

Subject: Refugee dies in Brisbane - the torture of a life in limbo

13 March 2015

Any death of a young person is tragic, and the suicide of Omid Avaz Ali, an Iranian Kurd, here in Brisbane last weekend, is particularly sad.

From the time he came by boat fleeing ethnic persecution in 2011, until late February, Omid was denied the right to work. His was a life in limbo, without a future. Depressed, he became suicidal, spent time in Toowong Hospital and when released from community detention where he had support, was left to fend for himself on a Bridging Visa without work rights. He said he had no family in Australia.

Caring volunteers at the Romero Centre and from among his own community befriended and supported him, even accommodated him, but chronic mental illness escalated. It is ironic that a few weeks ago the Government finally granted him a one year Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) visa with the right to work. But it was too late for this broken genuine refugee.

Parliament must urgently reform Australia's mistreatment of asylum seekers by way of compulsory indefinite detention, and years of deliberate delay in the processing of protection claims. It is torment, mental torture and persecution of the already persecuted. Since Morrison's cruel legislation (clearly in breach of universal human rights) passed the Senate last December, proven refugees like Omid can only ever be temporary short term residents without family reunion or permanent protection. Refugees need a durable solution.

Continuing what we do now will lead to more deaths and damage our whole society. My sincere condolences to his family, wherever they are, and to his friends and fellow asylum seekers here. I hope Omid is at peace, and we take better care of his friends.

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