

Image By: bplanet



TRAPPED ON AN ISLAND LIVING IN FEAR!

By Carina Joanne Mirabile

“Could you imagine our feeling?”

Some men and woman are working in Nauru detention centre that they have family and they should look after them. They should work hard for make better life for their family and themselves.

Yesterday I had chat with some of them some of them was very upset and when I see their photo that they have on their ID card I saw they lose too many weight, more than 10 to 15 kilograms. When I asked them WHY? They said missing family, some frustration, etc (same as some of asylum seekers).”

A letter from Nauru 20th May 2013 – By Mahdi Vakili

How often do you experience that unpleasant and unwanted stressed feeling? That uncomfortable sensation...you're sick to the stomach, running late for work, stuck in traffic and worried your ruthless boss will sack you!

Mahdi Vakili has never even had the opportunity to worry about any of the

stressors that a typical Australian may face. As an asylum seeker, he is one of many living life in constant fear and not knowing what each living day may bring. Mahdi is living life in a detention centre on the Pacific Island of Nauru - his cry for help is published in letters (above and below) in hope to spread the raw truth, his truth...about the Australian run detention centres.

AUSTRALIA

NAURU

Nauru, a South Pacific Island in Micronesia is approximately 4000 kilometers' North West of Australia. Nauru is the smallest Nation in the South Pacific, and the second smallest nation by population in the world! In fact, it's not far behind the smallest nation (by population) Vatican City! Estimated in 2011 the Island has as little of 9,378 residents with Nauruan's, European's, Chinese and other Pacific Islander's as the top four ethnic groups living on it.

At this point you're perhaps questioning why this 'diminutive' island has anything to do with Australia?

Well actually, the island is a Phosphate rock, which allows strip-mining operations, boosting the highest per-capita income in the world. Phosphate reserves were becoming exhausted and the environment was becoming extremely harmed from the mining operations. The Island's economy took a three sixty turn and its wealth started to diminish. From 2001 Nauru accepted economic aid from the Australian Government in exchange for two Regional Processing Centre's for the purpose of processing asylum seekers International protection claims.

Who are asylum seekers? They are an innocent person who has left (usually fled) their unsafe country of origin, seeking International protection but whose claim

for refugee status has not yet been determined. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees processes their refugee status application and

further assessments are then made. Estimates of one thousand Asylum Seekers currently live in Australian run Detention Centre's have originally fled their country of origin seeking greater opportunities, and a better life by leaving their families and loved ones to travel to Australia. Unknown to them, those seeking refugee status (and transported by boat without a valid visa) are immediately blocked by the Australian Border Control Protection, halting the process and sending the refugees to Nauru for offshore processing. Stated in an article by Hugh Tuckfield "only a small fraction of the world's asylum seekers seek refugee in Australia, that's roughly around 2% of the world wide claim," the Australian Government sends these innocent

individuals simply seeking a greater

life to detention centers, they are not managed well.

It seems that whilst the Australian Government has gained from this transaction by keeping Australia 'asylum free', the refugees who fled from heartache and poor conditions are the real ones suffering in much worse conditions. Those found in detention camps are exposed to high risks of developing severe psychological disorders, including depression and anxiety, leading to self-harm and suicide. Community relations manager, Bob from Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees says everything has become like "prison centre's, creating anxiety amongst people, especially when they are feeling vulnerable" due to leaving their families and loved ones.

Merian Evers a Veterinarian Nurse,



Illustration By: Vlado

has been in the industry for more than 40 years, started working in the Australian Immigration system just over a year ago and signed up to a six-week stint in a Nauru Detention centre. Ms Evers witnessed misery and self-harm first hand, seeing four hundred male single asylum seekers, mostly from Sri Lanka living in such horrific conditions... sixteen men living in one tent. "I was seeing people crawling on the floor like animals, saying please let me die. These pictures don't leave you." Ms Evers had to leave her job after only three weeks, unable to cope with the traumatizing insight in the situation.

"One of asylum seekers who is living in my room, he sewed his lips. □ When I want to drink or eating something I remember him. □ Also I saw some of asylum seekers who have been on hunger strike. Some of them hurt themselves and it is make harsh condition for me."

The centres are overcrowded and the living conditions are at an all-time low "it is rat-infested, cramped and very hot," says United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Richard Towle. According to the most recent figures, as the Nauru centres fill, there are currently 2217 seekers including 433 children, 76 of them are unaccompanied. Richard Towle says "that only one asylum seeker on Nauru has had a refugee claim processed in the past 14 months, and warns that a processing logjam may see asylum seekers stuck in the centres for years". Some Australian human rights acts and organisations are pledging to fight for the freedom of human equality saying the

Australian policies are "an appeal to fear and racism". The Salvation Army provides care and support working on the detention centres 100% funded by the Australian Government. Although the organisation doesn't like to get involved with the policies and politics, they are responsible for taking care of those in need. Providing educational activities like English classes, and recreational organised events, outings and sporting excursions.

But that's not enough! The proposed re-settlement deal between Australia wanting to send asylum seekers offshore to Cambodia, a third world country of 15 million people, has raised many concerns between refugee groups and the Australian Green Party, who are opposing the deal. The controversial proposal is mainly concerned about the country's human rights record where 20% of people live on less than \$1.50 a day. Richard Bennett, Amnesty International Asia-Pacific Director agrees that the settlement deal is a serious risk for Cambodia,

"The country has only limited capacity to process asylum seeker claims and is still struggling to respect and protect the rights of its own citizens."

Why would the Australian Government have to resort to settling asylum seekers in Cambodia? People fleeing their countries are mostly educated, as Bob from Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees further explains, "they have work ethics, they create culture in Australia, that's why our country is



Image By: Supertrooper

multi-cultural". We as a collective Nation should be embracing the different cultures, and in doing this it would create employment opportunities that could stimulate the Economy and outsource different resources for the detention centres. Whether Australia and Cambodia or any other third world country sign the resettlement deal or not, it is clear that people want a fair Immigration System for asylum seekers welcoming human equality.

"About one 2 hours ago I have been start to reading English but I couldn't because I heard crying of asylum seekers that they said: □ CLOSE NAURU ... □ DON'T MAKE US CRAZY... □ IT IS NOT HUMANITY

I have been living with them, they are my friends they are same as me, I never give up my hope, I will write about our situation until find a one who he/she do some thing for us."

-Mahdi Vakili