dead

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Tuesday 4 March 2014

Fourteen asylum seekers on Manus Island claimed they were unaccompanied minors between November and January, according to a leaked document seen by Guardian Australia, raising more questions about whether children were present on Manus during February's unrest, which left one man dead and dozens injured.

The document, which was used by contractors in the detention centre to manage cases, contains the details of every asylum seeker on Manus that, as of 21 January, had raised claims of being a child. It also contains worrying indications that many asylum seekers are transferred to Manus without having their ages properly verified.

In nine of the cases the notes suggest that the asylum seekers told immigration staff on Christmas Island they were underage but were transferred to Manus regardless.

One case note reads: "M states that he told Immigration at Christmas Island he was 16 years old and that they sent him here because he couldn't provide the necessary documentation."

The asylum seeker in this case was eventually classified as an adult, after authorities said only "original documentation" would be accepted to verify his claim.

Another case note states: "A felt that they [Immigration Department staff] hurried the interview and the interpreter translated his responses wrong. He questioned when he got his ID ..."

Professor Mary Crock, an expert in policy on unaccompanied minors, said asking for official documentation to prove age was "beyond belief".

"The idea that you should be requesting original birth certificates from displaced people, on a place like Manus Island, is beyond belief. How low can you go?"

Psycho-social cognitive testing is supposed to be used to determine the ages of young asylum seekers, but Crock and politicians in the Senate have expressed concern that these tests are not being used properly on Christmas Island. It is also unclear if the detention centre on Manus has the capacity to conduct this testing.

A spokesperson for the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, said there were no asylum seekers on Manus who had been accepted as unaccompanied minors at present.

"To date the department has not knowingly transferred any unaccompanied minors [UAMs] to the Manus Offshore Processing Centre [OPC]," the spokesperson said.

Morrison has also maintained that there were no minors on Manus during the unrest.

Guardian Australia understands that many of the asylum seekers in the document had continued to make their claims, even if they had been formally ruled against because they were unable to provide documentation proving their ages.

The document confirms the difficulty in verifying the ages of many young asylum seekers who use the Islamic Hijri calendar.

It records nine of those claiming to be minors were all born on the same day – 31 December 1994 – and a further two were born on the same day a year later.

The birth dates on the document are the birth dates recorded by the Immigration Department on arrival.

Crock said the fact that so many dates of birth were recorded as the last day of the year was an act of “meanness” by the department, as it automatically raised the assumed age of the asylum seeker by a year, even if their real date of birth was unknown.

Last week Guardian Australia reported there were at least two asylum seekers detained on Manus during the riots who claimed to be underage. One, an Iraqi teenager, has subsequently returned home after abandoning his claim.

The other was a Somali asylum seeker, claiming to be 15. Guardian Australia has since seen a copy of a document alleged to be his birth certificate, which shows his year of birth as 1998.

An anonymised version of the document was shown to the Australian Somali Community Association, which could not confirm its veracity.

The asylum seeker, known as H, has provided a copy of this document to the Immigration Department but his claim has been rejected. “Only original documentation will be considered to further this claim,” the document says.

Guardian Australia understands that three unaccompanied minors were moved from Manus about a week before the unrest occurred. The database confirms the case of one unaccompanied minor on Manus in early December.

On Tuesday, the Uniting Church in Australia wrote to the Australian government to offer sanctuary to all unaccompanied minor children held on Christmas Island to stop them from being transferred to Nauru. Transfers of unaccompanied minors to Nauru have been occurring for the past three weeks.

“We are well placed to offer these vulnerable young asylum seekers a place of sanctuary where we can ensure their wellbeing,” said the Reverend Professor Andrew Dutney.

The spokesperson for Morrison’s office indicated they would not be taking up the offer but would engage the church on working with other asylum seekers in mainland detention.

In November, Guardian Australia revealed that two unaccompanied minors had been held on Manus Island for months after a processing error had led to their transfer. The two boys were kept in isolation in a small room. Morrison initially denied the boys were on the island but was forced to issue a retraction and ordered their immediate return to Christmas Island.

Under the Coalition government's new 48-hour turnaround target, asylum seekers who arrive on Christmas Island are usually transferred to offshore detention within two days. This target has been criticised by medical experts, with a letter signed by 15 doctors on Christmas Island saying some asylum seekers would be seen by a doctor for about five minutes as a result.

The spokesperson for Morrison, who is the legal guardian of unaccompanied minors in Australia and mandated to work in their best interests, continued: "There have been a number of instances on Manus where transferees, who had previously advised that they were adults or were age determined to be adults onshore, later claimed to be UAMs.

"There have also been some instances where a transferee who was found to be an adult after a formal age determination process before departure to an OPC continued to claim that they were a minor.

"In cases such as these the department reviews all case files and pertaining information (including any new information/evidence that may have come to light) in consideration of the individuals' claims.

"Any transferees at the Manus OPC who are found to be minors will be returned to Australia at the earliest possible opportunity until such time as they can be transferred to Nauru, which has the facilities and services available to accommodate unaccompanied minors."

Labor senator Lisa Singh, who brought up the issue of unaccompanied minors on Manus at Senate estimates last week, said the age verification processes on Manus were "inadequate".

"Minister Morrison must act to ensure no further children end up on Manus Island. It is not an appropriate place for children, their mental health and wellbeing will be continuously compromised," she said.

"What will it take for this minister to address age assessment procedures properly so that no more children end up on Manus Island?"

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/04/manus-island-document-mentions-14-alleged-unaccompanied-minors

Violence, self-harm and bullying claims on Nauru and Manus

Violence, self-harm and bullying: whistleblowers speak of detention

Fresh claims of extensive self-harm, mistreatment by guards and fabrication of welfare documents have emerged from within the Nauru and Manus Island detention centres.

SBS World News

4 March 2014 - 9:45pm

By Stephanie Anderson with Dateline

(see website link for video and audio)

New claims of extensive self-harm, mistreatment by guards and fabrication of welfare documents have emerged from within the Nauru and Manus Island detention centres.

Exclusive footage obtained by Dateline details a string of allegations, including a shortage of underwear and sanitary items for female detainees.

Aired on SBS ONE on Tuesday, the footage also shows former employees speaking out over mismanagement at the camps, which led to the near death of an at-risk asylum seeker at Nauru.

A former Salvation Army worker told Dateline that guards had allowed the highly disturbed man out on a walking excursion, despite a carefully drawn plan outlining the need for close supervision.

The worker, identified as Claire, said two guards were escorting the group when the client found a piece of glass and stabbed himself in the neck.

“Thankfully he didn’t die on the road, but it came very close,” she said.

“They had no underwear, no bras”

Another former Salvation Army worker reported men self-harming on an almost daily basis while at Nauru.

The university student, identified as Marie, said she had witnessed asylum seekers cutting their wrists and necks, trying to suffocate themselves with plastic bags and stitching their lips together.

“We were told if we saw people protesting or self-harming not to look at them, because it empowers them,” she said.

“So we were told to walk away.”

Marie said she hadn’t undergone an application process or training and was instead told to “go mingle” in the camp, which she described as dirty and infested with vermin.

She said she was shocked at the conditions, which included shortages of underwear and sanitary items.

“There were escape attempts by women because they felt degraded because they had no underwear, no bras,” she said.

She said the shortage of sanitary items meant asylum seekers were required to fill out request forms for supplies.

“They were available, but in limited supply,” she said.

“I was told it was a potential fire hazard to give too many at one time.”

Marie also worked on Manus Island, where she described the camp as unsanitary and smelling of human waste.

“The smell of faeces and urine and still overwhelmingly hot, dirty the while thing,” she said.

“It was terrible.”

She said detainees on Manus Island had no real privacy and sheets hung as makeshift walls were often removed by guards.

She had also witnessed self-harm at that compound, including a man that suffered significant blood loss after trying to slit his wrist.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/03/04/violence-self-harm-and-bullying-whistleblowers-speak-detention>

Manus Island can't cope with settlers, Governor Charlie Benjamin warns

The Age

March 4, 2014

Sarah Whyte

with Matthew Knott

Manus Island will not welcome asylum seekers as permanent settlers, the island's governor has warned, blaming the threat of climate change and rising sea waters.

Charlie Benjamin, who is one of two members of parliament on Manus Island, said his province already had "its own problems", including the threat of climate change, which would limit its capabilities to permanently resettle asylum seekers if they were found to be refugees.

"In Manus they will only be processed," he said. "They will not be resettled in Manus. We are prepared to process but we are not prepared to accommodate them.

"The government's problem is how we can settle these people on the islands if they go underwater. That is our main concern."

Mr Benjamin said he had also been "caught by surprise" that PNG would have to resettle asylum seekers, as well as process them, as stated in the memorandum of understanding between the PNG and Australian governments in September 2013 under then-prime minister Kevin Rudd.

"Most Papua New Guineans have no problem with processing but they have a problem when it comes to resettling, when [the asylum seekers] don't want to come to PNG," he said.

"They don't want to be resettled here. They don't want to come to PNG. They have been forced to. This is why we have this problem."

Mr Benjamin could not say why there had been a delay in processing the 1332 asylum seekers held in the detention centre but he said the "PNG Solution" had become "unpopular" among island residents, especially after the fatal violence that killed 23-year-old Reza Barati in February.

"It is unpopular because it is not right that people resettle here when they want to go to Australia," he said. "It's not right for us to force them to be here when they don't want to be here. It is going against our own conscience."

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison told ABC radio that he had established monthly meetings with the PNG authorities to accelerate the processing of asylum seekers in the detention centre.

It was also likely PNG legislation would have to be changed, he said.

"There already are quite a number of cases which are almost decision-ready and that's something we want to see progress," Mr Morrison said. "There may be some legislative changes and they're some of the details which are not yet completely nailed down."

But Mr Morrison conceded it would take months for the processing to be completed.

"The key thing here is: we've got to get this processing moving and we've got to get the resettlement in place," he said. "After all, this was a resettlement arrangement, not just a processing arrangement."

Under the agreement PNG is solely responsible for processing asylum seekers.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-cant-cope-with-settlers-governor-charlie-benjamin-warns-20140303-340kc.html

G4S employee contradicts leaked PNG police report

Manus Island riot: G4S employee contradicts leaked PNG police report into violence at detention centre

ABC News Online

By national security correspondent Michael Brissenden

First posted Tue 4 Mar 2014, 6:24am AEDT

Updated Tue 4 Mar 2014, 3:09pm AEDT

An Australian employee of the G4S security firm on Manus Island says PNG police stood back and allowed locals to break into the compound last month, did nothing to stop them beating detainees, and in some cases participated in the violence and intimidation.

His claim, made on condition of anonymity, contradicted a leaked PNG police internal incident report into unrest at the detention centre on February 17 that describes the deadly violence as a confrontation solely between G4S security guards and asylum seekers.

Some expat G4S staff have since left the island suffering from serious post-traumatic stress.

A spokesperson for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says there are three investigations underway into the Manus Island incident, including a full independent inquiry headed by former senior public servant Robert Cornall.

"These investigations seek to establish the events on Manus Island that evening and we will await the outcome of these reviews," the spokesman said.

"The Government has taken steps with the PNG government to ensure there is information sharing, cooperation and convergence as appropriate to get the clearest possible picture of what occurred that night."

Meanwhile, one staff member told the ABC the situation is so tense that asylum seekers are refusing to have anything to do with local PNG staff.

The Australian G4S employee witnessed "a frenzy of out-of-control violence", telling the ABC that after a second night of protests at the detention centre, G4S staff under attack from rock-throwing asylum seekers asked to withdraw from the facility and agreed to hand over security to PNG police.

The source says PNG police then fired five or six warning shots and stood back as enraged locals poured into the compound over a back fence.

"Our guys were sheltered behind a container and when it came to a point when they couldn't do any more, someone said we need to withdraw," the guard said.

The negotiations that came over the radio raised concerns about handing over control to the PNG police.

"'Do you just want to hand over to the PNG police?' they were asked," the guard said.

"The answer came back over the radio: 'Yes, hand it over to them.'

"And the person who had asked said: 'Are you sure? Do you know the consequences of that?'"

"And they said: 'Yes, hand it over'."

Local G4S staff were the first in, followed by local contract staff.

"We saw them going in with machetes. They had anything they could pick up - rocks, sticks, the poles from the exercise weights," the guard said.

"Once they knocked people to the ground, they were stomping on their heads with their boots.

"A day later you could still see guards and staff and cleaners walking around with blood on their boots."

One of the injured asylum seekers has also detailed what happened to him in an interview recorded from hospital a few days after the attack.

He told the ABC:

"Six people were on top of me ... hitting me. At the end I was holding my hand to my face to protect my face from being hit. Then **** came ... I know him personally. He kicked me with his boots ... on my face."

Contrary to the PNG police incident report that describes it as a confrontation between G4S guards and transferees that saw guards being seriously assaulted, the G4S employee says that once the violence began, PNG police did nothing to try and control the situation and some even joined in.

"The police went from room to room as well and held guns to people's heads and said, 'If you don't give me your cigarettes, we're going to shoot you'," the guard said.

Some locals and expats were also inside trying to get transferees out and protect others with shields.

One expat guard lay across a transferee to prevent him being shot.

There was blood everywhere'

The eyewitness the ABC has spoken to says locals and police went systematically through the compound from room to room.

"There were guys who wet themselves and shit their pants out of total fear," the witness said.

"There are handles broken where they've tried to get in and the transferees have been holding the doors closed and they've snapped the handles off and they've tried to get in with machetes.

"There was blood everywhere ... faces kicked in ... noses ... it's all head injuries. I just remember blood everywhere I looked. Blood everywhere."

The wounded were taken to the wharf.

"The wharf was full from one end to the other and there were puddles of blood everywhere," the witness said.

"They did an emergency tracheotomy out in the open ... there were people moaning ... it was terrible. Everyone pitched in to do what they could, you just needed every single person who was there."

The G4S guard says the transferees now feel so unsafe that when they tried to bring in local cleaners the day after the incidents, it just about started another riot. The asylum seekers want nothing to do with any of the locals.

The expat staff say the atmosphere is so tense that it will not take anything much to kick off another round of unrest.

"The asylum seekers are asking them who they can trust. Who's going to keep them safe? You just don't know if it's going to happen again," the witness said.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-04/g4s-employee-contradicts-png-police-report-into-manus-riot/5295740

UN Report to call for review of PNG processing

United Nations human rights chief Navi Pillay to call for review of PNG asylum seeker processing

Sydney Morning Herald

March 5, 2014

Sarah Whyte

The United Nations high commissioner for human rights will call on Australia to review its treatment of asylum seekers and its agreement with Papua New Guinea after last month's violence on Manus Island.

In an opening address to be delivered at the Human Rights Council 25th Session in Geneva on Thursday, Navi Pillay will say that the violence on Manus Island underscores the need to review the resettlement arrangements signed by Australia with Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

"To ensure that the human rights of migrants and asylum seekers are fully protected in accordance with international law," she will say.

In her speech, Dr Pillay will also reinforce the commission's commitment to protect human rights, particularly in Sri Lanka and after many boat tragedies off the coasts of Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain.

"I call on the authorities to strengthen systems to protect against such events," Dr Pillay will say.

"Today the task of protecting and promoting human rights is as vital as it was 20 years ago."

The speech comes as Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young will push for a Senate inquiry into the Manus Island riot that saw one asylum seeker killed and scores of others injured.

Human rights groups said it was a "serious concern" that Australia's asylum seeker policy was being mentioned in the same breath as countries with serious human rights abuse records such as Ukraine, Syria, North Korea and Sri Lanka.

"The High Commissioner emphasises what successive Australian governments have ignored. Refugees have rights, irrespective of the mode of transport they use to seek protection," said Daniel Webb, the Human Rights Law Centre's director of legal advocacy.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/united-nations-human-rights-chief-navi-pillay-to-call-for-review-of-png-asylum-seeker-processing-20140305-346oz.html>

Indonesia and Iran to discuss Australia's treatment of asylum seekers

Iranian foreign minister, visiting Jakarta in wake of death of Reza Barati, says Canberra's policy will be subject of future talks

*Australian Associated Press
theguardian.com
Thursday 6 March 2014*

Iran and Indonesia are preparing to discuss Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, following the death of an Iranian man on Manus Island.

Reza Barati, 23, died on 17 February when riots erupted at Australia's offshore detention centre.

The Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, visiting Jakarta on Thursday, said Australian policy would be the topic of future talks.

"The lives of our nationals are important to us and we did in fact issue a statement against the way Iranian nationals were treated by Australia," he told reporters.

"This is an issue we will be discussing," he said.

"We agreed to have a working group, on consular affairs.

"We will be discussing together this issue in addition to other issues of a humanitarian character arising out of these talks."

Zarif was speaking at a media conference alongside Indonesia's foreign minister, Marty Natalegawa, who did not respond to questions about the talks.

The leaders' talks on Thursday touched on investment, combating terrorism and regional stability.

Diplomatic ties between Australia and Indonesia, meanwhile, have still not normalised after last year's revelations of spying.

It has been nearly 100 days since the two nations agreed to work on a new code of ethics but little progress has been made since.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/indonesia-and-iran-to-discuss-australias-treatment-of-asylum-seekers

Church slams 'cold blooded' treatment of asylum seeker children

The Age

March 5, 2014

Sarah Whyte

The Uniting Church has slammed the "cold blooded" treatment of asylum seeker children in detention, offering housing for children who are being forcibly moved from Christmas Island to Australia's second processing centre on Nauru Island.

There are about 70 children being moved to Nauru Island, said the president of the Uniting Church, Reverend Professor Andrew Dutney.

"We know that conditions on Christmas Island are very poor, and frankly not suitable for children who are not accompanied by their parents. We also know that Nauru is even worse for children," Professor Dutney said.

"We're simply wanting to offer the Australian government an alternative to knowingly harming these children and this kind of cold blooded willingness to put children in harms way.

"We watch with real concern, in fact, and alarm as the policies around asylum seekers have hardened over the last couple of governments," he said.

On Monday the Uniting Church approached the government to offer the children a home within its network, said Professor Dutney, from Adelaide.

This is not the first time churches have openly spoken against asylum seekers policies.

At the PNG Catholic Bishops Conference this week, a consortium of bishops condemned Australia's asylum seeker policy.

"We were concerned that the rhetoric of a righteous campaign against people smugglers actually seemed to be more a question of political convenience," the Church assembly said.

Last month the biggest church denominations in Australia have warned Immigration Minister Scott Morrison against amending a core migration act that could give him unparalleled power to "play God" and deport asylum seekers.

Under the current Complementary Protection visas, asylum seekers who are not deemed refugees are able to claim protection if they face death or serious human rights violations, including torture.

Now, under proposed changes, Mr Morrison will have discretionary power to determine the fate of these asylum seekers.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/church-slams-cold-blooded-treatment-of-asylum-seeker-children-20140305-346cy.html

Photos emerge of Manus injuries

Manus unrest photos appear to show serious injuries and damage to centre

A set of photographs has been sent by two separate sources to Guardian Australia and subsequently circulated online. They appear to show the aftermath of the Manus unrest and are understood to have been taken less than a week after the disturbances, which left one man dead and dozens injured. Warning: graphic images

Oliver Laughland and Mary Hamilton
theguardian.com
Thursday 6 March 2014

Images located at

www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2014/mar/06/manus-unrest-photos-appear-to-show-serious-injuries-and-damage-to-centre

Manus Island staff given two-page 'how-to' answer guide

Manus Island riots: Staff given two-page guide on how to deal with questions from asylum seekers

ABC Radio CAF - PM

By national security correspondent Michael Brissenden

First posted Thu 6 Mar 2014, 5:27pm AEDT

Updated Thu 6 Mar 2014, 5:41pm AEDT

The contractor charged with the provision of physical and mental health care to asylum seekers on Manus Island has issued staff with a two-page guide on dealing with questions about their fears for their personal safety, living conditions and human rights.

The document is clearly designed to help soothe concerns the asylum seekers are expressing in the aftermath of the bloody attacks last month that left one man dead and many others seriously injured.

Health workers have been told to urge the asylum seekers not to give up hope.

The ABC has also been given a letter written by an asylum seeker, which was smuggled out of the centre.

It claims those in detention are now living in fear of their lives.

There are five enquiries under way into the events that unfolded in the detention centre on February 17.

At some point there will be an official explanation and a conclusion and perhaps even some recommendations.

But inquires aside, as time goes on, more and more is being learnt about the terrifying events of that night.

We know that it resulted in the death of one man and that many more were badly beaten and badly wounded.

Earlier this week an Australian G4S security guard described to the ABC the details of what was a terrifying night as asylum seekers were hunted down room by room and bashed by enraged local contract staff armed with machetes, sticks and metal bars.

The guard said PNG police stood by as the violence escalated and in some cases participated in the violence and intimidation.

It is an experience that has traumatised many of the staff and the asylum seekers housed in the Manus Islands detention centre.

According to the G4S guard, the asylum seekers are now asking who they can trust, who will protect them and who is going to keep them safe.

These questions are also being asked of contractors for the International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), which is responsible for the mental and physical health care of detainees on Manus Island.

There have been so many questions from the asylum seekers there in the past few weeks that the IHMS has seen fit to provide their employees with two pages of suggested responses for the most frequently asked questions.

If they are asked, "How can we feel safe here?", the company suggests the reply should be:

"We understand that you feel unsafe after all that's happened. It will take a while to feel safe again and we are all working to try and make that happen."

According to expat Australian staff and those in detention that the ABC has spoken to, there is now a real suspicion and hostility between the asylum seekers and locals and a real fear that things could easily get out of control again.

If asked, "Will they do it again?" the IHMS suggested response is to say that:

"This was an extraordinary event and we have never seen anything like it before. We hope it's never repeated."

"Security is a big concern here right now to protect you. What we suggest is to not antagonise the local people and we hope that they will treat you with respect too."

In all there are 15 frequently asked questions, including "How can we trust anyone?", "Why have our human rights been violated?" and "How can I get through this?".

To the question "When will I get out of here?", the suggested answer is:

"We are sorry, we don't know the answer to this question."

Other questions with prepared answers are "Why doesn't Australia care?" and "Why shouldn't I hate Australia?".

The suggested answer:

"We can understand why you would feel this way. We are certain that from your own experience you understand that the people of a country are not the same as the government. There are many Australians who care and want to help."

And IHMS staff are urged to help at least keep some hope alive:

"There is always hope. It may not seem like that now in the middle of all this, but there are people who love you and people who will support you."

"You need to keep strong and build resilience."

But resilience is in short supply inside.

The ABC's PM program has been given a letter written by one of the detainees and smuggled out by an expat G4S employee.

The four hand-written pages match with the other detail and testimony that has leaked so far about the events of February 17 and the short conclusion at the end underlines the hopelessness and despair.

"We are escaped from our countries because of dangerous situation and human rights," it reads.

"We came to Australia to seek asylum. It's always claimed that Australia is the first country all around the world who protects and defends human rights, but now see what happens with us... lots of us get serious injuries and one of us died.

"Now we are living frightened and all of our lives are in danger in a brutal country in the middle of nowhere."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-06/manus-staff-issued-guide-on-handling-asylum-seeker-questions/5303696

MEDIA RELEASE: More eyewitness accounts name PNG Police and local G4S staff

PNG staff and Police excluded from Manus Island detention centre as more eyewitness accounts name PNG Police and local G4S staff

Friday March 7, 2014
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Despite denials by both G4S and PNG police that they were involved in the murder of Reza Barati and attacks on 77 other asylum seekers on 17 February, local G4S workers and PNG police remain excluded from the Manus Island detention centre.

"The continued exclusion of the local staff and PNG police is a tacit admission by Scott Morrison that G4S and PNG police were indeed involved in the attacks on defenceless asylum seekers," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"Asylum seekers remain in fear of their lives. Some who survived the brutal attack have told how guns were held to their bloodied heads. Many have since asked to be transferred to Delta Compound which was the compound not attacked on 17 February."

Asylum seekers inside the Manus detention centre are demanding to be told the truth about the injured that are not yet accounted for. Some asylum seekers have not been heard from since the attack.

Asylum seekers inside the detention centre are demanding to be allowed to speak to the Iranian man wounded by gun fire on the night. "If he is alive, we should be able to speak with him," one asylum seeker said from inside the detention centre.

"It is clear that Scott Morrison cannot guarantee the immediate physical safety of the asylum seekers left alone their long term security. He claimed he could guarantee asylum seekers safety if they remained inside their compounds -- but he couldn't then and he can't now," said Rintoul.

"If Scott Morrison had any decency he would resign. Reza was murdered on his watch and he has continued to try to cover-up the truth. There was no riot; there was no protest on the night of 17 February.

"Despite attempts to restrict contact with the outside world, more and more eye-witness accounts confirm the attacks were carried out by local G4S and PNG police. The bullet-hole ridden walls of buildings in Mike Compound reveal the full extent of the PNG police involvement."

An account received by the Refugee Action Coalition from a victim of the attacks reveals:

"Refugees screamed for help from G4S officers. When they got closer, it became obvious that the people [allowed into the compound] were G4S officers armed with hand weapons such as wooden sticks, rocks, machetes and long swords. They attacked the refugees and started hitting them. Everyone was panicked as to why the G4S officers were behaving so inhumanely" "Six people surrounded me and with the sticks they had in their hands started hitting me. I fell on the ground and the only thing I managed to do was to cover my head with my hands, so my face and head were less injured."

"In the face of such accounts," said Ian Rintoul, "Morrison's statement that "more work needs to be done to protect the rights of asylum seekers" is laughable, considering his responsibility for the grossest possible violation of their human rights."

For more information contact: Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Canteen clash sparked tension with locals that led to deadly riot

The Age

March 7, 2014

Rory Callinan

Just days before the deadly riot in the Manus Island detention centre last month, a Papua New Guinea man working in the camp's catering section beat up an asylum seeker in the dining area.

The incident is believed to have contributed to tensions between the detainees and locals employed in and around the centre.

Fairfax Media has been told the local was employed in the catering section operated by international provider Eurest.

A spokeswoman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed this week an incident had occurred. She said Mr Morrison was advised of an incident that was "initiated by a transferee striking a member of staff of one of the service providers at the centre".

"The transferee was treated by International Health and Medical Services for a small cut as a result of the altercation," the spokeswoman said. She did not provide further details.

Asked if the matter would be included in the investigations, she said: "Any and all events that are considered by [former public servant] Mr [Robert] Cornall to be relevant to the incident that occurred at Manus Island on the night of February 17, will be addressed in his independent review.

"The government expects that service providers conduct themselves lawfully and consistent with the service standards set out in their contract."

A source at the centre said the bashing happened after the asylum seeker tried to pull a plastic glove off the hand of the caterer a week or so before the riots.

"He also tried to cut [the caterer] with a plastic knife and he slapped him. [The caterer] then bashed [the asylum seeker]," said the source, who asked not to be named as comment by staff was banned.

Fairfax had previously been told locals working as caterers might have helped quell the riot and clashed with asylum seekers.

Eurest said "it would not be appropriate for Eurest to comment on operational matters" while there was a review. Eurest also declined to reveal whether the staff member in the bashing incident was disciplined or removed from the site.

The source said the local catering staff were no longer working in the centre alongside detainees, possibly because of the bashing.

But he said local cleaning staff were back in the centre because "the expats got tired of cleaning the toilets".

Eurest's website says the company promotes a corporate responsibility that promises to run the business in a way that "reflects our values, connects our business decisions to ethical, social and environmental concerns".

A number of rumours about who was responsible for the death and the assaults during the riots have circulated, including that locals piled in to help overwhelmed guards, that riot police shot at asylum seekers and that the asylum seekers were stomped on.

But so far none of the allegations has been confirmed by officials.

At least five inquiries are said to be under way into the riot that left asylum seeker Reza Barati dead and more than 70 injured, including one with gunshot wounds.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-canteen-clash-sparked-tension-with-locals-that-led-to-deadly-riot-20140306-34a8z.html

Parliament to probe Manus Island riot

The Age

March 5, 2014

Michael Gordon, Sarah Whyte and David Wroe

Asylum seekers will be invited to give their witness accounts of the recent deadly violence on Manus Island to a parliamentary committee that will free public servants and contractors from confidentiality clauses in their employment contracts.

Having persuaded the Labor Party to back the inquiry, Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young will push for it to conduct hearings inside the Australian-run detention centre where more than 60 asylum seekers were injured and one died last month.

Detainees have so far spoken, on the promise of anonymity, of local security contractors and others invading the centre and savagely beating and slashing detainees who tried to hide in the bedrooms after a non-violent protest.

Other staff have told Fairfax Media they know the identity of the man who killed Iranian detainee Reza Barati.

"I think it's going to be difficult to run a genuine inquiry unless we get there," Senator Hanson-Young said after agreeing with Labor on wide-ranging terms of reference for the probe.

The combined numbers of Labor and the Greens in the Senate ensure the inquiry will go ahead and will be dominated by non-government MPs. It will be chaired by Greens senator Penny Wright.

Under its terms of reference, the inquiry will review the conduct of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, "before, during and after the incident".

The inquiry will take evidence in April, after the inquiry set up by the government has concluded, and is expected to call asylum seekers, staff from G4S - the company that has been running the centre - and the Salvation Army, Papua New Guinean police and Australian officials.

Witnesses would have parliamentary privilege to speak openly and not be bound by confidentiality terms in their employment contracts, Senator Hanson-Young said.

"It is very clear that a lot of people who have witnessed what happened and want to speak out, but are scared of their confidentiality agreements and intimidated by the department," she told Fairfax Media.

"I spoke to an interpreter today who has been receiving phone calls from the department threatening her if she says anything."

If the inquiry was refused permission to conduct a hearing within the centre, Senator Hanson-Young said detainees would be able to give evidence by teleconference.

She dismissed the inquiry ordered by Mr Morrison as compromised because it was not arm's-length from government; the government would decide whether its findings were released in their entirety, and there were criticisms of the former public servant leading the inquiry, Robert Cornall.

Mr Cornall investigated allegations of sexual and other serious assaults at the centre last year, concluding claims of detainees being sexually abused, raped and tortured with the full knowledge of staff were not true and that other allegations were exaggerated.

"This inquiry will be the only independent investigation into Reza Barati's death and what happened on Manus Island," Senator Hanson-Young said.

Labor's immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, backed the inquiry, saying: "It is vital we get to the bottom of what went wrong on the minister's watch at Manus Island. So far, Mr Morrison has consistently failed to provide an appropriate response to critical questions relating to events between February 16-18."

A spokesman for Mr Morrison said the government's review would "now benefit from the participation of the government of PNG".

"In addition, the PNG government has established a police investigation and a coronial inquiry to ensure that any potential breaches of PNG laws are appropriately dealt with through their justice system."

Manus Island police chief Alex N'Drasal has told Fairfax Media that he expected his investigators would soon arrest more than one suspect in relation to the death of Mr Barati.

"We're still continuing the investigations, but there are indications that we will probably soon arrest someone in relation to that," he said.

He said his investigators had the names of "a few suspects". He could not give a precise number or say exactly when the arrests would happen.

Mr N'Drasal also stood by previous claims by PNG police that their officers remained outside the detention centre and took no part in the violence.

What the inquiry aims to establish

- A chronology of events
- The sequence of events that led to Reza Barati's death
- The involvement of the Immigration Department
- How the PNG police, military and civilians were involved
- Any documents involving staff, employees, contractors and sub-contractors involved
- Any communications between the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and the PNG government regarding the employment of contractors, sub-contractors and service providers
- Australia's duty of care obligations and responsibilities
- Refugee processing and resettlement arrangements in PNG

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/parliament-to-probe-manus-island-riot-20140304-345bo.html

Senate approves inquiry into Manus Island riot and death of Reza Barati

Labor backs Greens' motion to set up inquiry which follows criticism of the internal immigration department investigation

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Wednesday 5 March 2014

A parliamentary inquiry into the violence on Manus Island that left one man, Reza Barati, dead and dozens injured, will commence on 1 April after the Senate backed the Greens' motion on Wednesday.

The Labor party backed the vote, which passed on voices, despite no support from the Liberal party.

The Greens have repeatedly expressed concerns that the immigration department's review of the incident – the most serious in the controversial offshore detention centre's history – would not be enough to determine the true course of events in the 17 February unrest.

“Today we have secured the only genuinely independent investigation into Reza Barati's death,” said Greens immigration spokesperson, senator Sarah Hanson-Young.

“A man has died in the Australian government's care and anything less than a parliamentary inquiry would have been grossly insufficient.

“It was disappointing, though not surprising, to see the Liberal party once again vote against transparency and accountability in an attempt to continue its coverup campaign,” she continued.

The review commissioned by the immigration department, to be led by former civil servant Robert Cornall, has been heavily criticised for its lack of scope. The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, also said this review would be “synthesised” with a PNG police investigation into Barati's death, despite the police themselves being implicated in the disturbance.

The parliamentary inquiry will focus on creating a timeline of events during and leading up to the unrest. The Greens say it will also allow witnesses the confidence to come forward and detail their experiences.

It will also examine the immigration minister's conduct during and after the event and will have the power to table documents produced by contractors and the department for immigration related to the incident.

“Through this inquiry the workers who were there that night and the refugees who were attacked will have the opportunity to tell their stories, free from the government's gag order,” Hanson-Young said.

“It's essential for us to find out exactly what happened that night and the government's internal review, as part of its coordinated whitewash, is simply not good enough.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/senate-approves-inquiry-into-manus-island-riot-and-death-of-reza-barati

Senate to hold inquiry into Manus Island violence

Labor, Greens to hold Senate inquiry into Manus Island violence

ABC News Online

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Labor and the Greens will team up to establish a Senate inquiry into recent deadly violence at the Manus Island immigration detention centre.

Iranian man Reza Berati, 23, died and dozens were injured during unrest at the centre last month.

Police in Papua New Guinea have launched an investigation, while Australia's Immigration Department is holding a separate inquiry.

However, Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has dismissed those investigations as a "co-ordinated whitewash".

She says the Senate inquiry will be independent and rigorous, and will seek to hear from detention centre staff and asylum seekers involved in the violence.

Senator Hanson Young says it would be ideal if the investigating committee could travel to Manus Island.

"I think it's really important that we try and get as much information out of the camp as possible," she said.

"If we're not able to go there then we can have telephone calls, we can do teleconferencing, we can ask for written and oral submissions, anything we can do to try to shed light and shine light on the dark corners of what happened that night."

Labor is backing the motion for the inquiry and says it is vital to get to the bottom of what went wrong.

Labor's Immigration spokesman Richard Marles says the Minister Scott Morrison has shown a staggering lack of oversight of the centre. "This is happening on this Government's watch and what we've got here is a Government which runs from responsibility," he told AM.

"It's time they actually take responsibility for what is occurring under their watch.

"This Minister has not spoken to the official in charge of the Manus Island facility since September."

The inquiry is expected to begin in April and report by June.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-05/labor-and-greens-to-hold-senate-inquiry-into-manus-violence/5299236

PNG may not allow Australian probe on its soil

The Age

March 7, 2014

Sarah Whyte

Asylum seekers and workers at the Manus Island detention centre should be flown to Australia to give their evidence to the newly established Senate inquiry, a spokesman for Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister says.

Media adviser to Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, Daniel Korimbao, said Australia should pay for detainees to fly to Canberra to give witness accounts of the fatal violence to the parliamentary committee that was passed on Wednesday.

"I doubt if the PNG government would allow the Australian Senate to conduct an inquiry on PNG soil and jurisdiction," Mr Korimbao said. "The better option would be to have the detainees, and any other person, flown to Canberra, where the inquiry is being held, to be interviewed there."

The proposal came as a Senate report slammed the Coalition's "severe secrecy" on immigration and operational borders. The report, handed down on Thursday, recommended that the Australian Parliament consider changing its procedures, criticising the Abbott government's "unwillingness to engage in a meaningful way".

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who initiated the inquiry into the Manus Island violence, said the detention centre had become a "jurisdictional mess". "It is concerning that the Australian government is spending billions of dollars on a gulag in PNG and it should work to ensure that the Parliament can investigate what goes on there," she said.

"If the Abbott government genuinely wants to find out what really happened that night, it will do what it can to make sure the inquiry is able to visit Manus Island and take evidence from refugees and staff."

But a spokesman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said it was a "matter for the committee" on whether asylum seekers could be flown to Australia, and who would foot the bill.

Refugee rights advocate Pamela Curr, from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, applauded the idea, saying it provided a safer option than having an inquiry on the island. "It makes very good sense to do so," she said. "From a practical point of view it places enormous pressure on PNG and the private contractors to keep the witnesses safe after they have given evidence."

But mental health advocates disagreed, saying asylum seekers were likely to suffer enormous psychological distress. "To give an account of what happened and then to go straight back to the very place where they have been attacked would cause strong psychological distress," said Professor Louise Newman, from Monash University.

The inquiry will take evidence in April, after the government's own independent inquiry has concluded, and is expected to call asylum seekers, staff from G4S - the company that has been running the centre - and the Salvation Army, Papua New Guinea police and Australian officials.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-inquiry-png-may-not-allow-australian-probe-on-its-soil-20140306-34aao.html