

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 6 September 2015

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1. United Nations calls for up to 200,000 refugees to be shared among EU states

ABC News Online / AFP / Reuters
Posted Fri 4 Sep 2015, 4:16pm

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called on the European Union to admit up to 200,000 refugees as part of a "mass relocation program" that would be binding on EU states.

Commissioner Antonio Guterres made the comments as hundreds of migrants, many of them refugees from the Syrian war, woke after a night on a packed train stranded at a railway station west of Budapest, refusing to go to a nearby camp to process asylum seekers.

"People who are found to have a valid protection claim ... must then benefit from a mass relocation program, with the mandatory participation of all EU member states," Mr Guterres said in a statement.

"A very preliminary estimate would indicate a potential need to increase relocation opportunities to as many as 200,000 places."

His call came ahead of a meeting later on Friday of EU foreign ministers to discuss the continent's refugee crisis, of which Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, whose lifeless body was found face down in the surf on a Turkish beach on Wednesday, has become a searing symbol.

The boy's father, Abdullah Kurdi, returned to his hometown of Kobane on Friday to bury his wife, other son and Aylan, who all died as the family tried to get to Europe, news agency AFP reported.

Mr Kurdi arrived at the Turkish border town of Suruc with the funeral caskets of his son and other family members.

Referring to the pictures of the dead child, which "had stirred the hearts of the world public", Mr Guterres said: "Europe cannot go on responding to this crisis with a piecemeal or incremental approach."

"No country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part," he said.

His appeal tallied with a call by France and Germany for binding EU quotas to share the burden of the influx of migrants and refugees, which has hit Greece, Italy and transit countries in south-eastern and central Europe the hardest.

A European source told AFP that European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker would next week unveil a plan for the relocation of at least 120,000 more refugees

Hungary's PM says flow of asylum seekers 'endless'

Hungary's right-wing prime minister Viktor Orban said on Friday warned Europeans risk becoming a minority on their own continent.

He defended his country's hardline stand on asylum seekers as hundreds protested around a train stationed in the town of Bicske.

"The reality is that Europe is threatened by a mass inflow of people, many tens of millions of people could come to Europe," Mr Orban told public radio in a regular interview.

"Now we talk about hundreds of thousands but next year we will talk about millions and there is no end to this.

"All of a sudden we will see that we are in minority in our own continent."

Shouts of "No camp, freedom!" broke out. Using shaving foam, protesters wrote on the side of the train: "No camp. No Hungary. Freedom train."

The migrants had wrestled with police on Thursday, some throwing themselves on the tracks insisting they be allowed to remain on the train bound for a border town near Austria.

The train had left Budapest on Thursday morning after a two-day standoff at the city's main railway station as police barred entry to some 2,000 migrants.

Hungary says they must be registered, as per European Union rules, but many refuse, fearing they will be sent back to Hungary if caught later in western and northern Europe.

Hungary has hit out at Germany, the most popular destination among the migrants, for saying it would accept asylum requests from Syria regardless of where they entered the EU.

Parliament in Budapest is expected to endorse a raft of measures to effectively seal Hungary's southern border with Serbia to asylum seekers.

It wants to create holding zones on the frontier where migrants will be held while their papers are processed and potentially sent back into Serbia.

"Hungary cannot ignore Schengen rules in its procedures," Mr Orban said, referring to Europe's zone of passport-free travel.

"Migrants must cooperate with Hungarian authorities, with the German authorities and if Germany wants to admit Syrians, it should issue permission for them to go into Germany."

Mr Orban said the new measures being debated by parliament would be implemented from September 15.

"Everyone should be prepared for this: Serbia, Macedonia, the immigrants, the human traffickers. We ourselves will prepare for this, and a different era will start from September 15," he said.

Poland's foreign minister Grzegorz Schetyna said the EU had to tackle the reasons for the arrival of migrants.

"The scale of the migration is enormous, so we can't focus — I'm talking about the whole of Europe — on allocating illegal migrants without fighting the causes [of their arrival]," Mr Schetyna told private Radio Zet.

"We have to think of how to stop the illegal migration. Otherwise [we may] soon have 3-4 million economic refugees."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said Australia was considering whether to would increase the number of Syrian refugees it would accept.

Ms Bishop's comment came after a stinging criticism in a New York Time editorial of Australia's "unconscionable" border protection methods.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-04/un-calls-for-up-to-200000-refugees-to-be-shared-among-eu-states/6751080>

2. How asylum seeker help compares in major European Union nations

ABC News Online / AFP

First posted Thu 3 Sep 2015, 9:12am

Updated Thu 3 Sep 2015, 9:55am

Europe is facing an unprecedented influx of refugees as hundreds of thousands of desperate people flee war and misery in search of a better life.

Those who do reach European Union countries quickly discover there are wildly differing rules for how asylum-seekers are treated.

This has sparked divisions among members of the 28-nation bloc as migrants naturally flock to countries with the most favourable regimes in the absence of a common policy.

The following is a rundown of help available to asylum-seekers in major EU nations.

Full story at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-03/how-asylum-seeker-help-compares-in-major-european-union-nations/6745490>

3. Liberal MP's impassioned plea for refugees

Sydney Morning Herald

September 5, 2015 - 12:06AM

Michael Gordon

A Coalition MP has made an impassioned plea to the Abbott government to consider taking more refugees from Syria in response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Europe.

Craig Laundry made the call to Julie Bishop and Immigration Minister Peter Dutton after being shown the harrowing picture by his 16-year-old daughter of a young boy whose body had washed up on a beach in Turkey.

"Can we please do more?" the MP from western Sydney asked Ms Bishop on Friday morning.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop later told reporters the question of an increased intake was "under consideration", although Tony Abbott suggested a further increase was unlikely.

The Abbott government is being urged to take an extra 20,000 Syrian refugees to demonstrate Australian compassion in response to the largest movement of people since the Second World War.

Global aid agencies have backed a call by the Greens to approve the temporary increase, grant asylum to Syrian refugees already in Australia or in offshore detention and make an emergency contribution to the United Nations refugee agency to address the crisis.

Several government MPs, including Mr Laundy, Barnaby Joyce and Russell Broadbent, are supporting an increase in the intake as well as a skewing of the existing intake toward Syrian refugees.

Declaring "we can do better", World Vision's Tim Costello has urged the government to take more refugees as it moves to approve bombing of Islamic State targets in Syria.

"When you are bombing, people are fleeing and you have a clear ethical responsibility as you fight ISIS to treat this as a human security issue, not as some leave pass not to shoulder some of that burden," Mr Costello told Fairfax Media.

The Refugee Council of Australia is backing the call for an increased intake, saying Australia has contributed to the flow of desperate people by "closing our borders in the way that we have".

"Australia has a responsibility, capacity and the resources to be able to scale up our refugee intake generally, but the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Syria provides additional urgent impetus for us to act," said the council's chief executive, Paul Power.

While Ms Bishop said Australia would play its part and that "this matter is under review by the Minister of Immigration", Mr Abbott suggested no further increase was being contemplated.

Mr Abbott said Australia had already agreed to take an extra 4400 refugees from Syria and Iraq, saying the success of its actions to stop boat arrivals had made this possible.

Mr Laundy, a father of three, said that after seeing the photograph of the dead child "we broke down as a family around the dinner table thinking, 'There but for the grace of god go any of us'".

"I say this to the Australian people: 'Put yourself in these people's position. If you were faced with what they are faced with, would you put your life at risk to give your children a chance?'. My answer is yes."

The Prime Minister was untroubled by a scathing attack on Australia's approach to border protection by The New York Times newspaper, saying the most compassionate thing a country could do in the medium to long term was shut down the people smuggling trade.

"It's obviously a crisis right now on the borders of Europe and I think a lot of people right around the world are looking at what we've done and said, 'Well, if Australia can stop the people smuggling trade, if Australia can end the deaths at sea, perhaps we can learn from them'."

An editorial in the newspaper described Mr Abbott's policies as "inhumane, of dubious legality and strikingly at odds with the country's tradition of welcoming people fleeing persecution and war".

Greens leader Richard Di Natale has written to Ms Bishop and Mr Dutton requesting the increase. "Four million people are fleeing war in Syria. Two million of those are children. To welcome 20,000 of them into our community would be such an honourable and dignified response from Australia," Senator Di Natale said. "Australia has an opportunity to do something great here. We have the strength, the capacity and the generosity to support people who are seeking safety," said Greens immigration spokeswoman Senator Sarah Hanson-Young.

Anoop Sukumaran, executive director of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, said a substantial increase in Australia's refugee intake would help rebuild the credibility lost as a result of this country's "extreme" and "draconian" refugee policies.

Oxfam Australia's Dr Helen Szoke backed the intake increase and called on governments to improve infrastructure and support local economic development, education and health programs in neighbouring countries, to ensure people living in crisis-affected communities and refugees can access basic services.

Mr Joyce was touched by the personal story of a man whose plastic bag of water bottles and a packet of biscuits were his only possessions in the world.

"As an accountant myself, when you see an accountant walking across the border into Hungary from Syria when his life has been destroyed I feel a sense of empathy for him," Mr Joyce told The West Australian.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/can-we-please-do-more-liberal-mps-impassioned-plea-on-refugees-20150904-gjffqw.html>

4. Mike Baird challenges Tony Abbott to do more to aid Syrian refugees now

The Age
September 5, 2015 - 6:39PM
Kirsty Needham

NSW Premier Mike Baird has challenged Prime Minister Tony Abbott to do more to help Syrian refugees, saying "stopping the boats can't be where this ends".

Mr Baird has taken to his Facebook page on Saturday afternoon to express his "overwhelming sorrow", despair and anger at the image of the drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, whose body was washed ashore on a Turkish beach this week.

Mr Baird says the photo "changes everything".

"I turned away, but that image will never leave me. That photo isn't just a story of one tragedy. It is the story of thousands of real people in a fight for life itself," Mr Baird writes.

He said the crisis unfolding in Syria has been apparent for a while.

"But that photo. That little boy. I found that as the feeling of anger dulled, my next response was.... surely we can do more. But what is "more" and what does it look like?"

He said NSW had the strongest economy in the nation and it was ready to help the vulnerable beyond its borders and do whatever is needed.

In a challenge to the Abbott Government's policy on border protection, Mr Baird writes that the federal government needs to go beyond its commitment to increase its humanitarian intake over several years.

"And we should do it now," he writes.

"It is a great thing that we don't have children drowning at sea trying to get to our shores. That has been a significant humanitarian achievement. But stopping the boats can't be where this ends. It is surely where humanitarianism begins."

Mr Baird said he would discuss the issue with the Abbott government, and how NSW could work with it to do more, in the coming days.

"We cannot see the images we have seen, and feel the things we have felt, and then go back to business as usual," he writes.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/mike-baird-challenges-tony-abbott-to-do-more-to-aid-syrian-refugees-now-20150905-gjfx72.html>

5. Anastacia Palaszczuk says Aylan Kurdi image a 'wake up call'

The Age
September 5, 2015 - 10:43PM
Natalie Bochenski

The Premier says the picture of a Syrian toddler washed ashore on a Turkish beach was a "wake-up call" to Australia to search for a more humanitarian approach on asylum seekers.

Anastacia Palaszczuk said she, like all Queenslanders, was disturbed by the image of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, who drowned with his brother and mother while fleeing conflict in their home country.

"What we are seeing across the world is what happens when wars cause a massive impact on society, where people have to flee those countries and seek refuge for a better life," she said.

"Europe is addressing that issue, and you know, Australia should have a wake-up call and look at how the rest of the world is treating these poor people who are actually fleeing wartime situations."

Speaking in her own electorate of Inala in Brisbane's south west on Saturday, Ms Palaszczuk said its welcoming and inclusive spirit should be the standard nationwide. "These are federal issues, and [federal Opposition Leader] Bill Shorten has made it very clear, Labor's position is we need to have a humanitarian look at the way we treat people," she said.

"My grandparents came from a boat after the Second World War; they came to Australia [from Europe] with nothing. Australia has been built by people who've come from all around the world for a better place, and to build a better society."

<http://www.theage.com.au/queensland/premier-says-aylan-kurdi-image-a-wake-up-call-20150905-gjfu4a.html>

6. Aylan Kurdi should not have died, Naomi Klein tells Sydney festival

Author tells Festival of Dangerous Ideas audience Australia's offshore detention centres are 'black sites' and part of hiding the human cost of the refugee crisis

The Guardian

Adam Brereton and agencies

Saturday 5 September 2015 13.59 AEST

Aylan Kurdi, the three-year old refugee whose death at sea has become the central image of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, should have been safely living in Vancouver, Canada, author and activist Naomi Klein said.

In an emotional introduction to her talk on climate and capitalism at Sydney's Festival of Dangerous Ideas (Fodi), the Canadian writer said the "hostile bureaucratic processes" of Canadian immigration were to blame for the rejection of a refugee application by Teema Kurdi, Aylan's aunt, who is living in Canada.

The photo was a "harrowing image of abandonment and neglect", Klein said.

"I have found these past days very difficult. Let's also recall there have been other [positive] images and stories too."

Klein said western politicians are "hiding the human costs" of the refugee crisis "simply because their need is inconvenient", and referred to Australia's offshore immigration detention centres as "black sites".

"Tony Abbott has been in the news this week marketing his black sites [as a solution]", Klein said. "'Prison camps for safety', from the man who brought you 'coal is good for humanity'."

Earlier this week Klein issued a statement with other Fodi speakers distancing herself from retired Major General Jim Molan, a board member of festival co-curator the ethics centre and one of the architects of Operation Sovereign Borders, Australia's border control regime.

The Australian government is standing firm in the face of growing pressure to help more Syrian refugees flee the war-torn country.

As the crisis in Europe escalates with thousands crossing the Mediterranean to escape the conflict, church groups and the Australian Greens are pressing the government to open its doors.

The Greens are calling for an emergency intake of 20,000 Syrian refugees and \$150m funding for the UN high commissioner for refugees.

The Greens leader, Richard Di Natale, said more than 250,000 men, women and children had already died and it was time for Australians to lend a helping hand.

He said attitudes towards refugees had reached a turning point following distressing images of young children trying to escape the war being washed up on beaches in Europe.

"I just say to Tony Abbott, if you have a skerrick of compassion, of decency, of humanity – you would support the Greens' call and immediately welcome 20,000 Syrian refugees who desperately need our help," Di Natale told reporters in Melbourne on Saturday.

"We are a lucky country and strong enough to offer people safety and respite from war."

But the prime minister says he will not bow to the calls made by the Greens.

The Coalition agreed to take 4,400 people from northern Iraq and east Syria in 2014 as it carefully considered the impact of Islamic State through those areas, Abbott said.

He did, however, suggest that Australia may have scope to accept more refugees in the future because of his government's controversial Operation Sovereign Borders.

"One of the good things about stopping the boats is that we are now in a much better position to increase our refugee and humanitarian intake," Abbott told reporters in Hobart.

Joyce Chia, senior adviser and spokeswoman for the Refugee Council of Australia, joined the Greens at a news conference calling on the government to offer asylum to Syrian refugees.

"The situation in Syria is one of the world's most urgent and increasing crisis," she said. "It is a crisis we can do something about."

Australia has previously provided refuge to 40,000 Chinese people following the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 and also issued temporary visas to 4,000 Kosovo refugees in 1999.

(Australian Associated Press contributed to this report)

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/05/greens-leader-calls-for-emergency-intake-of-20000-syrian-refugees>

7. Immigration head launches legal bid to keep boat turnback document secret

Department secretary Michael Pezzullo is fighting ruling on freedom-of-information request from Guardian Australia

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Wednesday 2 September 2015 11.27 AEST

The head of the department that oversees the Australian Border Force is initiating potentially costly legal proceedings at taxpayers' expense in a bid to keep secret a single document about the federal government's asylum seeker turnback operations, despite some of the material being publicly available.

In July, customs – now part of the immigration department with the creation of the Australian Border Force – was forced to make public material outlining the legal processes, policy framework and operational objectives involved in conducting asylum seeker turnback and towback operations.

The agency had previously refused to release the material, claiming it would damage national security. It formed part of a freedom-of-information request from Guardian Australia for documents including ship logs and orders to conduct turnback operations.

The outgoing Australian information commissioner, John McMillan, ruled in his final decision for the commission that part of one document should be released because it would “add to public understanding of how a difficult and sensitive function is discharged within government”.

It was the only material out of 15 documents requested that McMillan said should be released. He ruled that there was no public interest in the release of ship logs and requests and orders relating to the turnback operations.

But the secretary of the immigration department, Michael Pezzullo, is now launching an appeal in the administrative appeals tribunal to fight that ruling.

The case is likely to throw the spotlight on secrecy surrounding asylum seeker turnback operations. The federal government has adopted a policy of refusing to confirm or deny when an asylum seeker vessel is intercepted and turned back to another country.

The appeal is being run on a particularly technical point of law. Under freedom of information laws, when an agency invokes national security as an exemption, the information commissioner must consult the inspector general of intelligence and security before it can be released.

The agency argues that McMillan “mistook” its submissions about whether the whole document fell under that provision, and should not have made a ruling on any of it without taking evidence from the inspector general.

The case may be a landmark ruling on how national security freedom of information cases can be decided, and may lead to the inspector general having to provide advice on national security implications of the federal government's asylum seeker policies.

The information commissioner may also be able to seek standing in the case, although the office is currently without a dedicated freedom of information commissioner. The privacy commissioner, Timothy Pilgrim, has assumed the additional role of acting information commissioner.

An initial conference is scheduled at the administrative appeals Tribunal in October.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/02/immigration-head-launches-legal-bid-to-keep-boat-turnback-document-secret>

8. Two asylum seekers need hospital care after reports of self-harm

Sydney Morning Herald
August 31, 2015
Neelima Choahan

An Afghan man who is believed to have tried to take his own life has been returned to a West Australian detention centre after a week-long stay in a hospital.

Another asylum seeker tried to commit suicide at Wickham Point Detention Centre on Sunday morning.

A fellow detainee said the Afghan man, believed to be Ali Jaffery, "cut his throat" at the Yongah Hill Detention Centre, north-west of Perth, on August 21.

A spokesperson for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said on August 21, a male detainee was transferred from Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre to hospital, where he received medical treatment.

The spokesman said the man was returned to Yongah Hill on August 28. They would not give any other information, saying it would be "inappropriate to discuss individual medical circumstances".

The detainee said the man, who was in his late 20s, had been in the "mental health room" and didn't mingle with anyone.

"There was too much blood," the detainee said.

"I saw the blanket and his singlet ... it was covered in blood. All of it was red.

"There was blood in the front of the room."

The detainee said others who had been inside the room saw both the bed and the floor were covered in blood.

He said such incidents of self-harm had become the norm at the centre.

"Every day someone tries to hang themselves," he said.

"Whatever we do, nothing happens."

Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said the man's visa had been cancelled, but he couldn't be returned home because he was a refugee or awaiting a decision on his status.

Mr Rintoul said the man was yet another victim of the government's detention regime.

"If an Australian citizen commits a crime, then they pay whatever penalty the court establishes and ... they are considered to have paid their debt to society," he said.

"But someone who is an asylum seeker or refugee, even if they have completed their sentence ... they are subject to immigration detention on top.

"There is no excuse for indefinite detention; it is a recipe for mental illness and attempted suicide."

Mr Rintoul said it was concerning that the man had been returned to the centre.

"He is back in the circumstances that is likely to mean he will try again [to harm himself]."

The latest incident follows the death of a young Afghan asylum seeker at the Yongah Hill Detention Centre just over four weeks ago.

Mohammad Nasim Najafi died on July 31 amid claims he had been denied medical treatment for two weeks despite complaining of heart trouble.

Mr Rintoul said an asylum seeker had also tried to commit suicide at 1.15am on Sunday at the Wickham Point Detention Centre.

A spokeswoman for the Department on Immigration and Border Protection said an incident had occurred at Wickham Point Detention Centre.

"The detainee involved is receiving appropriate medical and mental health support and care," she said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/two-asylum-seekers-need-hospital-care-after-reports-of-selfharm-20150829-gjav9d.html>

9. Abdul Karim Hekmat: Secret freeze on refugee citizenship processes

The government has ceased processing citizenship applications from boat-arrival refugees entitled to become Australians, leaving hundreds in limbo.

The Saturday Paper
Sep 5, 2015
Abdul Karim Hekmat

For years, Rahim, an Afghan Hazara, waited to become an Australian citizen. Deemed a refugee and granted residency, and having lived in the community for the requisite four years, he passed the citizenship test and received a letter from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection saying, "On behalf of the Australian government and the people of Australia, I am pleased to inform you that your application for Australian citizenship has been approved." He was given a date to attend a citizenship ceremony at a local council. Rahim did not own a suit but, feeling excited, he bought one.

"I counted every minute and hour of it all these years. I was very happy that the wait was over," he says. "It's a pride for me to become Australian citizen. As a Hazara, I don't have a good experience in my country. The Taliban killed us because of who we are and how we look. I hope this would be a new identity and new life."

There was another reason Rahim was jubilant. As a citizen, he could finally bring his family to Australia, which places boat arrivals at the lowest priority for family reunion under the directive of former immigration minister Scott Morrison. Citizenship is also the only truly durable protection that can be offered to a refugee.

"My family was excited too when they heard I will become Australian citizen. Then I could bring them here. It's safe here, you know," Rahim says. "They are worried to be killed every day there [in Afghanistan]."

A day before his ceremony, Rahim received a phone call. It was from the Immigration Department, telling him that his citizenship ceremony was cancelled for tomorrow. He was told he would receive another letter soon. He was given no explanation. All he could think was, "What wrongs have I done?" Ten months have passed and he has not received another letter. "When I call the department, they don't give me any reason, just saying, 'It's under process – wait,'" he says. "I don't know what the problem is. They don't tell me what my crime is."

Full story at <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2015/09/05/secret-freeze-refugee-citizenship-processes/14413752002323>

10. Transfield named Coalition's 'preferred tenderer' for Manus and Nauru centres

Guardian Australia understands the role of Save the Children – providing welfare services for children and families on Nauru – will be taken over by Transfield

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Monday 31 August 2015 12.36 AEST

Transfield Services, the company embroiled in a series of scandals over human rights abuses in its offshore asylum detention centres, appears set to continue running the Manus Island and Nauru facilities for another five years, after being announced as the government's preferred tenderer to run "welfare and garrison support services" offshore.

Guardian Australia understands the total five-year contract could be worth about \$2.7bn, about \$45m every month.

Transfield's bid is understood to be significantly more expensive than some other tenderers, but the per-month figure was reduced from its current contract budget, due largely to smaller detention centre operations.

And Guardian Australia understands the announcement from the government means that Save the Children, which was providing welfare services for children and families on Nauru, will no longer operate on the island. That role will be taken over by Transfield.

Transfield took over running Manus Island from G4S in March 2014, shortly after an Iranian asylum seeker, Reza Berati, was killed in a riot there, allegedly by guards. It was already running Nauru. Transfield's 20-month contract was worth \$1.2bn.

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The firm's stewardship of both contracts since has been controversial. Thirty-three asylum seekers on Nauru have alleged rape or sexual assault and a further five say they have been asked for sexual favours in return for contraband. Some of those allegations have been made against Transfield staff. The company has said it has counselled, disciplined and moved some staff for inappropriate behaviour.

Transfield bosses were criticised when they appeared before the Senate for failing to answer fundamental questions about their operations on Nauru.

Transfield subcontractors, in particular Wilson Security, have been accused of a series of abuses, including handcuffing children, spying on a senator when she visited the island on an official trip, assaulting asylum seekers who were handcuffed, and running a secretive solitary confinement facility on Manus.

The company has been forced to defend itself before a number of parliamentary inquiries, including the Senate select committee that is expected to report on Monday afternoon on conditions and allegations of abuse on Nauru. That report is expected to be fiercely critical of Transfield's running of the centre.

Transfield has firmly denied allegations it misled the Senate, and says it is committed to investigating allegations of abuse or inappropriate conduct.

"Every reported incident is investigated, actioned and reported to the department, welfare providers and the local law enforcement authorities as required," it said. "Furthermore, any allegation of illegal activities or criminal offences have been referred to the Nauruan police force."

The company is also the subject of a divestment campaign over rights abuse allegations.

The industry superannuation fund HESTA sold its 3% share in the company because of concerns over breaches of international human rights law and "a significant quantum of evidence that there have been numerous sexual and physical assaults in the detention centres operated by Transfield Services".

However, the company's 2015 annual report was stronger than in previous years.

Transfield reported an 11.6% drop in full year profit to \$48.6m for the 12 months to 30 June 2015. The fall was largely because of \$36m in costs relating to legacy contracts and writing off debt in North America.

Revenue grew 1.3% to \$3.797bn and Transfield's chairman, Graeme Hunt, said the result was "the strongest one, so far as I can see, probably since the company has listed".

Transfield reported to the ASX on Monday morning: "Transfield Services Limited has been notified that it has been selected as the preferred tenderer to provide welfare and garrison support services for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection at the regional processing centres in Nauru and Manus provinces.

"Subject to completion of a contract, the company will be responsible for providing these services for a further five years."

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/31/transfield-named-coalitions-preferred-tenderer-for-manus-and-nauru-centres>

11. Nauru detention centre 'not run well' but operator Transfield given new five-year contract

Sydney Morning Herald
August 31, 2015 - 5:55PM
Nicole Hasham

The detention centre at Nauru is badly run and despite the Australian government spending billions of dollars on the camp, its knowledge of what goes on inside is inadequate, a Senate inquiry has found.

Despite the inquiry revealing a litany of alarming allegations including child rape and sexual assault of asylum seekers, operator Transfield Services on Monday announced it had been chosen as preferred tenderer to run the government-funded detention camps at Nauru and Manus Island for another five years.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young described the decision as "shameful".

The select committee's findings were supported by Labor and the Greens, but opposed by government members who said the inquiry was unfair and politically motivated.

The report cited a case revealed by Fairfax Media, in which a Wilson guard allegedly framed an asylum seeker for assault. It said "the [immigration] department's ignorance of such events" demonstrates its limited control and oversight at Nauru.

It said the camp is apparently "not run well" and contractors Wilson and Transfield Services are not "properly accountable to the Commonwealth despite the significant investment in their services", which totalled \$1.2 billion to run Manus Island and Nauru for the last 20 months.

The committee also called for all children to immediately removed from Nauru.

It concluded conditions were "not adequate, appropriate or safe" for asylum seekers and the government must adjust the balance between enforcing security and providing "a decent quality of life".

The Department of Immigration and Australian Federal Police should fully audit all criminal conduct allegations, the committee said.

The Australian government says it refers such allegations to the Nauru Police, despite that agency laying charges in just five out of 50 cases, and reportedly being under-resourced. The Nauru police deny they are ill-equipped.

The inquiry called for mandatory reporting of any suspected sexual assault or other serious allegations, saying were it not for the inquiry, many cases would have remained hidden.

It said the Immigration Ombudsman should independently review all complaints involving Australian staff and contractors, following concern that Wilson Security and Transfield Services investigate their own behaviour.

Last year the Nauruan government increased the cost of a journalist's visa from \$200 to \$8000. The committee said the media and human rights groups should be granted reasonable access to the camp.

The committee recommended the government build more permanent infrastructure, after hearing asylum seekers lived in mould-infested tents in hot, humid conditions.

It questioned evidence given to the committee by the department, Wilson Security and Transfield Services about an incident in which Wilson staff spied on Senator Hanson-Young on a visit to the island.

The evidence was at odds with that of Wilson guards with intimate knowledge of the incident "suggesting these organisations have misled the Senate, either wilfully or as a result of inadequate investigations", it said.

In a dissenting report, government senators said the inquiry accepted "unsubstantiated submissions as fact" and the inquiry sought to advance the perspective of those opposed to the government's asylum seeker policies.

"The department is committed to working with Nauruan authorities to ensure that people accommodated at the [centre] are provided with a safe and secure environment," they said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/nauru-detention-centre-not-run-well-but-operator-transfield-given-new-fiveyear-contract-20150831-gjbkkv.html>

12. Gillian Triggs attacks Transfield offshore detention centre contract

Sydney Morning Herald
September 1, 2015 - 10:25AM
Nicole Hasham
with Jenny Wiggins

Australian Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs has slammed as "extremely troubling" that the firm running offshore detention centres will likely have its contract renewed even though a Senate report revealed systemic abuse and human suffering under its watch.

Professor Triggs, a distinguished and respected lawyer, said the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's decision to name Transfield Services as its preferred tenderer to continue running the camps at Nauru and Manus Island, on a contract worth a speculated \$2.7 billion, reflects the secrecy and lack of transparency pervading detention centres.

"We are deeply concerned, it's extremely troubling," she told ABC radio, adding Transfield Services, who has been paid billion of dollars to run the camps, had been forced to dismiss scores of staff members for poor conduct.

She said the decision should be examined by "an objective independent reviewer".

"The idea that [Transfield Services] should be granted another five-year contract in these circumstances is something that clearly needs to be reconsidered in light of the findings of the select committee."

That committee, which delivered its report into Nauru on Monday, found conditions were "not adequate, appropriate or safe" for asylum seekers.

It concluded the Nauru centre is badly run and despite the Australian government spending billions of dollars on the camp, its knowledge of what goes on inside is inadequate.

Evidence to the inquiry revealed a litany of alarming allegations including child rape and sexual assault of asylum seekers.

Labor and the Greens backed the findings but the government rejected them. In a dissenting report, Coalition senators said the department was working with Nauruan authorities to provide "a safe and secure environment".

However Professor Triggs said the committee's findings echoed that of the independent Moss Review into Nauru and the Human Rights Commission's report into minors in detention, The Forgotten Children.

"The evidence is pretty clear ... it's been repeated over and over again," she said.

"When you get the same kind of evidence presented over and over again by people of very considerable reputation and objectivity, then it's fair to say that evidence is looking as though it's truthful."

Government senators claimed the inquiry was politically motivated and it accepted unsubstantiated evidence as fact.

Professor Triggs said a royal commission into detention centres should be held and the system should become more transparent to allow allegations to be confirmed.

There is speculation that as part of Transfield's new contract, it will take over welfare services from Save the Children.

This is despite the Senate inquiry recommending the government directly engage a non-government organisation to provide such services.

Save the Children unsuccessfully bid for the contract as part of a consortium. Its staff presented alarming evidence of abuse and neglect of asylum seekers to the inquiry, throwing doubt on the performance of Transfield and its subcontractor, Wilson Security.

Professor Triggs questioned why Transfield should take over welfare services when "you have a reputable group such as Save The Children who have been conducting these in a way that meets basic respect for [asylum seekers'] humanity".

Transfield declined to comment on the Senate report, or how much the new contract would be worth, saying that it was still negotiating the terms and conditions with the government as well as the scope of work.

Earlier this year following the release of The Forgotten Children report, the government labelled Professor Triggs a partisan "disgrace" whose position has become untenable. It claimed she deliberately delayed the report's release until after Labor left government.

Professor Triggs strongly denied the accusations and refused to step down.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/gillian-triggs-attacks-transfield-offshore-detention-centre-contract-20150831-gjc7cy.html>

13. 'Hell exists and it's on Nauru': Priest angers Transfield over asylum seeker church signs

Sydney Morning Herald
September 2, 2015 - 9:40AM
Joanne McCarthy

Transfield chairwoman Diane Smith-Gander has asked to meet with Newcastle Anglican Bishop Greg Thompson about the priest who won't stop talking about Jesus, morals and asylum seekers.

Father Rod Bower's sign "Hesta Divests Transfield. Good on ya!" outside his Gosford church on August 18 after the superannuation fund divested its Transfield shares, and a tweet saying "Don't invest in evil", led to a call from Transfield and a request for a meeting.

It followed a series of increasingly strong public statements from the priest about Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and Transfield's role managing detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru.

"I think the tweet upset the chair of Transfield," Father Bower said.

Bishop Thompson said the Transfield chairwoman was "concerned to engage with the church in the light of Father Bower's messages".

He supported his priest, even if Transfield saw him as troublesome.

"Transfield is the operator of detention centres where we have grave concerns about the treatment of children and vulnerable people," Bishop Thompson said.

"I endorse that we should not support companies involved in practices that do not protect the vulnerable, as we ourselves have not protected the vulnerable in our care in the past."

Bishop Thompson said he welcomed a meeting.

"This is clearly an important challenge for all leaders to face up to what's being done in our name," he said.

"Australians can't remain spectators on the issue of asylum seekers while so many people are displaced in Europe because of conflict."

#Auspol #Dutton #Borderfarce Mr Dutton, in the words of your leader Mr Abbott...<https://t.co/sc1oeesC7f> #defytyranny
pic.twitter.com/MSno75IHtq
— Fr Rod Bower (@FrBower) September 1, 2015

Father Bower led a rally in Gosford on August 21 during a visit by Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, and had a private meeting with the minister about Australia's treatment of asylum seekers.

He spoke strongly on the subject because "it's what Jesus would do".

#Auspol There is a cure for #Homophobia, it is called education. #Wearitpurple #Gabybaby <https://t.co/qLvKLumQcG>
pic.twitter.com/ZUBIkFenqC
— Fr Rod Bower (@FrBower) August 28, 2015

He condemned the federal government's decision to approve another five year contract for Transfield to run the detention centres.

"It is beyond belief that Transfield, a company that has presided over Australian concentration camps amidst allegations of child sexual abuse, rape, torture and murder, could be awarded an extended contract," Father Bower said.

#Auspol Disturbing article. #AsylumSeekers on #nauru <https://t.co/CIDZu1wJvG> pic.twitter.com/vrbiZufv6i
— Fr Rod Bower (@FrBower) August 23, 2015

"It is indicative of the delusion that now operates in the Abbott government, and the consequences of unchecked power. This level disregard for human suffering is reminiscent of the worst days of the church now being exposed by the royal commission."

The contract was also condemned by the Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce, which said Transfield and its sub-contractors should have been punished because of their poor performance.

#Auspol Don't buy shares in evil. <http://t.co/V0Xk4nvvtS> pic.twitter.com/ciHuJVddb
— Fr Rod Bower (@FrBower) August 20, 2015

Transfield failed to respond to repeated requests for comment on Tuesday.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/hell-exists-and-its-on-nauru-priest-angers-transfield-over-asylum-seeker-church-signs-20150901-gjd1rl.html>

14. All children should be removed from Nauru detention, Senate inquiry finds

Immigration detention centre 'is not well run' and 'insupportable' in its current form, five-member cross-party select committee reports

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Monday 31 August 2015 17.30 AEST

All asylum seeker children should be removed from the Nauru detention centre because the centre is "insupportable" in its current form, a Senate inquiry has found.

The Nauru regional processing centre is marred by widespread allegations of child abuse, violence against asylum seekers, deprivation and sexual assault, and the Australian government does not know what is happening on the island, a five-member cross-party select committee into abuse on the island reported on Monday.

"Nauru is not run well, nor are Wilson Security and Transfield Services properly accountable to the commonwealth despite the significant investment in their services," the majority report says.

"The committee believes that the shortcomings of the current framework offer no reassurance that the department is fully aware of events on Nauru."

All asylum seeker children should be removed from Nauru, new laws should mandate reporting of sexual assault and violence allegations, and workers on the island should submit to daily drug and alcohol tests, the committee's report recommended.

Women and children – there are now 87 in detention – were particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault, because they could not be removed from the island, or moved anywhere safe on Nauru, the committee argued.

The committee also found that Australia – not Nauru – is legally responsible for the abuses in Nauru detention centre, because it has "effective control" of it.

Australia's justifications that problems on Nauru are a matter for that country's government are "a cynical and unjustifiable attempt to avoid accountability", the committee said.

"Australia created the regional processing centre in Nauru. It is Australia's responsibility and in its present form, it is insupportable."

The committee condemned the Department of Immigration and Border Protection for its lack of control of the centre, and the absence of any reporting mechanism for staff "to disclose allegations of mistreatment, abuse or to make complaints".

"The department has been unaware of serious acts of misconduct by staff of contractors, as those contractors have not adequately fulfilled their reporting obligations."

The committee said the government and its contractors had attempted to hide information about what was happening on Nauru. "The committee remains of the view that the government in particular has sought to avoid the full accountability to which the Senate is entitled."

The report found that running the detention centre on Nauru has cost Australian taxpayers \$1.333bn since it was reopened in September 2012 – about \$37m a month.

On average, asylum seekers spent 402 days in detention on Nauru.

The Senate inquiry follows last year's report by the Australian Human Rights Commission, The Forgotten Children, into children in Australian immigration detention.

That report found that more than 300 children committed or threatened self-harm in a 15-month period in Australian immigration detention, 30 reported sexual assault, nearly 30 went on hunger strike, and more than 200 were victims of assaults.

The government will respond to the Senate report after consideration of its recommendations. The office of the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has been contacted for comment.

The Liberal party senators on the committee, Linda Reynolds and David Johnston (who replaced Cory Bernardi), presented a dissenting report, arguing that the government of Nauru was responsible for the running of the centre and that much of the inquiry was politically motivated.

“The government has a determined and successful policy of ending the illegal trafficking of people into Australia and this policy is politically unacceptable to some senators,” they wrote. “This inquiry has sought in many respects to advance the political perspective of those opposing senators.”

The government senators said many of the allegations of abuse were untested and reliant on “unsubstantiated hearsay”. They said the number of children in detention on Nauru had decreased significantly under the government and said all of the committee’s recommendations were “redundant”.

The Greens’ immigration spokeswoman, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who was spied upon by guards when she visited Nauru on an official visit, said the detention regime was damaging children. “It can’t be made any clearer that locking children up with the guards on Nauru is exposing them to abuse,” she said.

“The government’s head-in-the-sand approach to mounting evidence of systemic child abuse is causing immeasurable harm.”

The Greens tabled additional recommendations including: the reinstatement and compensation of 10 Save the Children workers who were sacked on untrue allegations of coaching self-harm among asylum seekers; a royal commission into children in detention, and; an Australian federal police investigation into spying allegations.

Hanson-Young also called for the termination of Transfield’s contract to run the Nauru detention centre on the day the government indicated it wanted to negotiate with Transfield for another five-year deal.

When questioned about the inquiry’s recommendation that journalists should be allowed to visit the Nauru detention centre, Dutton, the immigration minister, said he would not dictate migration matters to another sovereign country.

“It’s an issue for the Nauruan government,” he told Sky News.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/31/all-children-should-be-removed-from-nauru-detention-senate-inquiry-finds>

15. Nauru detention centre not safe for children, says Senate committee calling for full audit into abuse claims

ABC News Online

By the National Reporting Team's Alex McDonald

First posted Mon 31 Aug 2015, 4:04pm

Updated Mon 31 Aug 2015, 4:15pm

The Australian Government should speed up the removal of all asylum seeker children and their families from the Nauru detention centre, a Senate inquiry has recommended.

The Senate select committee probing the operation of the Australian-funded facility found that conditions in the centre were “not adequate, appropriate or safe for the asylum seekers detained there”.

It called for a “full audit” of allegations of sexual abuse, child abuse and other criminal conduct.

The committee also called for the Australian Human Rights Commission and Australian media to be given “reasonable access” to the regional processing centre.

But Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has rejected the report as a political witch hunt, pointing out the committee is dominated by Labor and the Greens.

The inquiry was established in March after the Moss Review exposed alleged sexual exploitation of detainees — including children — by detention centre staff.

Three days of public hearings and more than 100 submissions revealed fresh claims of misconduct, including an allegation that security personnel used “unreasonable force” against asylum seekers.

A former employee of Wilson Security said he witnessed a range of misconduct by locally employed security staff, including trading in contraband and threatening and sexually harassing asylum seekers and refugees.

He said some of the reports documenting these incidents were shredded.

There are currently 637 asylum seekers detained in Nauru, including 86 children.

The committee received evidence from a number of submissions that the Government was aware of the abuse of children well before it publicly acknowledged the allegations after the release of the Moss Review in September 2014.

In one incident from November 2013, an asylum seeker child was allegedly indecently assaulted by a cleaner employed by Transfield Services.

A Save the Children case worker said her manager referred the incident to then-immigration minister Scott Morrison in December 2013.

The case worker, Kirsty Diallo, criticised what she described as the Government's failure to protect the child or take action to "mitigate potential threats" to other children in detention on Nauru.

"It can't be made any clearer that locking children up with the guards on Nauru is exposing them to abuse," committee deputy chair Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said.

"No-one there is safe."

A number of Wilson Security guards told the inquiry that Senator Hanson-Young was spied on by members of the company's emergency response team during a visit to the island in December 2013.

The former guards said they were ordered to follow and photograph the senator and make special notes about who she met and when.

The committee said it was "of serious concern" that "Commonwealth-funded contractors did not view it as their primary obligation to support transparency and openness in relation to the visit of an Australian senator" and instead viewed her presence as a "potential security threat to be managed".

"The committee considers that this incident is a striking example of gaps in the discipline and professionalism of contractor staff and their management, indicative of a culture of secrecy," the report said.

The committee recommended that legislation be passed requiring the mandatory reporting of any reasonably suspected unlawful sexual contact, sexual harassment, unreasonable use of force or other assault perpetrated against asylum seekers in offshore detention.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-31/senate-inquiry-calls-for-children-to-be-removed-from-nauru/6738644>

16. Cambodia deal in tatters after only four Nauru refugees resettled at cost of \$13m each

Labor calls Australia's \$55m resettlement deal an 'expensive joke' after Cambodia says it has 'no plans' to take more Nauru refugees

The Guardian
Guardian staff and agencies
Monday 31 August 2015 09.27 AEST

Australia's \$55m plan to resettle refugees from Nauru to Cambodia appears finished, with just four refugees moved to the south-east Asian country at a cost of more than \$13m per refugee.

Four refugees – an Iranian couple, Iranian man and a Rohingya man from Burma – were transferred from Nauru to the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in June.

Since then, they've lived in relative luxury in an Australian-funded villa, and will remain there indefinitely.

However, Cambodia expects it will take no more from Australia's resettlement plan.

"We don't have any plans to import more refugees from Nauru to Cambodia," interior ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak told the Cambodia Daily. "I think the less we receive the better."

Under the deal, signed by previous immigration minister Scott Morrison and Cambodia's interior minister Sar Kheng last September, Australia promised an additional \$40m in aid to the impoverished south-east Asian country as well as \$15.5m in resettlement, housing, education and integration costs for the refugees.

The deal was not contingent on Cambodia taking a certain number of refugees.

Throughout last year, the Cambodian government sent delegations to Nauru to promote the resettlement plan, but very few refugees even met with the government officials. Those visits have ceased.

Joe Lowry, a spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration, which has managed the four refugees' resettlement in Cambodia, told the Cambodia Daily the group was doing "fine".

"They have asked for privacy so we are respecting that," he said. The group is living in a villa in Phnom Penh, originally intended as temporary housing.

"When they are ready to leave [the villa] they can," he said. "I don't think any of them have expressed any desire to go."

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, a former battalion commander in the Khmer Rouge, and who has ruled his country for 30 years, will visit Australia in December.

His regime is regarded as one of the most corrupt on earth. Transparency International ranks Cambodia 156th of 175 countries on its index of corruption perception.

Hun Sen, his family, and associates are alleged to have amassed billions of dollars in personal wealth, siphoning off aid money, and through corrupt sales of natural resources and land.

Rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, say Hun Sen's regime crushes dissent in the country through extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, summary trials, censorship and widespread bans on assembly and association.

A spokesman for immigration minister, Peter Dutton, told Fairfax the government was committed to its policy that no boat arrivals would be settled in Australia.

"The government continues to work with Cambodia and other partners, including source countries, to facilitate the return or placement of people on Nauru and Manus Island," he said.

Labor's immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, called on Dutton to explain the situation.

"This is an expensive joke and once again we are learning about this through comments from ministers in the Cambodian government rather than ministers in our own government," he told Sky News.

When the Cambodia deal was signed it was condemned by the United Nations, who described it as "a worrying departure from international norms" and said Australia was shirking its responsibility of people fleeing persecution.

"We are seeing record forced displacement globally, with 87% of refugees now being hosted in developing countries. It's crucial that countries do not shift their refugee responsibilities elsewhere," the UN's high commissioner for refugees, António Guterres, said.

"International responsibility sharing is the basis on which the whole global refugee system works. I hope that the Australian government will reconsider its approach."

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/31/cambodia-has-no-plans-to-take-more-nauru-refugees-in-55m-australia-deal>

17. Peter Dutton plays down fresh doubts on Cambodia deal; Labor slams 'expensive joke'

ABC Radio CAF - The World Today

By Dan Conifer and Peta Donald

Updated Mon 31 Aug 2015, 12:29pm

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has played down reports Cambodia does not want to settle more refugees as part of its transfer deal with Australia.

Four people were transferred from Nauru to the South-East Asian nation in June in an arrangement costing Australia more than \$55 million, but a Cambodian ministry spokesman has reportedly said the fewer refugees the country receives, the better.

Mr Dutton said the comments were from a low-level official and he expected Cambodia to continue to honour the agreement.

"We have discussions ongoing at an officials level, and we have a level of confidence in the MOU that we've signed with the Cambodian government which allows for more than four to go," he told the ABC's World Today program.

"We hope a lot more will follow the four, but the MOU has been signed between Cambodia and Australia and we expect it to be honoured and we're working with Cambodians to that end.

"There are other people in Nauru now who are prepared to go to Cambodia and we're working through the detail of that with the officials."

The Federal Opposition earlier slammed Australia's refugee resettlement deal with Cambodia as an "expensive joke".

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles said the Government has failed to find resettlement options for refugees.

"How does [Mr Dutton] reconcile the Australian Government's ambitions for Cambodia with the comments which are coming out from Cambodia itself?" he asked.

"We've always heard consistently from Cambodia that they've never imagined doing anything other than having a few a handful of people go to Cambodia."

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said she recently held talks with the Cambodian foreign minister, Hor Namhong, about the transfer arrangement.

"We had a very productive, constructive discussion about how Cambodia can continue to work in partnership with the Australian Government and others," Ms Bishop said.

"Obviously Cambodia is determined to ensure that the people they do take are integrated well into their society, into their communities, and so that's what they have done with the first four. But we're working closely with them," she said.

"Cambodia is committed to a regional solution, and has committed through a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Government to resettle some asylum seekers who are found to be genuine refugees."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-31/cambodia-deal-dutton-denies-more-refugees-not-being-resettled/6737528>

18. Abbott defends \$55m resettlement deal after Cambodia says no to more refugees

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, says the deal is 'ongoing' and the government has had no advice from Cambodia that the situation has changed

The Guardian
Ben Doherty and Paul Farrell
Monday 31 August 2015 15.48 AEST

Tony Abbott and other senior Australian ministers have defended a \$55m refugee resettlement deal with Cambodia after a spokesman for Cambodia's government said it had no plans to take any more than the four refugees it has already accepted.

Four refugees – an Iranian couple, an Iranian man and a Rohingya man from Burma – were transferred from Nauru to the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in June. They live in relative luxury in an Australian-funded villa, and will remain there indefinitely.

However, Cambodia expects it will take no more from Australia's resettlement plan, which has so far cost \$55m, or more than \$13m per refugee.

"We don't have any plans to import more refugees from Nauru to Cambodia," interior ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak told the Cambodia Daily. "I think the fewer we receive the better."

Immigration minister Peter Dutton said he believed the agreement to resettle people in Cambodia was "ongoing".

"Well, the government has not had that advice [that no more refugees would be resettled]," he said. "Obviously people at the low level will make comment from time to time but we have a good engagement with my counterpart, with counterparts at an official level and our discussions are ongoing."

Australia's foreign minister Julie Bishop denied the deal was collapsing. "That is not correct," she told reporters in Sydney. "You're relying on an alleged statement of one official."

She said she had had a positive meeting with her Cambodian counterpart earlier this month and the south-east Asian country was keen to harness the skills of foreign workers to boost its gross domestic product.

Prime minister Tony Abbott said Cambodia had been helped by the international community when it was "in trouble some years ago" – a reference to the Khmer Rouge period – but that it was now keen to assist in managing refugee flows.

"This is an important agreement and it's an agreement which indicates Cambodia's readiness to be a good international citizen," he said.

Under the deal, signed by then immigration minister Scott Morrison and Cambodia's interior minister Sar Kheng last September, Australia promised an additional \$40m in aid to the impoverished south-east Asian country as well as \$15.5m in resettlement, housing, education and integration costs for the refugees.

The deal was not contingent on Cambodia taking a certain number of refugees.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, a former battalion commander in the Khmer Rouge, who has ruled his country for 30 years, will visit Australia in December.

Labor's immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, called on Dutton to explain the situation.

"This is an expensive joke and once again we are learning about this through comments from ministers in the Cambodian government rather than ministers in our own government," he told Sky News.

When the Cambodian deal was signed it was condemned by the United Nations, who described it as "a worrying departure from international norms" and said Australia was shirking its responsibility towards people fleeing persecution.

"We are seeing record forced displacement globally, with 87% of refugees now being hosted in developing countries," the UN's high commissioner for refugees, António Guterres, said. "It's crucial that countries do not shift their refugee responsibilities elsewhere."

"International responsibility sharing is the basis on which the whole global refugee system works. I hope the Australian government will reconsider its approach."

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/aug/31/abbott-defends-55m-resettlement-deal-after-cambodia-says-no-to-more-refugees>

19. Victim's family says it was told guards accused of rape will be returned to Manus

Family of alleged rape victim says it has been promised three former Wilson Security guards will be flown back from Australia for PNG police questioning

The Guardian
Ben Doherty and agencies
Wednesday 2 September 2015 17.03 AEST

An alleged rape victim says the operator of the Manus Island immigration detention centre has promised three former Wilson Security guards will be flown back from Australia to face questioning by Papua New Guinea police.

The father of the woman and supporters from her community armed themselves with machetes and hijacked a 25-seater bus and a three-tonne truck belonging to the detention centre on Monday, angry that the three men had not faced justice.

The woman at the centre of the allegations, Sarah*, told Guardian Australia her family had been promised the men would be returned to the island. A meeting brokered on Tuesday involved Sarah's family and community, Transfield, immigration, and police representatives.

"That was what was said: that these guys were coming to come back to be questioned," she said.

"I want justice to run its course, that's all we've ever wanted. We've been running around in circles for months, but if they come back, and I can get some answers about what happened to me, then I'm happy with that."

The detention centre guards, who were stood down and sent back to Australia after the alleged incident in mid-July, worked for Wilson Security, a subcontractor to the detention centre manager, Transfield Services.

Speaking out for the first time last week, the woman at the centre of the incident, who worked for Transfield, told Guardian Australia the men should be brought back to face justice.

"I told Transfield management ... 'If the guys were here, this could have been solved a long time ago,'" she said. "They have the answers I want to know. This would have already been fixed."

"But once you start hiding people and sending them away, what are you covering up for?"

It is alleged that while at after-work drinks on 15 July the woman was drugged and then possibly assaulted. She was found, naked and disoriented, the next morning in the Wilson Security accommodation block.

The men alleged to have been with her, and supplied the drug, were flown off the island that morning.

Papua New Guinea police have demanded the men be returned and confirmed they were investigating “attempted rape, indecent exposure, and sexual assault”.

Rape can carry the death penalty in Papua New Guinea, but in practice the country has a de facto moratorium on capital punishment; there have been no executions in the country since 1954 when it was still an Australian protectorate.

Manus MP Ron Knight, who has been in regular contact with the woman’s family, said her father and community leaders met on Tuesday with the management of Transfield Services, which runs the detention centre on contract from the Australian government.

Knight said the company had promised to fly the guards back to Manus by next week.

But Knight said the woman’s family did not have any commitment in writing and he was doubtful the men would be returned.

“I don’t believe it will happen,” he told Guardian Australia. “I’ll believe it when I see these men at Lorengau police station being questioned.

“I think they are just trying to buy time. They have done this before.”

Calls to Transfield Services by Guardian Australia have not been returned.

A spokesman for Australia’s immigration department said: “This [vehicle] incident is a matter for the Manus provincial police.”

Port Moresby officially took over the investigation into the alleged rape after Manus Island police threatened to storm the detention centre and arrest managers for perverting the course of justice unless the trio was returned.

It’s unlikely that either Transfield or Wilson’s would be able to compel the men to return. The three men no longer work for Wilson Security.

Further comment is being sought from Transfield, Wilson Security and the immigration minister, Peter Dutton.

A spokesperson for the immigration department said the government was cooperating fully with local authorities on the matter and would continue to do so.

* Sarah’s name has been changed

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/02/former-manus-guards-accused-of-to-be-sent-to-papua-new-guinea>

20. PNG police in talks with Australia to return Manus guards accused of rape

Three Wilson guards were flown out of PNG hours after the alleged rape of a Transfield employee inside the Australian-run detention centre

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thursday 3 September 2015 14.39 AEST

Australian and Papua New Guinean police are in talks about returning three Wilson Security guards who are accused of raping a PNG Transfield employee to Manus Island for police questioning.

The three men were flown off the island and out of the country in the hours after the alleged incident inside the Australian-run asylum seeker detention centre in mid-July.

One of the men later said to the alleged victim he’d been taken off the island because he “got in trouble”.

The female Transfield employee was found naked and disoriented in a shower block in the Wilson’s accommodation block on the morning of 16 July. She has said she remembers nothing after being given an unknown pill by a Wilson guard while at after-work drinks with colleagues.

Wilson Security is subcontracted by detention centre operator Transfield Services to provide security at the detention centre.

Papua New Guinea police have demanded the men be returned and confirmed they were investigating “attempted rape, indecent exposure and sexual assault”.

The men’s rapid – and thus far permanent – departure from Manus has been an enduring controversy on the island, with the alleged victim, her family and community insisting they be returned to face justice.

On Monday, the woman's father and supporters, armed with machetes, forcibly seized control of two vehicles owned by the detention centre.

In a meeting brokered subsequently, the woman's family said detention centre operator Transfield had promised the men would be returned to the island.

On Thursday, the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said he was aware of the allegations against the Wilson guards and that discussions were underway between PNG's police force and the Australian federal police, over the men's return.

"There are protocols that exist between countries and that's now a matter for the police. I understand there is a discussion between the royal national police in Papua New Guinea and the Australian federal police."

A spokesman for the immigration department said: "The department is cooperating fully with local authorities on this matter and will continue to do so."

Australia has an extradition agreement with Papua New Guinea, making extraditions between the two countries possible.

After more than a month of silence, the woman at the centre of the allegations, spoke out last week about the incident, saying all she ever wanted was for "justice to run its course".

"I told Transfield management ... if the guys were here, this could have been solved a long time ago," she told Guardian Australia. "They have the answers I want to know. This would have already been fixed.

"But once you start hiding people and sending them away, what are you covering up for?"

She said she feels she has been abandoned by her former employer Transfield who, she says, have attempted to cover up the incident.

"I worked hard to do a good job. But they didn't care about me, they just wanted to protect their name."

Guardian Australia has contacted Transfield, the Australian federal police and Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary seeking comment.

A spokesman for the Australian federal police told Guardian Australia the investigation was primarily a matter for Papua New Guinean police.

"The AFP has discussed the status of this matter with the RPNGC but has not received any requests ... for assistance in this matter."

The spokesman said any extradition request from PNG would be considered by the AFP in accordance with established protocols.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/03/png-police-in-talks-with-australia-to-return-manus-guards-accused-of>

21. Manus bus hijacking by father of alleged rape victim 'a matter for PNG police'

Immigration department dismiss incident which saw father seize detention centre bus because he was angry three Australian guards had not faced justice

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Wednesday 2 September 2015 13.50 AEST

The Australian immigration department says the hijacking of a Manus Island detention centre bus and truck by the father of an alleged rape victim is a matter for the local police.

"This [hijacking] incident is a matter for the Manus provincial police," a department spokesman said in a statement on Wednesday.

Three Australian guards, who were stood down and sent home following an incident in mid-July, could have faced a death sentence if convicted of rape in PNG.

Papua New Guinea MP Ron Knight said on Monday the man and his supporters seized the bus belonging to the centre operator because they were angry the guards had not faced justice.

The victim of the alleged rape told her story to Guardian Australia in an interview published last week.

Manus Island provincial police commander Alex N'Drasal confirmed a "relative" of the alleged victim hijacked the 25-seater bus on Monday as it was travelling back from the airport.

The bus was returned to the Manus detention centre operator Transfield Services half an hour later.

Police are investigating the incident and considering laying charges, N'Drasal said.

Knight said the group had machetes but no one was harmed.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/02/immigration-department-dismiss-manus-bus-hijacking-by-father-of-alleged-victim>

22. Brisbane student fighting deportation overwhelmed by support from school

Iranian asylum seeker Mojgan Shamsalipoor who faces being sent back to Iran is the subject of a campaign to have her released from detention

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Thursday 3 September 2015 15.17 AEST

A Brisbane high school student being held in a Darwin detention centre has described it as a "sad, dark place" but says she is trying to remain positive.

Iranian asylum seeker Mojgan Shamsalipoor, 21, has dictated a heartfelt letter to a member of her school's P&C, who visited her in detention amid a campaign to secure her release.

Last month Shamsalipoor, who was months away from graduation at Yeronga State high school, was forcibly taken from the Brisbane immigration transit accommodation centre, where she was still allowed to see her husband, Milad Jafari, and attend classes.

She was taken to Darwin's high-security Wickham Point immigration detention centre for what she was told were "operational reasons".

Jessica Walker, who visited Shamsalipoor in detention this week to hand over her school work, took a statement from her to pass on to her growing group of supporters – including classmates and teachers – appalled at how she has been treated.

Shamsalipoor spoke of being overwhelmed by the support she had received, saying she didn't "know how to handle this much love".

Her time in detention had taught her to be patient and see the best in people even when they were angry at her.

"In detention, which is a sad, dark place, I only see light," Shamsalipoor said. "I look and see colour."

The aspiring midwife said her time in detention made her realise how much time she wasted when she was free and it gave her clarity about future plans.

"I will adopt children from places of poverty and war and raise them with my husband," she said.

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, who earlier this week revealed he had finished reviewing Shamsalipoor's case, refused to comment on Thursday, except to say the government was right to take action against failed claimants such as her.

"The Australian public would expect us to take action against people who are not here with a valid visa," he said.

Shamsalipoor's lawyer, Kevin Kadrigamar, said her asylum claim had failed because she was initially reluctant to tell immigration officials that family members, with connections in the government, had sexually abused her in Iran.

He said he wrote to Dutton urging him to allow her to apply for a partner visa while in detention, instead of having to return to Iran to do so.

Kadrigamar said Shamsalipoor not only feared for her safety in Iran, but that Australian immigration protocols meant her application was almost certain to fail if lodged from Iran.

Her husband said he was urgently seeking a face-to-face meeting with Dutton. The "Free Mojgan" campaign will include a rally outside Dutton's Brisbane offices in coming weeks.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/03/brisbane-student-fighting-deportation-overwhelmed-by-support-from-school>

23. Husband and teacher of detained Iranian asylum seeker fly to Darwin, plead for ministerial intervention

ABC News Online

By Steven Schubert

First posted Tue 1 Sep 2015, 12:45pm

Updated Tue 1 Sep 2015, 1:22pm

A young Iranian asylum seeker is pleading with the Immigration Minister to let her apply for a partner's visa so she can be with her husband and finish her schooling.

Mojgan Shamsalipoor, 21, came to Australia by boat from Iran in 2012 and was initially detained on Christmas Island, before being released into community detention in Brisbane.

Her application for a protection visa was rejected in 2012, along with a bridging visa which was rejected in 2013.

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

Ms Shamsalipoor's husband, Milad Jafari, 21, lives in Brisbane with his parents and is a permanent resident of Australia.

The family also follow the Bahá'í faith, which is persecuted in Iran.

The couple's lawyer, Darwin-based Kevin Kadirgamar, said Immigration Minister Peter Dutton had the power to allow Ms Shamsalipoor to apply for a partner's visa, as Mr Jafari has permanent residency status.

A spokesperson for Mr Dutton said in 2014, then immigration minister Scott Morrison decided it was not in the public interest to intervene in Ms Shamsalipoor's case.

"Ms Shamsalipoor's last visa ceased in 2013 and she remained unlawfully in the community," the spokesperson said, adding that the case had been thoroughly considered.

The visa rejection was affirmed by the Refugee Review Tribunal and the Federal Circuit Court.

The 21-year-old Iranian national was detained again in December 2014 in Brisbane, before being transferred to Darwin in early August this year.

New application based on family ties, not rape claims: lawyer

The couple's lawyer said Ms Shamsalipoor was not challenging the earlier visa outcomes, and that she was instead asking for a visa based on her marriage to an Australian permanent resident.

"She is married to an Australian permanent resident and is part of an Australian family," Mr Kadirgamar said.

"It's not about her protection claims any more, it's about the fact that she's a member of an Australian family and we should allow her to apply for a partner visa.

"But her status as an asylum seeker means she can't apply for that visa unless the minister allows her to apply for that visa."

Whilst detained in Brisbane Ms Shamsalipoor had been attending high school, and was taken by armed guard to attend classes at Yeronga State High School each day.

When she was moved to Darwin Ms Shamsalipoor had been just weeks off finishing Year 12.

Mr Jafari has since flown to Darwin with two of Ms Shamsalipoor's teachers, who brought schoolwork so she can continue her studies, which they say she hopes to use to become a midwife.

Mr Jafari said he had been separated from his wife since her detention in December.

"Separating a family is just unbelievable, hopefully there will be no more family separation," he said.

"The first month I could not study, I could not have any food, I could not talk to my parents."

Mr Jafari said his wife remained hopeful that she would be allowed to apply for a partner's visa.

"It's very hard but she's coping because of the support from her school," he said.

One of Ms Shamsalipoor's teachers, Jessica Walker, said there was a lot of support from both teachers and students at her school in Brisbane.

"For her to be taken the way that she was, it's not something that you just let go," Ms Walker said.

She said it was of "paramount importance" that Ms Shamsalipoor completed her Year 12 studies.

"Mojgan's been with us since Year 10, she's put in huge amounts of effort in the last two years to get to where she is now," she said.

"It would be such a waste for her not to be able to complete her education and reach that dream of finishing Year 12."

Mr Dutton's spokesperson said people who have exhausted all avenues to stay in Australia were expected to depart.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-01/husband-detained-iranian-asylum-seeker-pleads-for-intervention/6740234>