

Refugee Action Coalition
MEDIA RELEASE
20 March 2015

**MANUS ISLAND PNG CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE WINS
LAWYERS' ACCESS TO
DETENTION CENTRE**

In a major breakthrough in the legal challenge to the Manus Island detention centre, the PNG government has agreed to provide access to lawyers to obtain statements from asylum seekers incarcerated there.

Final orders by the Supreme Court will be made on Tuesday 24 March, but initial access will be for a period of two months with provision to apply to extend the time period, if necessary.

“We are extremely happy to finally have legal access to the detention centre,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“Ever since the detention centre was opened, asylum seekers have been denied access to lawyers and legal advice. The centre has operated under a complete cloak of secrecy under which the Australian Immigration Department, the PNG government, G4S, Transfield and Wilson’s Security violated the human rights of asylum seekers with impunity.

“Hopefully that dark time is coming to an end. For the first time asylum seekers will have an opportunity to openly make statements regarding their treatment to a lawyer.

“Asylum seekers have been denied the fundamental right of people to obtain legal advice. They have been denied, habeus corpus, the fundamental democratic right to be taken before a court, established by the Magna Carta, 800 years ago, has been denied to them by both the Australian and PNG governments.”

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