

Refugee Action Coalition
MEDIA RELEASE

NAURUAN REFUGEES PROTEST DEFIES POLICE BAN

Up to 300 refugees, women, men and children, from all refugee camps across Nauru have defied the Nauruan government and police attempts to ban refugee protests and staged a peaceful protest this afternoon (Wednesday, 11 March) – photos attached.

The protest was held at the Nibok camp on the western side of the island, as plain-clothes police and Connect staff looked on.

The protest comes just one week since Nauruan police staged mass arrests on the island in a bid to stifle the campaign of non-cooperation being waged by the refugees. The Nauruan government had distributed notice on Nauru warning that protesters could be punished by up to three years jail.

One hundred and eighty three people including children were arrested on 4 March, and held for 24 hours without food and without water in some cells.

Ten of those arrested, including a number of children, are due to appear in the Nauruan district court on 18 March.

“We have just one slogan,” refugees on the island told the Refugee Action Coalition, “ ‘Freedom and Justice’ .”

Banners at the rally appealed for the UN to intervene on Nauru. The UNHCR has condemned Australia’s offshore processing regime, while yesterday the report of the UN Committee Against Torture found Australia exposed asylum seekers to ‘torture and inhumane treatment.’”

Conditions on Nauru have also been condemned by the Australian Human Rights Commission and by medical staff recently on the island.

On International Women’s Day, 9 March, women and children also held a defiant rally calling for ‘Freedom’ and an end to the discrimination that keeps them on the island.

Video of today’s protest at Nibok are available on request.

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