

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Wednesday, 25 January 2017

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This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Sudanese asylum seeker Faysal Ishak Ahmed, 27 years of age.

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1. The judge who unmade Manus Island on why offshore detention has no future

Papua New Guinea's Justice Terence Higgins says Australia should have known the detention centre would not survive constitutional challenge

The Guardian

Christopher Knaus

Saturday 24 December 2016 08.14 AEDT

Something still niggles away at Justice Terence Higgins, the man who unmade Manus.

Sitting in a quiet restaurant in Canberra's trendy inner south, a world away from his home in Papua New Guinea, Higgins shakes his head as he mulls it over.

Why did the Australian government ever think its Manus Island detention centre would survive a constitutional challenge?

Eight months ago Higgins became one of five Papua New Guinean supreme court justices who unanimously ruled that the detention of asylum seekers on Manus breached detainees' human rights and was therefore at odds with the PNG constitution.

Australia's federal government ought to have known it was an unavoidable.

As long ago as 2013 the then prime minister, Kevin Rudd, and the then opposition leader, Tony Abbott, had been warned that the Manus plan was unconstitutional because it deprived asylum seekers of their liberty despite them not having committed an offence.

In his first interview since the decision, Higgins tells Guardian Australia that subsequent governments may not have taken the independence of PNG's judiciary seriously.

Should they not have foreseen the outcome?

"You would have thought so, unless they thought the government up there controls the judiciary, which it doesn't," he said. "That's one of the features of PNG that's good, unlike Fiji or Nauru, and the judges really hold it very dear."

Higgins has a long history of action in the highest courts on behalf of the least powerful.

In the early 1970s he had founded a modest-sized firm operating in Canberra's small legal pond. The practice could barely scratch two cents together. The trust account was bare.

But while others were slogging away on mundane money-makers in lesser courts, Higgins could often be found on his feet in the high court, championing the causes of clients who could scarcely afford to pay.

"There was not even a penny in the Higgins Faulks trust account but there was his honour off on another venture to the high court for some poor unfortunate case he was championing," Higgins's friend and former colleague Gregory Stretton SC recalls.

"He was always a champion of the underdogs and the oppressed, there's no question about that."

It's a constant thread weaving its way through Higgins's life.

It was there in his early days as a solicitor, again as chief justice of the Australian Capital Territory supreme court and once more during the momentous Manus Island decision – by far his most high profile – which threw the future of Australia's offshore detention regime into uncertainty.

Higgins said the 2012 decision to reopen Manus was clearly rushed. "I think that's almost certainly true, they thought they could come to an agreement with the PNG government and it would be their problem, which is what they say in Nauru – 'It's not our problem, it's the Nauruan government's problem.'"

Higgins spent almost all his practising life in Canberra, starting as a solicitor in the 1960s, becoming partner, plying his trade as a barrister in the 1980s and then eventually joining the ACT supreme court bench in 1990, where he stayed for 23 years.

Periods of personal turmoil, often spilling into the harsh glare of the media, shaped his last years on the bench. His son and stepson have both experienced mental illness and have both faced criminal charges and spent time in custody.

His son was charged for seriously assaulting Higgins in 2003, an attack that attracted media publicity. The day after the assault, Higgins was back at work on the ACT supreme court bench, his injuries clearly visible.

He plays down any argument that this gave him a special insight into detention and mental illness, or any deeper understanding of the circumstances of those detained on Manus.

“I do understand that if you lock people away and don’t tell them when they’re going to get out, it does create mental health problems,” he said. “[But] that’s not a unique insight.”

Stretton, however, believes Higgins’s personal experiences gave him something many judges are sorely lacking: a proper, real world grounding.

“Most judges would not have children who have mental problems and come in contact with the law, that’s just something way outside what you’d call a normal judge’s life,” he said.

“The criticism of judges is they always claim to know what the average person on the street thinks. They think they know ... but they haven’t experienced it and therefore they don’t really know. Terry had experienced it and he did know.”

Before he joined the bench, Higgins was a longtime member of the Labor party. He worked for some time as a Labor branch president and helped write the party’s earlier human rights policies.

Gough Whitlam was counted as a friend, a mentor and a client. The pair met through the Australian National University in Canberra and Higgins would later represent Whitlam through the fallout of the 1975 loans affair.

Higgins believes that the support of both parties for offshore processing is not sustainable and says the policy is hurting the international reputation of PNG, as well as Australia.

“Eventually it will need to be rethought but how [Labor] do that is a matter for them,” he said. “I wouldn’t have thought they could sustain the current regime indefinitely. I don’t think they think they can either. I don’t just mean the Labor party there, I mean the government is in the same position ...

“It’s hard to justify the continued detention of people who have not committed a crime. Of course, in PNG that’s taken for granted because the constitution expressly sets out the human rights of people.”

Higgins, who left the ACT supreme court in 2013 aged 70, joined the PNG national and supreme courts last year under laws allowing the appointment of non-citizen judges. He followed a number of other judges who decided to serve there after reaching their mandated retirement age in Australia.

Now Higgins’s retirement in PNG is fast approaching, and his relatively brief love affair with the country is coming to an end. He has developed a keen interest in the country’s history and animatedly recounts stories of its time as a German colony.

But when conversation turns to Australia’s history, and how the current immigration policy will be remembered in decades to come, the tone becomes serious.

“Look, I’m pretty sure it will be regarded as a significant event,” he said. “It’s certainly not enhancing our reputation any more than it was enhancing the reputation of PNG or has enhanced the reputation of Nauru.

“When they compare us, of course, with Europe, we don’t come off too well.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/24/the-judge-who-unmade-manus-island-on-why-offshore-detention-has-no-future>

2. The price of 'stopping the boats': abusing asylum seekers and shaming Australia

In a new chapter of his updated book, a former Salvation Army worker inside the offshore detention centre on Nauru argues that the hardline stand on refugees is morally and practically flawed

The Guardian

Mark Isaacs

Tuesday 27 December 2016 12.34 AEDT

Australia is closing the gap between our democratic ideals and the oppressive regimes asylum seekers are fleeing from.

Our greatest fear while working in Nauru – that someone would die while being detained offshore – has been realised many times over. On 17 February 2014 Reza Barati, a 23-year-old Iranian man, was beaten to death by two detention centre staff on Manus Island during a protest. Seven months later, on 5 September, Hamid Kehazaei, 24, who was detained on Manus Island, died after contracting a treatable infection in his foot. Hamid’s death was avoidable, but poor healthcare and bureaucratic delays caused by the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection meant he didn’t receive proper treatment.

Fazel Chegeni, an Iranian Kurd, was found dead on 8 November 2015, after escaping the Christmas Island detention centre. He had been held in immigration detention for four years despite being granted refugee status. A coronial inquest will formally determine Fazel's cause of death, but reports say he had been psychologically crushed by years of waiting for settlement in the detention system. And then in April 2016, 23-year-old Omid Masoumali set fire to himself while on Nauru in protest against Australia's treatment of people seeking asylum. He died two days later in a Brisbane hospital, again amid concerns that delays in medical treatment may have prevented his survival.

These are just a few examples of the deaths caused directly or indirectly by the pressures of our immigration system. Since 13 June 2013, 17 people seeking asylum in Australia have died while in detention or in the Australian community. These people have been subjected to horror upon horror upon horror, and yet our politicians continue to justify human rights abuses as humanitarian and essential to protecting our borders. Changes to government and leadership have had no effect on the unofficial bipartisan agreement to abuse people seeking asylum in Australia.

The inexcusable continues to be excused because "We are stopping the boats". And yet, in the first year the Nauru camp was reopened, the boats had not stopped arriving in Australian territorial waters. When it became clear that offshore detention had failed as a deterrent, the military-led Operation Sovereign Borders commenced in September 2013. Boats suspected of carrying asylum seekers were to be returned to Indonesian territorial waters: a refusal policy rather than a deterrence policy that admits the only way of truly stopping the boats is to forcibly remove people from our waters.

In enacting Operation Sovereign Borders, the government has broken international laws and conventions and threatened our relationship with Indonesia after it was revealed that the Australian navy breached Indonesia's territorial waters six times. Tony Abbott, prime minister at the time, refused to deny that Australia paid people smugglers to turn around an asylum seeker boat, even while claiming that breaking the people smugglers' "business model" was vital to "stopping the boats". The Australian government even donated two patrol boats to the Sri Lankan government to assist it in intercepting asylum seekers fleeing the country by boat.

But even that has failed to completely deter boat arrivals. We don't know how many boats have arrived in Australian waters since the commencement of Operation Sovereign Borders due to the government's secrecy surrounding "on-water matters". However, the occasional story emerges, such as in 2014 when two boats fleeing Sri Lanka were intercepted by Australian authorities. One boatload of people was held on an Australian Customs vessel for four weeks before being deported to Nauru. The other group was returned to the Sri Lankan authorities and the very persecution they claim they were fleeing from. The most recent boat arrival the media reported on, again from Sri Lanka, made it to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in May 2016.

According to the findings of the Houston panel (the expert panel on which our current detention centre system was designed), stopping the boats was only ever meant to be a "circuit breaker" to allow us the opportunity to recalibrate our regional resettlement policies. However, under the calculating eye of the former immigration minister Scott Morrison and Abbott, the resettlement of UNHCR-registered refugees from Indonesia to Australia ceased as of June 2014. We were removing the "legal" avenues for migration at the same time as we were demanding that refugees adhere to them.

If this was truly about saving lives, the easiest and quickest way to stop the boats would be to bring people to Australia by plane. This would smash the people-smuggling syndicate, it would encourage people to wait for a legal avenue of migration, it would ensure we don't incarcerate children in torturous conditions indefinitely and it would be a lot cheaper than the billions of dollars spent on maintaining our offshore detention centres.

I'm not suggesting this as an alternative policy. But it is clear: the current system isn't about saving lives. Our detention centre regime is about taking control of our borders and deciding, as John Howard said, "who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come".

While there has been little positive change in our politicians' attitudes towards people seeking asylum in the last few years, I believe there is a growing sense of outrage among the Australian people regarding our offshore detention centre system. The "Let Them Stay" campaign saw thousands of Australians gather in public spaces demanding that the government not return asylum seekers who had been transferred to Australia for medical attention back to Nauru. Doctors at Brisbane's Lady Cilento children's hospital refused to release one-year-old baby Asha, who had been badly burned on Nauru, as they feared the government would return her to the island.

All of the state governments, except Western Australia, offered to resettle asylum seekers rather than return them to Nauru. The "Love Makes a Way" campaign has gathered leaders of all religions together in peaceful protest. Our doctors are marching in the streets demanding the closure of Nauru and Manus Island. Whistleblowers continue to defy the Australian Border Force Act. The most famous example was in Eva Orner's documentary *Chasing Asylum*. Lawyers continue to battle the legalities of our system in the courts. In April 2016 Papua New Guinea's supreme court ruled Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island to be illegal and ordered the PNG and Australian governments to immediately take steps to end the detention of asylum seekers in PNG.

While the Australian people continue to protest against our politicians' human rights abuses and fight for a just policy, there is hope that positive change will come. While I agree with the necessity of "stopping the boats", the answer does not lie in the abuse of children. There are alternatives to the hellholes of Nauru and Manus Island. NGOs, academics and immigration experts have suggested better, more humane ways of offering these people protection through regional resettlement programs and establishing viable migration alternatives. This will mean we have to increase our refugee intake, but we

currently accept 168,000 migrants a year; the only reason we can't find room for more refugees is because our politicians won't allow it.

There is a glimmer of hope. It seems the Australian government has finally acknowledged that Nauru and Papua New Guinea are unsuitable resettlement options for refugees by offering a "one-off" resettlement deal to the United States for "some" refugees detained in Nauru and Manus Island. At this stage, the details of the deal have not been released, so it's hard to judge who will be allowed to leave, why they will be prioritised over others, and what is the timeframe of this deal. There are concerns the inauguration of Donald Trump as America's next president may jeopardise it.

There is, of course, a catch. The Turnbull government is proposing a lifetime ban for those who tried to come to Australia by boat since July 2013, regardless of whether they have been found to be refugees. This accounts for everyone currently on Manus Island and Nauru. Many of these people have family in Australia. Just why they deem this to be necessary is unclear. By their own admission, the boats have stopped and the policy has been a success. What purpose does this cruelty have other than to punish people further?

It is clear we have to find all the people detained in Manus Island and Nauru another home. But by that time they will be traumatised, damaged shells of people, their trust in our country completely eroded.

---->>> *Extracted from the updated edition of The Undesirables by Mark Isaacs, published by Hardie Grant Books on 1 January, RRP \$24.99*

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/27/the-price-of-stopping-the-boats-abusing-asylum-seekers-and-shaming-australia>

3. New York Times: Australia's Brave Whistleblower Nurse

Roger Cohen
New York Times
The Opinion Pages
December 20, 2016

From the start of its "offshore processing" program that has seen more than 2,000 asylum seekers and refugees dumped on two remote Pacific islands, Australia has relied on draconian nondisclosure contracts to keep the extent of its brutality secret. But this month Lynne Elworthy, an Australian mental health nurse employed on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, defied the gag clauses and a federal law against whistle-blowers to tell me the policy was an exercise in "absolute cruelty."

Elworthy, who lives in the south Australian town of Gawler, near Adelaide, has observed for more than three years the impact of endless limbo on men in Manus. She has watched them grow inert. She has seen the "plummeting lows" induced by Australia's punitive measures, as I did during five days on Manus last month. She has witnessed refugees losing their lives through mayhem and medical negligence in what she calls the "lifeless pit" of confinement. In the end she felt compelled to speak out because "there is no room in my head or my heart for anyone except those guys on Manus."

Now, Elworthy, who was supposed to return to Manus this week on her regular rotation, has been told she will not be going back. She has, it seems, been fired for her honesty.

In an email provided to me, International SOS, her employer, informed Elworthy that there were no flights available until Dec. 27 and that "the position you were filling has not been renewed past 31st December." It continued, "We have to cancel all the remaining rotations for you as we simply don't have the headcount approval."

Elworthy told me: "I knew the risk I was taking and I accept the consequences. But it's quite disgusting the way this has been done."

International SOS owns International Health and Medical Services (I.H.M.S.), a company that has been paid hundreds of millions of dollars by the Australian government to run clinics in the detention facilities on Manus, the tiny Pacific island of Nauru and elsewhere.

I.H.M.S. responded to my query about Elworthy's dismissal by saying her contract "was concluded in light of changes to operational requirements." It said in an email that she had occupied "a surge position" — although she has worked there for several years — in "a constantly changing environment." The email made no mention of her interview with The New York Times.

Since July 2013, Australia has dispatched "boat people" trying to reach its shores to Manus and Nauru, far from inquiring eyes. There they have festered, grown ill, staged hunger strikes, attempted suicide; a handful have died. The conservative Australian government headed by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull argues that its policy has "stopped the boats" and that Australia would otherwise be inundated.

But its approach — in effect cruelty as deterrence — is a growing source of international embarrassment; and the government last month announced a vague one-time accord under which the United States would take some of the Manus

and Nauru refugees. When, how many and from which island was left murky, but the men on Manus, who now number about 900, will almost certainly be last in line.

Elworthy began hearing rumors last Friday from the Manus Offshore Processing Center — so called although there has been no “process” since the Australian policy was instituted three-and-a-half years ago — that she would be barred from returning because she had spoken to The New York Times.

With the Sydney offices of International SOS, a leading medical assistance company, about to close for the weekend, and her departure to Manus by way of Cairns scheduled for Sunday, Elworthy wrote twice to request clarification. Finally, Veronica O’Riordan, a senior recruitment partner at International SOS, delivered the news that Elworthy would not be returning.

The treatment of Elworthy, who was once banished from Manus for several months because she had given chocolates to the detainees, is consistent with Australia’s punitive obsession in regard to the human debacles on Manus and Nauru.

Since the United States agreement, the government has even introduced legislation that would impose a lifetime ban from Australia on refugees held in one of the camps. So if a refugee in Manus were by some miracle (an even greater miracle now that Donald Trump has been elected) to become an American citizen he would be unable to visit Melbourne.

“It is time to close this chapter,” Elworthy told me. “My greatest fear is that these men will end up being far worse off than they even suspect. The U.S. deal sounds like pie in the sky to me.”

Later she sent me an email: “I am not interested in justice for me or anything like this. I have worked for I.H.M.S. for a long time; nothing surprises me any more.” The important thing, she added, was “to bring the focus back on the Manus men.”

In conditions of oppression and menace, most people are compliant, calculating or cowed. But some, like Elworthy, will not be swayed from the truth. As Hannah Arendt wrote, “Under conditions of terror, most people will comply but some people will not. Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation.”

The Manus and Nauru island prisons, orchestrated by Australia, are unfit for human habitation and unworthy of a liberal democracy that is a signatory of all major international human rights agreements. The Iraqis, Iranians, Burmese, Somalis, Sudanese and others who have fled for their lives, only to find themselves in a lifeless hell for 42 months, should be brought to Australia now, if they are not to go to the United States.

Lynne Elworthy should receive one of Australia’s highest civilian honors. She has stood up for the values of her country against a policy that has dragged those values into a tropical swamp. She has raised her voice when so many have been silent.

In 2014, Reza Barati, an Iranian Kurd, was killed in the Manus detention center. Later that year, another Iranian, Hamid Kehazaei, died from septicemia in Papua New Guinea after medical negligence at the Manus facility left a cut untreated. In 2016, Omid Masoumali, a third Iranian, killed himself through self-immolation. These deaths were all avoidable. They are Australia’s responsibility.

In Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, I met Janet Galbraith, a writer and trauma worker who has tried to help the refugees in Manus. She was with an Iranian who had been hospitalized in the capital after several suicide attempts on Manus. He had scars all over his body and told me, “The guards beat me because I tried to kill myself.” Persecuted in Iran, he said, “They torture me here, too.”

Galbraith told me: “As an Australian I am horrified that these people are being used, their bodies and their psyches, for something unacceptable. They are being tortured in such a sophisticated, nuanced way. I see this policy as part of a continuum: It is how white Australia has dealt with anyone who challenges that whiteness from the time the aboriginal people were incarcerated. These refugees are being held at a point between life and death.”

Her words echoed Elworthy’s, who is convinced a Royal Commission will one day examine the cruelty inflicted in Australia’s name on Manus and Nauru.

“I tried my best,” Elworthy told me. “There was not much we could do except say, ‘Keep yourself strong.’ Every night about 180 people would come for medication, mainly sleeping tablets. We were in a container with four windows, like bank tellers, dispensing the pills. Those guys are just over it.”

She told me of a Lebanese refugee who became a friend and would say to her over coffee: “We’re all damaged goods now. Face the facts, woman. Who will pick us up? Nobody is going to want us.”

---->>>> *This column has been updated to reflect news developments.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/20/opinion/australias-brave-whistleblower-nurse.html>

4. Imran Mohammad: 'The torture in my country is transparent, in Australia it is not obvious'

The Age
January 12 2017
Imran Mohammad

I am trapped in Australia's camp on Manus Island but I have remained the master of my soul. While I don't have control over my life, I have never relinquished control over my mind. I have accomplished a great grasp of the English language, even though I could barely say a few words when I arrived here.

I am writing because everyone's mood here has darkened beyond understanding. We have begun our fourth year behind the same fence without hope and a clear future. It feels like we don't exist. Behind our calm exterior, we are rotting from the inside. Hence, everything we suffer goes unnoticed.

My ancestors have lived in Rakhine, Myanmar, for generations. However, our country doesn't acknowledge the existence of Muslims. We are considered illegal migrants in our own land. Rohingyans are not allowed birth certificates or any documentation to prove our citizenship or our existence. Therefore, there is no way to leave our country legally, even though we are considered the most persecuted cultural group in the world.

Our families have been stuck in UN camps throughout Asia waiting decades for visas. So we are left with no choice, except to take a boat ride and risk our lives to find protection. People who are at imminent risk of death don't make plans before they start travelling. We just jump into oceans to escape persecution. Oceans are our lifeline because it is the only way we can seek safety. As a Rohingya I would never be able to come by plane, which is the accepted way to seek asylum. I would require an immense number of documents to apply for a visa. I would need more than \$US5000 in cash to be able to board the plane. But, even with all these papers, it is very unlikely I'd be granted a visa.

And now after three years of imprisonment, the government is trying to impose a lifetime ban on refugees from ever entering Australia. Some men wasting away on Manus left on a boat only two days after their wife and children. In those two days Australia closed its borders. We had no idea of the policy change, we were busy surviving.

And we are shattered by Faysal Ishak Ahmed's unnecessary death. It feels like an Australian-run detention camp is a death sentence; we refugees are going to die one by one.

I didn't know what depression was and how catastrophically it debilitates. Now I see with my own eyes what it does. Many men around me came to Manus as healthy young men but have been turned into a shadow of who they once were by the enduring hopelessness. They don't even know they are suffering. All they want is to stay in their bunk beds, wrapping bedsheets around the frame, blocking out their surroundings, the light and humans. It is like living in a coffin, and I know that often they wish they were already dead.

I hoped Australia would finally end this sense of feeling irrelevant, yet instead it has reinforced it. While the torture in my country is transparent, in Australia it is not obvious.

We hope the US acts quickly to get us out of this endless prison. We have been tested beyond our endurance and our threshold has reached saturation point. My abilities are being eroded after spending almost six years in various detention centres. All we crave is what all people crave: freedom and a chance at a life in safety so we can contribute to this world.

On behalf of the men on Manus Island, I ask the world to do something to end Australia's political game on vulnerable refugees.

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-torture-in-my-country-is-transparent-in-australia-it-is-not-obvious-20170110-gtoqky.html>

5. Sudanese refugee dies in Brisbane hospital after medivac from Manus

Faysal Ishak Ahmed, 27, who was said to have suffered from blackouts for months, collapsed on Friday, but died despite airlift to Australia

The Guardian
Michael Slezak and Ben Doherty
Saturday 24 December 2016 17.02 AEDT

A 27-year-old Sudanese refugee held on Manus Island has died following "a fall and seizure" inside the Australian-run detention centre.

It is understood the man, who had reportedly been unwell for several months, collapsed and suffered head injuries inside the detention centre on Friday. He was then evacuated to Royal Brisbane and Women's hospital, where he died on Saturday.

The Guardian understands the man's name was Faysal Ishak Ahmed. He was born in Khartoum in June 1989 and had been held on Manus since October 2013.

A source on Manus told Guardian Australia that Ahmed had been sick for more than six months and other detainees had alerted the organisation responsible for care on the island, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), to his situation.

"Last night he collapsed in Oscar prison and injured his head seriously," the source said. "It was not the first time that he had fainted. A few days ago the refugees wrote a complaint against IHMS about his situation."

According to the Refugee Action Coalition, the letter was signed by more than 60 refugees on Manus last week.

They said he had suffered numerous blackouts and collapses over the past several months.

"Faysal is yet another casualty of the systematic neglect that characterises Manus Island and offshore detention," said Ian Rintoul, spokesman for the Refugee Action Coalition.

A media statement from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection confirmed the death of the 27-year-old man from "a fall and seizure" at the detention centre.

"The department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends," it said. "The death will be reported to the Queensland coroner. No further comment will be made at this time."

Rintoul said: "The government should stop playing with refugees' lives and bring them to Australia, where they can get the protection and medical attention they need."

Hamid Kehazaei, an Iranian asylum seeker, died in a Brisbane hospital in September 2014 after delays in moving him from Manus. Kehazaei, 24, had originally presented with a small infection in his leg that developed into sepsis and eventually caused a series of heart attacks.

The coronial inquest into his death heard that the Manus Island medical facilities were inadequate, doctors' clinical instructions were ignored and critical medical equipment was not working. Requests to urgently transfer Kehazaei from the island were ignored, then refused, before he was finally flown on an air ambulance, first to Port Moresby and then, ultimately, to Brisbane.

Several other asylum seekers and refugees have died in immigration detention or on detention islands. Reza Barati was murdered by guards inside the Manus detention centre in 2014, and in 2016, Omid Masoumali died after dousing himself in lighter fluid and setting himself alight on Nauru, in protest at being held indefinitely on the island.

Other refugees suffering serious medical complaints, including pregnant woman facing complex births, or suspected cancerous growths, have been denied medical transfers from detention islands.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/24/sudanese-refugee-dies-in-brisbane-hospital-after-medivac-from-manus>

6. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus refugee medivacced to Australia in critical condition

Saturday December 24, 2016
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

A 27 year-old Sudanese male refugee, Faysal, has been medivacced from Manus to Australia after collapsing and suffering head injuries inside Oscar compound on Thursday night, 22 December. The refugee has been held on Manus since October 2013.

He was kept in the IHMS clinic at the Manus detention centre on Thursday night before being medivacced to Brisbane on Friday afternoon, 23 December.

It is believed he is in a critical condition. It is not known if the immediate emergency is a result of the head injuries sustained when he collapsed or because of underlying medical conditions that lead to his collapse. He had suffered numerous black-outs and collapses over the past months.

The medical emergency has again thrown a stark light on medical failures of IHMS (the medical provider) and the lack of proper medical treatment on Manus.

The refugee has made numerous complaints to Border Force and IHMS because of a lack of treatment or medical attention by IHMS. He has suffered ill health for around one year -- including long-standing heart problems.

Only last week, more than 60 Manus refugees signed a complaint letter regarding IHMS's failure to properly treat the refugee. On his last few visits to the IHMS clinic, he was only seen by a clinic nurse, not a doctor.

Only a week ago, a fellow Manus Sudanese refugee wrote a complaint to IHMS and Border Force on behalf of Faysal.

IHMS and Border Force has been at the centre of questions over medical negligence at the inquest in to the death of Hamid Khazaie who died in Brisbane in 2014 after being evacuated from Manus with blood poisoning.

"We have grave concerns for Faysal's welfare," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition, "Faysal is yet another casualty of the systematic neglect that characterises Manus Island and offshore detention.

"The PNG Supreme Court ordered that Manus be closed last April. It is still open only because the Australian government has refused to accept the decision of the Supreme Court.

"The government should stop playing with refugees' lives and bring them to Australia where they can get the protection and medical attention they need."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

7. MEDIA RELEASE: Another refugee killed by negligence and detention

Saturday December 24, 2016
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Like the death of Hamid Khazaie and Reza Barati, the responsibility for the death of the Sudanese refugee Faysal Ishak Ahmed, lies with the Immigration Department and the Minister for Immigration.

The statement from the immigration department says that the department 'is not aware of any suspicious circumstances'. That's true, precisely because the department is well aware of all the circumstances of Faysal's death and of the role the department has played in creating the circumstances that led to his death.

The medical negligence and the culture of dismissal so obvious in the treatment of Hamid who died in 2014, is just as obvious in the treatment of Faysal.

On Wednesday, the day before he collapsed and hit his head, Faysal told other refugees, that the IHMS doctor had threatened him and had told him. 'You are not sick; do not come to us again,' and, 'If you do we will not treat you.'

Interestingly, the department's statement does admit to Faysal suffering a seizure. But Faysal had been suffering seizures resulting in him collapsing, for weeks with out treatment

"We do not yet know the precise cause of Faysal's death whether it is the head injuries he suffered or his underlying medical condition," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"What we do know is that he should not have been in detention, should not have been on Manus Island and was denied the medical attention he needed. Faysal is another fatal victim of Australia's brutal detention regime.

"It has taken two years to have an inquest into the death of Hamid Khazaie. Justice demands that the Manus is closed now - and that those sent who were sent to Manus are all brought to Australia."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

8. Statement from Behrouz Boochani on Manus Island

THE WORLD NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT IHMS AND AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION

Saturday December 24, 2016
via Ian Rintoul, Refugee Action Coalition

The Australian government must answer us. 'What has happened with Faysal?' IHMS is a criminal system and must answer to us why they did not care about the many complaints Faysal wrote about his heart problem and headaches.

Many times Faysal collapsed and all of us here knew that he was seriously sick for more than 6 months. More than 60 people wrote a letter to IHMS and explained to them how Faysal is sick and has constant headache and heart problem but they did not care.

Every day Faysal went to medical asking for help. They did not help him. A few days ago a nurse in IHMS told Faysal that he was fine and didn't need medical treatment. Now we know he has died. The government and IHMS must know that they can not hide the truth and we in Manus prison are caring about our friend and will follow up and tell the truth to people of how the Australian government killed him.

IHMS is obviously a criminal medical system, as criminal as the Australian immigration. This system has forgotten all its values and dignity that a health provider has to be obliged to. It has forgotten the values and dignity of protecting the health of people and is instead protecting its financial interests and benefits.

This is a crime that shouldn't be ignored easily. In relation to Hamid Khazaei's death, IHMS claims that it did its best to save his life, but the immigration department didn't allow his transfer. The question is why IHMS works in the system that doesn't give it the power it needs to help patients. Why does this company renew its contract with immigration for its financial interest?

I - as a person who deeply understands how IHMS is used by immigration as a means of torture - suggest advocates and the Australian human rights institutions make a complaint against IHMS to the international organisations which observe the medical and health institutions.

As a result of the complaint, IHMS will be convicted of conducting criminal activities and ignoring the values and dignities that it has to apply as a health provider. Doctors Without Borders, World Health Organisation and other international health organisations need to know the nature of IHMS.

Behrouz Boochani, refugee, Manus Island

9. Manus Island refugee dies after being flown to Brisbane hospital

ABC News Online
Saturday December 24, 2016

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection says a 27-year-old Sudanese refugee from Manus Island detention centre has died in the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital after being airlifted to Australia for urgent treatment.

The department released a statement confirming the man, named as Faysal Ishak Ahmed by the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC), suffered a fall and a seizure and had subsequently died in the Brisbane hospital.

RAC spokesman Ian Rintoul said Mr Ahmed was flown to Brisbane from Manus Island on Friday afternoon.

"The Department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends," the statement said.

Mr Rintoul said it was not yet clear whether the emergency was a result of Mr Ahmed's head injuries or because of "underlying medical conditions that led to his collapse".

He said Mr Ahmed had suffered numerous blackouts and collapses over the past few months and suffered head injuries on Thursday night when he collapsed inside Oscar compound at the Manus detention centre.

The case had once more thrown a "stark light" on the failures of International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) — the medical provider servicing the Manus detention centre, he said.

Mr Rintoul said Mr Ahmed had made numerous complaints to Border Force and IHMS because of a lack of treatment.

"Only last week, more than 60 Manus refugees signed a complaint letter regarding IHMS's failure to properly treat the refugee," he said.

Queensland coroner Terry Ryan is investigating the death of 24-year-old Hamid Khazaei, who died in Brisbane's Mater Hospital in August 2014, 13 days after presenting to the Manus Island clinic in August 2014.

Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court ruled in April that Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was illegal.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton confirmed in August the Manus Island detention centre would be closed, but that no timeline had been set for the closure.

Australia and the United States reached an agreement in November for a one-off refugee resettlement deal for people held in detention by Australia on Manus Island and Nauru.

Earlier this month, a spokesperson for the US State Department's bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration said the bureau was not in a position to speculate on how president-elect Donald Trump would react to the deal after taking office.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-24/asylum-seeker-flown-manus-is-to-brisbane-in-critical-condition/8146864>

10. Asylum seeker dies from injuries after fall and seizure on Manus Island

Brisbane Times
December 24 2016 - 5:38PM
Jodie Stephens
with Michael Koziol

A 27-year-old asylum seeker has died from injuries suffered after a fall and seizure at the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea.

The Immigration Department said the man, a 27-year-old Sudanese refugee who advocates named as Faysal Ishak Ahmed, was taken to the International Health and Medical Services clinic (IHMS) on Manus Island for urgent treatment before being air-lifted to Australia for further care.

He died at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital on Saturday.

"The department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends," a statement said.

The Refugee Action Coalition (RAC) said Mr Ahmed was treated at the IHMS clinic on Thursday night after collapsing inside Oscar compound, before being flown to Brisbane on Friday afternoon.

Spokesman Ian Rintoul said Mr Ahmed's case threw "a stark light on medical failures of IHMS... and the lack of proper medical treatment on Manus.

He had Mr Ahmed suffered numerous black-outs and collapses in the months leading up to his death.

"We do not yet know the precise cause of Faysal's death whether it is the head injuries he suffered or his underlying medical condition," Mr Rintoul said. Advertisement

He said Mr Ahmed had made numerous complaints to Border Force and IHMS over "a lack of treatment or medical attention".

"Only last week, more than 60 Manus refugees signed a complaint letter regarding IHMS's failure to properly treat the refugee," he said.

The RAC compared Mr Ahmed's treatment with that of 24-year-old Iranian refugee Hamid Khazaei, who died in 2014 after cutting his foot at Manus Island detention centre. He contracted septicaemia from the cut, and was declared brain dead by doctors at Brisbane's Mater Hospital.

Last month the Australian Medical Association detailed cases of apparent medical neglect among asylum seekers on Manus Island, and accused immigration bureaucrats of failing to adequately follow up cases.

In a submission to a Senate inquiry, the peak medical body revealed it was regularly contacted by asylum seekers seeking intervention in their healthcare, but was frustrated by a lack of co-operation from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/manus-island-asylum-seeker-airlifted-to-brisbane-with-head-injuries-20161224-gthn22.html>

11. Manus Island refugee turned away from clinic for 'pretending to be sick' before death, detainee claims

ABC News Online
By Sharnie Kim
Saturday December 24 2016

The Sudanese refugee who died after falling ill on Manus Island had been turned away from the detention centre's medical provider amid accusations he was pretending to be sick, a fellow detainee has alleged.

Faysal Ishak Ahmed, 27, collapsed at the centre's Oscar compound on Thursday. He was evacuated to Brisbane for urgent treatment on Friday, but died in hospital.

The Immigration Department said Mr Ahmed had suffered a seizure and there were no suspicious circumstances.

But fellow detainee Abdul Aziz Adam, 24, said Mr Ahmed had sought medical treatment from the clinic, run by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), every few days for several months for various ailments including stomach upsets, high blood pressure, fevers and heart problems.

"[Mr Ahmed] said 'I don't get to see the doctor, I always see the nurse and then the nurse tells me 'you don't have anything', but I feel I have a problem'," he said.

Mr Adam said he and about 60 asylum seekers signed a letter addressed to IHMS demanding better medical treatment for Mr Ahmed after he returned from the clinic earlier this month looking particularly crestfallen.

"He said 'I went to the IHMS and then the IHMS told me that, hey you don't have anything, you are not sick and you're pretending to be sick, and from now on, we don't want you to come down here, so please stop coming here'," he said.

"And we were very, very devastated at that moment when he told us that story."

'The system is designed to kill us one by one'

Mr Adam said Mr Ahmed had been in detention since late 2013, having fled Sudan — where his parents and brother still live — and tried to come to Australia by boat.

He said they were both granted refugee status about two years ago.

Mr Ahmed enjoyed painting, reading and writing, Mr Adam said, and was always smiling, even if he was in pain.

"I can't hold my tears because how does this happen?" he said.

"Two days ago I spoke with him on the phone, now he end up dead.

"This system is designed to kill us one by one."

The Immigration Department said it had referred the case to the Queensland Coroner but declined to comment further.

IHMS did not respond to the ABC's requests for comment.

'It's clearly a recipe for disaster'

Dr Barri Phatarfod from Doctors for Refugees said Mr Ahmed was the latest needless death arising from the poor standard of healthcare on Manus Island.

She said Mr Ahmed's pleas for help went unanswered.

"Somebody has ignored it," she said.

"Now whether that's IHMS, whether that's the department, presumably that will come out in yet another coronial inquest.

"There'll be records that these complaints and these symptoms and these presentations have been made over several months."

She said Australia's offshore detention system was a failure.

"It's clearly a recipe for disaster and we're not talking about old, infirm people here — not that that would make it any more palatable," she said.

"Hamid Khazaei was 24 when he died. This young man was 27."

The Queensland Coroner is currently investigating Mr Khazaei's death in 2014 from a leg infection.

The inquest has been scrutinising medical evacuation procedures off Manus Island, and will resume in February.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-24/refugee-turned-away-from-clinic-before-death:-detainee/8147032>

12. Why did Faysal die? The questions Mr Dutton has to answer

Sydney Morning Herald
December 24 2016 - 6:23PM
Michael Gordon

The detainees on Manus Island began to fear the worst when Border Force officials made inquiries if anyone had contact details for the family of a young Sudanese refugee named Faysal Ishak Ahmed.

Their first thought was that similar requests for family contacts had been issued before the deaths of two other detainees, Reza Barati and Hamid Khazaei, were confirmed back in 2014.

Mr Barati was murdered and scores of detainees were injured when chaos descended on the centre in February that year. Mr Khazaei died several months later, 13 days after presenting at the centre's medical clinic with an infected foot.

"It meant he is in a dangerous situation," was how Behrouz Boohani interpreted the call for contact details for the family of Mr Ahmed, who had been held at the centre for more than three years.

The previous day, Friday, Mr Ahmed, 27, had been air-lifted to Brisbane after what Australian Government officials describe as "a fall and a seizure" at the detention centre.

The statement of less than 100 words released by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on Christmas Eve to confirm Mr Ahmed's death makes no reference to any pleas for medical attention for Mr Ahmed well before he apparently fainted in the Foxtrot compound and hit his head. Advertisement

It notes that the department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends.

But, according to Mr Boochani and other sources, more than 60 Sudanese refugees wrote to Border Force some days ago, saying that Mr Ahmed's condition was critical and pleading for him to receive urgent medical care.

"He was sick for more than six month and collapsed several times but IHMS (the medical provider) did not care about him," Mr Boochani says.

"Every day Faysal went to medical asking for help. They did not help him. A few days ago a nurse in IHMS told Faysal that he was fine and didn't need medical treatment. Now we know he has died."

The veracity of these assertions will be tested when the death is investigated in due course by the Queensland coroner, but three questions are raised by another death on Manus.

The first is whether he received adequate medical care in the months leading up to his death, and whether requests were made earlier by health professionals for him to be treated in Australia.

The second is whether Australian officials responded with appropriate speed in approving Mr Ahmed's transfer to Australia. These are the questions that dominated the coroner's inquiry into the death of Mr Khazaei.

The third transcends the details of the level of care afforded to Mr Ahmed: why, some nine months after Papua New Guinea's highest court ruled that the centre was unconstitutional, are almost 900 asylum seekers and refugees still there?

The hope is that the misery of those on Manus, like those on Nauru, will end soon, with those found to be refugees included in the resettlement deal with the United States. The sooner they have certainty that they will be able to rebuild their lives in a safe environment, the better.

But the deal came too late for Mr Ahmed, whose tragic passing is to be marked by another solemn gathering at the centre, this one on Christmas Day.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/why-did-faysal-die-the-questions-mr-dutton-has-to-answer-20161224-gthnu8.html>

13. Manus Island detainees riot after death of refugee Faysal Ishak Ahmed

ABC News Online / Reuters
Sunday December 25, 2016

Asylum seekers inside the Manus Island detention centre briefly took control of two compounds and expelled guards after the death of a Sudanese refugee who fell ill at the centre, Papua New Guinea police say.

Senior Sergeant Thomas Lelepo, who is stationed on Manus Island, said guards at the regional processing centre were forced out of the facility last night.

"There was a situation there ... over the death of a resident," he said.

Sergeant Lelepo said order had since been restored inside the detention centre.

Faysal Ishak Ahmed, 27, collapsed in the Oscar compound at the Manus detention centre on Thursday.

He was evacuated to Brisbane for urgent treatment on Friday, but died in hospital on Christmas Eve.

A Department of Immigration and Border Protection spokesperson said Mr Ahmed had suffered a seizure.

Mr Ahmed's death had been referred to the Queensland coroner, but there were no suspicious circumstances, the spokesperson said.

However, detainees and the Refugee Action Coalition claimed the man was seriously ill for months and had made repeated requests for medical assistance before the emergency.

The department also confirmed an incident had occurred overnight inside the Manus detention centre.

"The department is aware of a disturbance involving a group of residents in the mess area of Manus RPC," the spokesperson said.

"The disturbance has now been resolved. There is minor property damage and no reported injuries."

Photos posted to Facebook by Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani, who is among the asylum seekers held on Manus Island, showed what appeared to be damage to a mess area inside one of the compounds.

"We just kicked out the Wilson security from Delta and Oscar detentions. This message is for the Government," Mr Boochani wrote.

'The system is designed to kill us'

Another Manus detainee, Abdul Aziz Adam, 24, said Mr Ahmed had sought medical treatment from the clinic, run by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), every few days for several months for various ailments including stomach upsets, high blood pressure, fevers and heart problems.

"[Mr Ahmed] said 'I don't get to see the doctor, I always see the nurse and then the nurse tells me 'you don't have anything', but I feel I have a problem'," he said.

"I can't hold my tears because how does this happen? Two days ago I spoke with him on the phone, now he end up dead.

"This system is designed to kill us one by one."

Mr Adam said he and about 60 asylum seekers signed a letter addressed to IHMS demanding better medical treatment for Mr Ahmed after he returned from the clinic earlier this month looking particularly crestfallen.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-25/manus-island-detainees-clash-centre-security-over-refugee-death/8147606>

14. Manus Island detainees rebel against guards after death of refugee

Inmates 'kicked the officers and staff out in a serious way' for a night of protest, says Iranian journalist Behrouz Boochani

The Guardian
Elle Hunt and Ben Doherty with agencies
Sunday 25 December 2016 16.26 AEDT

Detainees on Manus Island are demanding answers about the death of a refugee as advocates call for a royal commission into medical care at Australia's offshore detention centres.

Faysal Ishak Ahmed, a 27-year-old Sudanese man, died on Saturday in Brisbane after being airlifted there from the centre in Papua New Guinea the day before.

He had reportedly been unwell for more than six months, prompting fellow detainees to complain to International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), the organisation responsible for his and others' care on the island.

Refugees and asylum seekers on Manus rebelled against guards on Saturday night in a non-violent protest in response to Ahmed's death, peacefully taking control of two of the four internal compounds in the detention centre.

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian journalist and refugee who has been held on the island for more than three years, told Guardian Australia that he and others had "kicked the officers and staff out in a serious way" and "took control" of the centre.

He said it was an attempt to seek answers from the "fascist system" about the circumstances surrounding Ahmed's death. "They must answer our questions and make it clear who is responsible," he said.

The officers and staff returned to the centre on Sunday, he said. "Now the refugees are angry and sad but the situation otherwise looks like normal."

Memorial services for Ahmed were to be held on Sunday evening.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection said on Saturday that Ahmed had died from "a fall and seizure" and it was not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding his death. "The death will be reported to the Queensland coroner," it said. "No further comment will be made at this time."

Ahmed fled Sudan in 2013 and tried to reach Australia by boat.

Boochani said it was widely known within the compound that Ahmed was unwell and that he had complained of experiencing heart problems and constant headaches.

"Many times Faysal collapsed and all of us here knew that he was seriously sick for more than six months ... Every day Faysal went to medical asking for help. They did not help him."

Boochani said a nurse had told Ahmed that "he was fine and didn't need medical treatment" a few days before he died.

He encouraged advocates and human rights organisations to lodge complaints against IHMS.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said Ahmed had been suffering seizures "for weeks without treatment".

"We do not yet know the precise cause of Faysal's death – whether it is the head injuries he suffered or his underlying medical condition," he said.

The prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, made no apology for the government's policy not to allow asylum-seeker boat arrivals to set foot on Australian soil.

"That has stopped the people-smuggling and it's stopped the drownings at sea," he told reporters in Sydney on Sunday. "Our policy is compassionate but it respects the sovereignty of Australia."

Calls have been made for the Australian government to instigate a royal commission into the medical care refugees receive on Manus Island and Nauru, the other offshore processing centre.

George Newhouse, the principal solicitor of the not-for-profit human rights law centre the National Justice Project, said Ahmed was the latest victim of the "systematically cruel and inhumane system".

"It appears that Faysal did not receive appropriate treatment for his condition and we now have another death that was likely to have been entirely avoidable," he said on Sunday.

Newhouse said Ahmed's death was the "tip of the iceberg" and that a royal commission with broader powers of inquiry was necessary to determine the full extent of the "miserable level" of medical treatment on Manus and Nauru.

He pointed to the deaths of Hamid Kehzaei, an Iranian asylum seeker who died in a Brisbane hospital in September 2014, and Rakib Khan, who died while awaiting medical evacuation from Nauru this year.

Kehzaei, 24, had originally presented with a minor infection in his leg that developed into sepsis, eventually causing a series of heart attacks.

The coronial inquest into his death heard that the Manus Island medical facilities were inadequate, doctors' clinical instructions were ignored and critical medical equipment was not working.

Khan, 26, died from suspected heart failure in Nauru hospital in May. Plans had been made to take him to Australia by air ambulance but he could not be moved. An overdose of medicines may have contributed to his death.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/25/manus-island-detainees-rebel-against-guards-after-death-of-refugee>

15. Australia needs to build a proper hospital to stop refugees from dying, PNG MP says

ABC Radio CAF - AM
Monday December 26, 2016
By Julia Holman

Australia must build and staff a hospital on Manus Island to prevent refugees from dying in the future, the Papua New Guinea politician who represents the island says.

On Christmas Eve, 27-year-old Sudanese man Faysal Ishak Ahmed, who had been evacuated from Manus Island after suffering seizures, became the fourth refugee detained on the island to die.

The processing centre on the island houses close to 900 refugees and the local MP Ronnie Knight said the situation there was increasingly tense.

"We really find it hard to believe that this is going on in this day and age in this country," he said.

Mr Knight said he was extremely frustrated following the death of a fourth refugee.

"It doesn't reflect back [well] on my people and my province," he said.

"Originally it was supposed to be a township out there, [but] it's just a big military-style barracks, or mining-camps-style of barracks out there."

Mr Knight said they had originally been told that a "decent hospital" would be built.

"And the amount of money that is being paid for those people out there, you would think by now they would have a decent health system out there and a couple of competent doctors or something ... to keep this sort of thing from happening," he said.

"And if they are misdiagnosing calls like this, what does this hold for more refugees in the future?"

Mr Knight said it needed to be done urgently.

"Why don't they just spend some money and upgrade the local hospital and staff it properly and bring it to the stage it was when the Australian navy was there?"

"We even had a diving chamber there for people that had got the bends. These are things that we need to look at.

"Is it cheaper for them to just until [it] gets to the position where they have to medivac a person for hundreds of thousands of [local currency] kina, than have a proper staff hospital that can take care of them on the spot?"

US deal 'just more propaganda'

Yesterday protesters showed up at a Christmas charity lunch attended by the Prime Minister in Sydney.

Malcolm Turnbull said that he made no apologies for keeping the borders secure and said that the Australian Government policy was compassionate.

He said that there were plans to move some refugees offshore to the US.

But Mr Knight said he did not have much hope the US deal would lead to the closure of the facility.

"Our hopes were pinned on this American deal that was supposed to happen and we were told that in early January, or mid January, most of them would be repatriated to the United States," he said.

"Now I can see that's probably just more propaganda to keep people placid and just while the time away."

There have been three other refugees from Manus Island who have died. Reza Barati, 23, died following protests inside the Manus detention centre in 2014. Hamid Kehazaei, an Iranian asylum seeker, died in a Brisbane hospital in September 2014.

Pakistani Kamil Hussain drowned at a waterfall on the island near the main town of Lorengau.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-26/australia-needs-to-build-a-proper-hospital-on-manus-island-mp/8148410>

16. Faysal Ahmed's family not told of his death, refugees 'treated with contempt', advocate claims

ABC News Online

By Matt Eaton

Monday December 26, 2016

The Federal Government has not notified the family of a Sudanese refugee who died in hospital on Christmas Eve after suffering a seizure inside the Manus Island detention centre, a refugee advocate says.

Faysal Ishak Ahmed, 27, was evacuated from Manus Island to Brisbane but on Saturday became the fourth refugee detained on the island to die.

Refugees inside the Manus detention centre held a vigil for him on Christmas night.

A spokeswoman for Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the Government would be making no further comment on Mr Ahmed's death.

But Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC) said he knew for certain Australian authorities had not spoken to Mr Ahmed's family.

"Why don't they pick up the phone and talk to Faysal's family?" Mr Rintoul said.

"That in itself is a disgrace and says a lot for the kind of contempt they have for people who are their responsibility.

"We get the hypocrisy from the Government about the concerns about safety of lives at sea. They have got no concern for lives they have responsibility for on Manus Island."

He said Mr Ahmed's death showed Australian Border Force had not changed its practices, despite shortcomings in health management on Manus that had come to light in the ongoing inquest into the 2014 death of Hamid Khazaei.

Mr Khazaei, 24, died in a Brisbane hospital several weeks after a leg wound suffered inside the Manus centre became infected with a rare bacteria found in soil and stagnant water.

RAC also released a series of letters from the Manus Island medical provider, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), responding to Mr Ahmed's complaints over a period of several months that his illness was not being taken seriously.

The complaints prompted 60 Sudanese detainees to write to IHMS calling for urgent action to address Mr Ahmed's ill health.

The letter was dated December 21, one day before the seizure that led to the 27-year-old's death.

In that letter, also obtained by the ABC, IHMS was told Mr Ahmed's condition was "getting worse and worse day by day".

Mr Rintoul said the letters showed Mr Ahmed should have taken off Manus Island for medical treatment several months ago.

"He clearly should have got proper medical attention, so the responsibility for his death I think does lie with IHMS and the immigration department," Mr Rintoul said.

"It's clear from their responses that they said there would be a written response which never arrived.

"At one point they suggest he has an appointment with an ear, nose and throat specialist, which clearly indicates they've got some concerns to make that referral.

"But they don't know when that appointment is going to take place and say 'good luck if the symptoms persist'.

"It is not the kind of treatment that someone would get in Australia. It is the kind of treatment that has been systematically dished out to people in the detention centres because there is a culture of dismissal which has been clearly exposed by the inquest into Hamid Khazaei."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-26/faysal-ahmed-family-not-told-of-his-death-says-refugee-advocate/8148618>

17. Refugee pleaded with doctors on Manus Island for help before his death

Detainees' letter claims medical staff ignored months of escalating complaints before Faysal Ishak Ahmed collapsed

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Monday 26 December 2016 15.49 AEDT

In the days before Sudanese refugee Faysal Ishak Ahmed collapsed and died, he pleaded with doctors inside the Manus Island detention centre to treat him, having been “more than 20 times” to see medical staff, who had been unable to arrest his worsening condition.

Sudanese refugees inside the detention centre were so worried by his repeated seizures and collapses that they wrote a letter outlining months of escalating health complaints that, they said, had been ignored by medical staff.

Ahmed, 27, collapsed inside the detention centre on Thursday morning. The Department of Immigration said in a statement he had suffered a seizure and fall.

According to a witness, Ahmed had been removed to the voluntary supported rest area – usually used to protect people suffering mental health episodes – complaining of chest pains.

“Another patient heard him saying, ‘I cannot breathe, my heart has stopped’, and shortly afterwards he fell down on his forehead with thick liquid and water came out through his nose and mouth,” the witness said.

Ahmed was taken by air ambulance to Brisbane on Friday, but died in hospital on Saturday.

On 15 December, exactly a week before he collapsed, Ahmed had written to International Medical Health Services, the multinational company with the contract to provide health services inside Australia’s detention regime, complaining his health concerns were being ignored.

In faltering English, Ahmed said he had chest and heart problems, and high blood pressure.

Ahmed had written a similar letter two months earlier, following a collapse.

After he collapsed last week, but while he was still alive, Ahmed’s compatriot refugees and asylum seekers wrote a four-page letter to IHMS pleading with doctors to “give him the kind of treatment his problem need[s] ... before its too late ... instead of hiding the facts from him”.

They detailed seizures and breathing difficulties Ahmed had suffered since September.

The letter alleged:

“He saw a GP on the 21st of December 2016, and he was told by the GP there was nothing wrong was told that he was not going to be seen by any doctor again in the future and IHMS cannot help him anymore with that problem.

“When he came back from his appointment he was very much affected by the reply of the IHMS that they would be assisting him in the future. He kept saying ‘I swear, I am not pretending that this disease would kill me’. His condition got worse and worse on that day.”

The letter-writers asked that Ahmed be treated immediately.

“We have got nothing in our power to help him, but we are kindly and humbly giving you this piece of advice so as to take it into consideration immediately before it’s too late,” they wrote.

An IHMS spokeswoman told Guardian Australia: “As this matter will be referred to the Queensland coroner, IHMS is not in a position to respond to your questions. IHMS expresses its sympathies to his family and friends.”

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian journalist and refugee held in detention on Manus Island, said a protest led by detainees following Ahmed’s death – in which guards were forced to withdraw from the two compounds and some windows were broken – was “a message to the government that it cannot hide the truth”.

He said detainees had no other way to resist their detention, which was ruled illegal by Papua New Guinea’s supreme court eight months ago. The PNG and Australian governments have agreed to close the centre, but neither has committed to a time frame.

Boochani said: “We are victims in this prison and Australia is killing us one by one, and I would like to ask people to put themselves in our shoes: ‘what could we do at that moment?’ I, as a person who lived under a dictatorship, found out that a

different version of dictatorship and a new version of fascism exists in this prison. How many times should I write in a peaceful way and how many years should I fight in a peaceful way?"

Healthcare in immigration detention centres is under acute scrutiny, with a coronial inquest under way into the death of Hamid Kehazaei, an Iranian asylum seeker who died in a Brisbane hospital in September 2014 after delays in moving him from Manus.

Kehazaei, 24, had originally presented with a small infection in his leg that developed into sepsis and eventually caused a series of heart attacks.

The Queensland state coroner has heard that the Manus Island medical facilities were inadequate, doctors' clinical instructions were ignored and critical medical equipment was not working. Requests to urgently transfer Kehazaei from the island were ignored, then refused, before he was finally flown in an air ambulance, first to Port Moresby and then to Brisbane.

Several other asylum seekers and refugees have died in immigration detention or on detention islands. Reza Barati was murdered by guards inside the Manus detention centre in 2014, and in 2016, Omid Masoumali died after dousing himself in lighter fluid and setting himself alight on Nauru, in protest at being held indefinitely on the island.

Other refugees suffering serious medical complaints – including pregnant woman facing complex births, or suspected cancerous growths – have been denied medical transfers from detention islands.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/26/refugee-pleaded-with-doctors-on-manus-island-for-help-before-his-death>

18. Deceased Sudanese Refugee 'Should Not Have Been In Detention' On Manus Island

Refugee advocates have hit out after the death of a Sudanese refugee.

Huffington Post
25/12/2016 9:05 AM AEDT
Updated 25/12/2016 10:06 AM AEDT
Sam McKeith, Associate Editor, HuffPost Australia

Refugee advocates have hit out at the Turnbull Government following the death of a Sudanese man who was airlifted to hospital from the Manus Island detention centre.

The Immigration Department released a statement on Saturday confirming the man, named as Faysal Ishak Ahmed by the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC), passed away in Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital after being airlifted from the controversial PNG facility.

Ahmed reportedly collapsed on Manus Island and suffered head injuries.

The Department said it was not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of the 27-year-old.

"The Department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends," it said in a statement.

The Huffington Post Australia has sought the Immigration Department for comment.

RAC spokesman Ian Rintoul said while the details of Ahmed's matter remained unclear, he should not have been in detention in the first place.

"We do not yet know the precise cause of Faysal's death whether it is the head injuries he suffered or his underlying medical condition," Rintoul said in a statement.

"What we do know is that he should not have been in detention, should not have been on Manus Island and was denied the medical attention he needed. Faysal is another fatal victim of Australia's brutal detention regime.

"Justice demands that Manus is closed now -- and that those who were sent to Manus are all brought to Australia."

It has been claimed that Ahmed suffered blackouts and collapses over the past few months, according to unverified reports on social media.

The reports also suggest that numerous letters had been written to authorities about Ahmed's health problems in the months before his death.

Pictures posted to Facebook purport to show damage to property at the Manus detention centre in the wake of the man's death.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/12/24/deceased-sudanese-refugee-should-not-have-been-in-detention-on/>

19. 'Don't wait treating me': Manus detainee Faysal Ahmed's final, desperate plea for help

Sydney Morning Herald
December 26 2016 - 6:14PM
Michael Gordon

Nine days before he died, a young Sudanese refugee's exasperation at what he saw as the inaction of the health providers at the Manus Island detention centre reached breaking point.

In broken English, Faysal Ishak Ahmed filled out a complaint form, demanding to know why more than 20 visits to the centre's clinic had not produced a diagnosis of his ailments, let alone a treatment plan.

For six months he had been complaining of chest pains, swollen arms and fingers, breathing problems, high blood pressure and a "problem at the back of my head".

"One thing I want to know about my healthy [sic] is are you guys able to treat me or if no tell me in write [written] form," he asked.

"I have chest, heart, high pressure and also nose block. I have problem in never of back of my head you guys have all my text there with you don't wait treating me."

A week later, Mr Ahmed visited the detention centre medical clinic with a final, desperate plea for help. He returned to his compound to tell friends the doctor had told him there was nothing wrong with him and not to come back.

Three days later, a brief media release from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection announced that a 27-year-old Sudanese refugee "has sadly died today from injuries suffered after a fall and seizure at the Manus Regional Processing Centre".

The man had been taken to the medical clinic run by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) for urgent treatment before being airlifted to Australia and dying at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, the statement said. "The Department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death."

Now, Mr Ahmed's sense of frustration and despair is being felt by the almost 900 men who remain at the detention centre, some nine months after Papua New Guinea's highest court declared it unconstitutional.

One of them, Aziz Adam, 24, can report that it is also consuming Mr Ahmed's parents in Sudan.

"They are really shocked and devastated. They don't even know whether they will accept this because their son left home and he was alive and now they are telling them he is dead," Mr Adam, also from Sudan, told Fairfax Media after speaking by phone with Mr Ahmed's parents.

Mr Adam says the detainees received no word on Mr Ahmed's condition after he was taken to an isolation area last Wednesday after 60 Sudanese refugees wrote a letter demanding he receive urgent treatment.

He told Mr Ahmed's parents he could not say what caused his friend's death, but that he had been suffering for six months.

"I feel there is real negligence going on in the IHMS clinic. It's one or the other. Either they are not honest with themselves about the treatment they provided to Faysal or they are hiding something."

Australian government officials have said there will be no comment beyond Saturday's short statement, which noted that the death would be reported to the Queensland coroner.

Fairfax Media put several questions to the department on Monday, including whether it was true that Mr Ahmed had seen a doctor last Wednesday and been told there was nothing wrong with him.

"As our statement says, we will be making no further comment," came the reply.

Greens leader Richard Di Natale says this is not good enough and that the Greens will press for an independent inquiry when Parliament resumes in February.

"This completely preventable death is the latest symbol of the cruelty, inhumanity and heartlessness of these camps," Senator Di Natale said.

"Faysal Ishak Ahmed wanted nothing more than our protection, and instead the government took his hope and then his life."

Labor's immigration spokesman Shayne Neumann said the death could be examined by a Senate inquiry into serious allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers in off-shore processing centres.

Dr Barri Phatarfod, president of Doctors for Refugees, said Mr Ahmed's symptoms would have warranted an urgent investigation had he been in Australia.

"In Australia, after the requisite brain scans such as CT and MRI, he would normally have cardiac investigations, such as an echocardiogram," Dr Phatarfod said.

Dr Phatarfod said there appeared to be a culture of cynicism among at least some of the IHMS health professionals.

"We have seen instances where basic tests have not been performed on people in offshore detention, and in the medical records the doctor has justified this by stating 'they often exaggerate their symptoms to get attention'," she said.

Mr Adam said the detainees were struggling to cope with the death of a young man who was "a really a good friend of everyone, not just his community".

He described Mr Ahmed as an "open person and a good person" who kept engaging with others, partly to distract himself from his deteriorating health.

"We just want to let people know what happened to this guy. He left us and he was alive."

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/dont-wait-treating-me--manus-detainee-faysal-ahmeds-final-desperate-plea-for-help-20161226-gti2j5.html>

20. Manus detainee Faysal Ahmed told there was no bed for him at clinic days before he died

Sydney Morning Herald
December 28 2016 - 6:55PM
Michael Gordon

Faysal Ishak Ahmed was told there was no bed for him at Manus Island detention centre's medical clinic just five days before he died after collapsing, hitting his head and suffering a seizure.

The company contracted to provide health services, International Health and Medical Services, told Mr Ahmed firmly that the clinic was not an "accommodation area" and, as such, a bed in the clinic would not be provided.

In correspondence obtained by Fairfax Media, the IHMS health services manager told Mr Ahmed that if he wished to request a room in the area for those suffering mental health issues, he could contact another contractor.

More than 200 detainees at the centre have signed an open letter calling for a royal commission to investigate the circumstances of Mr Ahmed's death on Christmas Eve.

Released on Wednesday, the letter asserts that Mr Ahmed had heart and other health problems for more than six months before his death, but that IHMS "did not care about him and did not provide any treatment for him".

The company has emphatically rejected Mr Ahmed was denied access to medical care, and released a statement on Wednesday saying it was "very concerned with the inaccuracies and misinformation" surrounding the reporting of Mr Ahmed's death.

"He was seen by clinicians and other allied health professionals at the clinic on numerous occasions in the three months preceding his death for multiple issues and his presenting medical issues were assessed, investigated and managed," the statement said.

"The facts and circumstances surrounding his death will be referred to the Queensland Coroner. However, currently available information indicates that Mr Ahmed died from severe head injuries sustained in a fall at the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre on 23 December."

IHMS was extremely proud of the work of its "highly qualified and professional clinicians", whose efforts to stabilise Mr Ahmed and transfer him to Australia were "exemplary".

Fairfax Media has obtained a raft of documents in which Mr Ahmed repeatedly seeks treatment for a range of conditions including chest pains, difficulty in breathing, swollen hands and stomach pains.

In a formal complaint lodged four days before he was told he would not be given a bed at the clinic, he demanded to know why more than 20 visits to the centre's clinic had not produced a diagnosis of his ailments, let alone a treatment plan.

Detainees have asserted that Mr Ahmed went to the clinic two days after his request for a bed was rejected and was told there was nothing wrong with him.

The documents include formal responses from IHMS that suggest the provider considered his problems were more mental than physical. In October, he was told a primary health nurse and doctor had discussed his problems at length and "ways to resolve these issues".

"You were offered to see mental health regarding your sleeplessness, which you refused," the letter said. "We note that you have been attending medication rounds and we advise that you continue to do so."

This is a reference to what detainees regard as a nightly ritual, where they line up to be given medicine to help them sleep.

The letter calling for a royal commission says the detainees believe Mr Ahmed was already dead when he was flown to Australia on Christmas Eve.

"About two years ago another refugee, Hamid Khazaie, died in similar circumstances to Faysal. Also we lost Reza Barati and Hossein Kamil in this prison in a system made and run by the Australian government.

"We are writing this letter to you to request [a] royal commission to fully investigate IHMS, the provider of medical services and its control by Border Force."

The letter asserts that more than 400 of the almost 900 detainees at the centre require emergency medical treatment.

"We wrote that letter under fear and sadness," one of the signatories, Behrouz Boochani, told Fairfax Media. "The people in Manus are really worried about their health, and there is a big question here that who will be next?"

In what may have been the final response to Mr Ahmed's pleas for medical attention, the IHMS health services manager wrote to him on December 19 informing that his request, presumably for a bed in the clinic, had been received.

"We advise that IHMS is not an accommodation area and as such as bed in the clinic will not be provided," the correspondence says.

"If you wish to request a room in the VSRA you need to contact Wilsons Whisky team and they will assist you with this."

Mr Boochani said VSRA is a small room close to the IHMS clinic where people with mental problems are kept for a few days a time. He said the Wilson Whisky team is a section of the security provider that deals with those with mental health issues.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-detainee-faysal-ahmed-told-there-was-no-bed-for-him-at-clinic-days-before-he-died-20161228-gtives.html>

21. MEDIA RELEASE: Supporter Vigils; Manus refugees demand Royal Commission

VIGILS CALLED FOR MANUS SUDANESE REFUGEE

MANUS REFUGEES DEMAND ROYAL COMMISSION INTO IHMS MALPRACTICE

Refugee Action Coalition
Thursday December 29, 2016
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

More than 200 refugees on Manus Island have signed a letter (text below, photos attached) calling for a Royal Commission to fully investigate IHMS (the Manus detention medical provider contracted to the Australian government) and its political control by Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Shortcomings and negligence by IHMS and the DIBP have already been revealed by the inquest into the death of Hamid Khazaie, the refugee who died in Brisbane in 2014, after being transferred from Manus.

Calls are growing for a Royal Commission into IHMS, the lack of facilities and the culture of dismissal and neglect that characterises medical services on Manus Island.

"We waited two years for the inquest into the death of Hamid Khazaie. The asylum seekers and refugees cannot wait another two years for another inquest. The revelations of the inquiry into Hamid's death in 2014 have been horrifying.

"That urgent medical decisions are not made by medical staff but require the sanction of Border Force officials are the kind of Machiavellian arrangements that are concerned with political control, not care.

"They cry crocodile tears over deaths at sea while their punitive control of offshore detention control cost the lives of refugees.

"For the refugees on Manus, the US deal is a mirage. The government must make immediate arrangements to bring them here," said Ian Rintoul, of the Refugee Action Coalition.

Vigils for Faysal Ishak Ahmed, the Sudanese refugee who died in Brisbane after being medi-vacced to Brisbane hospital, will be held around the country over the next week, beginning with Brisbane and Newcastle today (Thursday) followed by Sydney on Friday, 30 December, through to Melbourne on 3 January.

Sydney's vigil will be held on Friday, 30 December, at Hyde Park, near St James Station, 6.00-7.00pm. Speakers will include: Fr Rod Bower; Dr Barri Phataford (Doctors for Refugees), George Newhouse, human rights lawyer, and a representative of the Sudanese community.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Letter signed by over 200 detainees, calling for Royal Commission:

To the Royal Commission:

to Australian politicians, Labor, The Greens, the government and Human Rights Commission

We refugees in the Manus prison lost another friend Faysal Ishak from Sudan in the past few days. Faysal was sick and had heart problems for more than six months but IHMS, the company that has responsibility for our health, did not care about him and did not provide any treatment for him.

Faysal filled in request forms for medical treatment and wrote complaints more than 20 times but IHMS did not provide any treatment for him. More than 60 people signed a letter and asked IHMS to help to him.

We in Manus prison think that Faysal was already dead when he was in Manus medical and believe that the Australian government is lying when they say he died in Australia. About two years ago another refugee, Hamid Khazaie, died in similar circumstances to Faysal. Also we lost Reza Barati and Hossein Kamil in this prison in a system made and run by the Australian government.

We are writing this letter to you [to request that royal commission to fully investigate IHMS, the provider of medical services and its control by Border Force. we ask that royal commission investigate how and why IHMS killed Faysal Ishak in systematic torture. More than 400 people in Manus prison need emergency medical treatment and we are worried about our health.

Finally we would like to mention that the PNG Supreme Court ordered in April 2016 that this prison is illegal but the Australian government has not accepted the court decision.

Manus detainees 27 Dec, 2016

Signed by over 200 Manus refugees and asylum seekers

22. 'I need you guys to look after my family': Sudanese refugee Faysal Ishak Ahmed's final message

Sydney Morning Herald
December 30 2016 - 1:19PM
Michael Gordon

Faysal Ishak Ahmed carried a deep secret and a burning fear during his years in detention on Manus Island, long before he became the fourth asylum seeker to die after seeking protection in Australia and being sent to Papua New Guinea.

His secret was that he left behind a wife and baby boy when he fled Sudan in 2013, having refused to be recruited by the same militias that had tortured him, killed several members of his family and raped his sister.

His fear was that he would never be able to extract his wife and child from their precarious existence in a Sudanese refugee camp and realise his dream of a life with family and without fear.

He felt it acutely back in February 2014, when locals and security guards turned on the detainees inside the Manus detention centre, as he hid under his bed only metres from where Reza Barati was murdered.

All the while, he later told his friends, he was thinking about his wife and little boy, Mazim.

The fear became all-consuming in recent months, as his body wilted, his confidence in the detention centre's health providers evaporated and he wandered about the centre at all hours, hoping the exhaustion would bring sleep.

When his death was imminent last week, friend Aziz Adam says Mr Ahmed delivered his last message: "If anything happens to me, I need you guys to look after my family."

"We will do our best," says Mr Adam, 24, though the Sudanese community on Manus feels incapable of assisting while its members remain in a centre declared unconstitutional by PNG's highest court last April, still unsure whether they will be included in the resettlement deal with the United States.

What they can do is give their account of what happened to Mr Ahmed, in the hope that it might lead to changes and avert further tragedies.

This is why they entered the tent Mr Ahmed shared with 25 others in Oscar compound and took his most precious possessions from the bag by his bed when word of his death began to spread on Christmas Eve.

Among them was a cache of requests for treatment by International Health and Medical Services, the global company contracted to provide primary and mental health services to detainees on Manus Island and Nauru.

There were also copies of the formal complaints he lodged against IHMS and Australian Border Force, official responses to his requests and complaints, and personal items including a picture of his wife and boy.

At first Mr Ahmed, who spoke little English, had written his requests for help in Arabic, but when time dragged on with little response, Mr Adam says he agreed to translate them into English and read them back to Mr Ahmed before he put his name to them.

"It made me feel a human being," Mr Adam told Fairfax Media. "He deserved that kind of compassion and support."

Fearing a cover-up, or that the litany of complaints would not emerge until a coroner's inquest a year or two from now, the friends took it upon themselves to put the material on the public record.

"We needed to show this is not the way to treat people here," said one of those who took the documents and provided copies to Fairfax Media. "I want everyone to know no one (in authority) cared about him."

Among them is the letter signed by the 60 Sudanese detainees "kindly and humbly" pleading with IHMS to help him after he returned from the clinic and informed friends he had been told there was nothing wrong with him.

Two days later, he passed out, fell, hit his head and had a seizure, prompting his transfer to Brisbane, where authorities say he died.

The health provider has since released a statement, expressing concern at "the inaccuracies and misinformation" surrounding the reporting of Mr Ahmed's death and pride in the work of its "highly qualified and professional clinicians".

"Claims that the patient was denied access to medical care are not correct. He was seen by clinicians and other allied health professionals at the clinic on numerous occasions in the three months preceding his death for multiple issues and his presenting medical issues were assessed, investigated and managed," the statement says.

"The facts and circumstances surrounding his death will be referred to the Queensland Coroner. However, currently available information indicates that Mr Ahmed died from severe head injuries sustained in a fall at the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre on 23 December."

Fairfax Media has interviewed several of the detainees who contest the IHMS assertions. They insist Mr Ahmed was the victim of what Dr Barri Phatarfod, president of Doctors for Refugees, has dubbed "a culture of cynicism among at least some of the IHMS health professionals".

Dr Phatarfod has provided Fairfax Media with one referral from IHMS for an asylum seeker who had cracked the right lens in his glasses and complained that he could not see out of his left eye. A test had not been done to assess the left eye, the referral asserted, "as they exaggerate their acuity to get attention".

Astonishingly, the referral was dated September 7 2014, the day after the life support machine for Iranian asylum seeker Hamid Khazaei, was switched off in the Brisbane hospital.

Mr Khazaei died 13 days after presenting at the Manus Island detention centre's medical clinic with an infected foot. A coroner's inquest into his death will reconvene in February.

"Faysal was sick and had heart problems for more than six months but IHMS, the company that is responsible for our health, did not care about him and did not provide any treatment for him," says an open letter signed by more than 200 detainees.

What is beyond question is that Mr Ahmed's mental and physical health deteriorated dramatically during his more than three years in detention.

Rohingyan refugee, Imran Mohammad, 22, met Mr Ahmed when they were in the same compound in 2013 and says he was "full of life" and very engaging, with no health issues at all.

They did not cross paths again until recently, when they were again in the same compound, and Mr Mohammad says Mr Ahmed was withdrawn, had lost a lot of weight and was clearly very ill. "He was a different man," he says.

Having survived more than 13 years as an internally displaced person in Sudan and witnessed all manner of horrors, Mr Ahmed began to fall apart on Manus after his claim for protection was accepted in October 2015, some eight months after his "initial positive assessment".

The chest pains, stomach aches, dizziness and breathing difficulties became more pronounced in the last six months, after Mr Ahmed learnt that his mother had died in the Sudanese refugee camp.

In his application for protection, Mr Ahmed told how his village was attacked by the militia in 2003, when he was 16. "Around 35 people were killed during the attack including my brother, Abubakar, my grandmother and my uncle. My uncle was slaughtered by the militia when he refused to give up his camels."

The family escaped to a refugee camp where Mr Ahmed lived with surviving family members until he fled in July 2013. "It was not safe in the camp," he explained in his application for protection.

"On many occasions the Janjaweed militia entered the camp and killed people... They raped my uncle's daughter. My sister was also raped. In one occasion in 2003, I was handcuffed and tied to a tree for two or three days. I was beaten badly. I have a scar on my left forearm where the handcuff was and scars on my forehead where I was whipped.

"The militia wanted me to join them as a fighter but I refused."

Mr Adam says all the Sudanese refugees have similar stories. "All of us in the Sudanese community living on Manus Island detention centre, we have been experiencing the same trauma and torture, the same nightmares. We prefer not to talk about it because it's painful."

Now they are devastated. "This is Christmas and we were hoping for a gift from the Australian government, like our freedom. All we got was a dead body," he says.

When Mr Khazaei died in 2014, then immigration minister Scott Morrison said his department's chief medical officer would be conducting an "in-depth clinical review" of the Iranian's medical treatment while on Manus Island.

This time the only official comment has been a brief statement on the Border Force website, saying the department is not aware of any suspicious circumstances and the death will be reported to the Queensland Coroner.

Those still detained say this is not good enough and, in their open letter, have called for a royal commission to investigate Mr Ahmed's death.

One of those still detained is the Iranian Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani, who recalls that a similar open letter was written at the time of Mr Khazaei's death, and that it concluded by asking who the next victim would be.

Mr Ahmed was among those who put his name to the letter.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/i-need-you-guys-to-look-after-my-family-sudanese-refugee-faysal-ishak-ahmeds-final-message-20161230-gtjrk4.html>

23. Behrouz Boochani: Faysal Ishak Ahmed's life was full of pain. Australia had a duty to protect him

Born in Sudan, Faysal Ahmed had spent more than half his life in refugee camps. Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani speaks to Faysal's friend about his illness and the life that led him to Australian detention in Manus Island

The Guardian

Behrouz Boochani

Friday 30 December 2016 10.02 AEDT

"They're trying to kill me, if they kill me take care of my son."

These were the last words of Faysal Ishak Ahmad before his death on Christmas Eve. The Sudanese refugee uttered these words during his last visit to his friend Walid Sandal. This is not a scene from a tragic film or novel. This is the reality of the prison on Manus Island, hundreds of kilometres from Australia and in the middle of a silent ocean.

Faysal was born in Darfur, Sudan – a region associated with war, genocide and displacement. A symbol of affliction in western media. In other words, Faysal was born into war. In 2004, at the age of 13, his family was displaced and moved to the Kasab refugee camp north of Darfur, a camp managed by international organisations. No refugee from the camp had the right to work and once every few months the organisations would distribute food between the families. It is a place full of hardship, suffering and hunger.

In the month of July 2013, after nine years living in a camp for displaced people, Faysal left behind his nine-month-old son and wife destined for Australia. First he arrived in Egypt and then Indonesia. He spent two months displaced and hungry in Indonesia until, on 1 September 2013, Faysal travelled to Australia on a decaying boat with 90 other people.

The journey was difficult and dangerous and they encountered waves that may have destroyed the boat at any moment. However, after nine days Faysal arrived in the Australian city of Darwin.

In my interview with Omar Jack Giram – who was on the boat with Faysal – he told me:

"After five days we had consumed all our water and food supplies. We were starving for four days and practically unconscious – as close to death as possible. Faysal vomited many times along the way, however he was mostly worried about his family and was always thinking of his son."

The boat was intercepted by the Australian navy, and without attending to the sick people the navy immediately transferred them by boat thousands of kilometres to the west of Australia, to Christmas Island – a trip that would take approximately five days and nights.

After roughly one month, Faysal was forced onto a plane and exiled to another island prison, a flight nine hours north of Australia. From a refugee camp in Darfur to Manus Island; from the western hemisphere to the eastern hemisphere in something like four months.

First, Faysal was taken to Delta prison together with his friend, Walid, and put in a small cage with dimensions of 70x70 meters. After three months he was transferred to Mike prison with a cage of 80x80 meters. The transfer to Mike marked the beginning of Faysal's physical ailments. It was there that, for the first time, he became sick with stomach aches.

Walid shared with me the following: "He had severe stomach aches and the only medicine we received were pain relief tablets such as Panadol. He couldn't sleep most nights because of the intensity of the pain." When I asked Walid about the attacks on the prison by locals in February 2014 he replied:

"That night Faysal and I didn't leave our room and we secured the door using the bed. We heard the sound of shots fired and then everything went dark. That's when Faysal hid under the bed for one hour – he was more afraid for his family than himself. The next day we found out that Reza Barati was killed by officers just meters away from us – it was a horrible night."

Faysal was lucky, this was the second time that he escaped death. But with the stomach pains he was now experiencing his life was to take a different turn. Faysal spent over two and a half years in Mike prison waiting in the queue to use the telephone, otherwise on his way to the medical centre to receive his pain relief tablets.

Regardless of this state of affairs, Walid tells me: "Faysal was a very warm and cheerful man. On most occasions he would make us laugh and/or he would analyse current news reports. He was so clever that we would call him 'The Honourable Minister'." It was in this very prison – Mike prison – that he would eventually receive a response to his asylum case.

His case was accepted, meaning that he was officially recognised as a refugee; a person who the government must treat as someone in need of protection.

In April 2016, the responsibility for asylum seekers who received positive assessments as refugees was transferred to Oscar and Delta prisons, and Faysal was moved to Oscar. In the same month, the Papua New Guinea courts ruled that Manus prison was illegal, which meant one step towards freedom.

But entering Oscar prison was marked by two terrible incidents in Faysal's life. First, he lost his mother who was living in the same refugee camp he left in Sudan. And then Faysal began to experience severe heart problems. He was able to tolerate his stomach aches with pain relief tablets, but heart problems were a dangerous issue and he realised, quite rightly, that this time he needed to fight more seriously for his wellbeing.

For the next six months he would visit the medical centre every day and would stand in long and slow queues for medication. Walid recalls:

"Faysal became unconscious and collapsed over and over again but every time he visited the medical centre the doctor would tell him he was fine. On every occasion he returned empty handed and angry."

For six months he wrote more than 20 letters to the medical centre but every time he received a patronising and dismissive response. This continued up to the point when even Walid asked Faysal to be honest and tell him if he was really sick or not. Faysal responded: "I swear to god I have pain in my chest (heart), I swear to God I'm sick, I'm not faking."

In the face of all the indifference from the doctors he continued to write to them, he desperately begged them for assistance; he sought help from the medical centre but returned unsuccessful every time.

During his final encounter his situation was so critical that the other refugees wrote a collective letter to the doctors describing his crisis. There was no reply.

A few days later, Faysal collapsed for the last time. After 24 hours they finally transferred him to Australia. The next day, news of his death was published in the media.

He was a man whose life was full of pain; he spent more than half his life in refugee camps. Faysal's brother Salih shared his feelings on the loss. Salih said:

"When we were told that Faysal died we were shocked! Because Faysal was the only person we were counting on to transform our lives from the refugee camp to a safe world. We don't actually know how he died and the only thing we know is he was sick. He told me so many times that he was sick but I have no idea how he injured his head."

On the day of Faysal's death, a picture was shared on Facebook of the immigration minister and his smiling son. It was Christmas: a time to celebrate, a day to be merry.

---->>>> *Translated by Dr Omid Tofighian, Sydney University*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/30/faysal-ishak-ahmeds-life-was-full-of-pain-australia-had-a-duty-to-protect-him>

24. Sudanese refugee's death set to be probed by Senate committee

Canberra Times
January 15 2017 - 2:53PM
Michael Gordon

The death of a Sudanese refugee who alleged repeated negligence over six months by health providers on Manus Island is set to be investigated by a Senate committee.

Labor immigration spokesman Shayne Neumann has asked that Faysal Ishak Ahmed's death be examined by the legal and constitutional affairs references committee, which is already inquiring into allegations of abuse of asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru.

"Given media reports suggesting asylum seekers on Manus Island had requested better medical treatment for Mr Ahmed and the ongoing cases of alleged neglect, abuse and self-harm at the centre, I believe this matter falls within the committee's remit," Mr Neumann says in a letter obtained by Fairfax Media.

"This inquiry was established to investigate matters of this nature and the reporting timeframe of 30 March 2017 provides a suitable window that will allow for thorough investigation of Mr Ahmed's death."

Mr Ahmed, 27, died on Christmas Eve, nine days after filing a formal complaint demanding to know why more than 20 visits to the centre's clinic had not produced a diagnosis of his ailments, let alone a treatment plan.

More than 200 of the Manus detainees have signed a letter calling for a royal commission to investigate the death. They assert that more than 400 of the almost 900 detainees at the centre require emergency medical treatment.

Mr Ahmed's death was confirmed in a statement on the Immigration and Border Force Department website on Christmas Eve, saying a 27-year-old Sudanese refugee had "sadly died today from injuries suffered after a fall and seizure at the Manus Regional Processing Centre".

The man was taken to a clinic on Manus for urgent treatment, then flown to Australia for further medical care, the statement said. He died at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

Mr Ahmed's complaint said he had been suffering from chest pains, swollen arms and fingers, breathing problems, high blood pressure and a "problem at the back of my head" for more than six months.

A week after filing it, he visited the detention centre medical clinic and returned to his compound to tell friends the doctor had told him there was nothing wrong with him and not to come back.

This prompted about 60 Sudanese detainees to write to the health provider, International Health and Medical Services, pleading for Mr Ahmed to be given urgent treatment.

IHMS has emphatically rejected allegations of negligence, asserting Mr Ahmed "was seen by clinicians and other allied health professionals at the clinic on numerous occasions in the three months preceding his death for multiple issues and his presenting medical issues were assessed, investigated and managed".

Greens leader Richard Di Natale has declared his support for an independent parliamentary inquiry, saying: "This completely preventable death is the latest symbol of the cruelty, inhumanity and heartlessness of these camps."

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/sudanese-refugees-death-set-to-be-probed-by-senate-committee-20170115-gtrptz.html>