

# Shut Down Manus!

SHUT DOWN MANUS: IN THE SKY

On February 17 at 1pm "SHUT DOWN MANUS" was written across the sky above the Sydney Opera House.



To mark the anniversary of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati's death in Australia's Manus Island offshore detention centre, three individuals launched a crowdfunding campaign to skywrite the 500m-large letters. The Pozible campaign received an overwhelming response, with the funding goal reached in less than 48 hours. By the end of the 6-day campaign, 348 people from Australia and beyond donated a total of \$9,700, nearly doubling the original target. Donations ranged from \$3 to \$200.

The campaign received so much support that the organisers were able to fund a second message on the same day. "CLOSE NAURU" appeared above Parliament House in Canberra at 3pm.

"The response shows that there is widespread condemnation for Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees - and the very existence of our asylum seeker detention centres." co-organiser Gabrielle de Vietri explains. "It shows how determined Australians and global citizens are to see an end to a policy that deliberately inflicts suffering upon people fleeing persecution and seeking refuge in Australia."

The giant words over Australia's most loved and picturesque harbour, sent a clear message to Tony Abbott that thousands of Australians do not support the mandatory indefinite detention of asylum seekers.

On Tuesday 17 February, it is one year since 23-year old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati was killed under Australia's care in the Manus Island detention centre. Many others were injured. Since then, 700 prisoners have gone on hunger strike, and others have swallowed detergent and razor blades in an effort to insist upon their rights as human beings, and to plead for release from the oppressive and dangerous conditions inside the camps.

"We thought it couldn't get much worse than it was one year ago, but since Barati's brutal death, Australia's treatment of asylum seekers has only become more inhumane", de Vietri said. De Vietri was one of the artists who successfully spearheaded the international campaign against Transfields' involvement in mandatory indefinite detention and the profits from this being used to fund the Sydney Biennale in 2014.

"No matter how concerned we may be about border security or

drownings at sea there can be no excuse for what happened to Reza Barati, nor for the suffering of all the other men, women and children in Australia's detention camps. As the recent Human Rights Commission Report shows, keeping children in detention is extremely damaging for them. Australians would not tolerate any other group of children being treated in this way."

Government secrecy surrounding the policy's execution, means the Australian public is not kept fully informed of the situation asylum seekers face while in Australia's care.

This action was coordinated by three individuals, unaligned with any groups or political parties. The action was not only a demand for the humane and rapid processing of asylum seeker claims, but also a message of hope and solidarity for those inside the detention centres.

"We know sky-writing won't solve the problem, but it contributes to the mounting public pressure against Australia's unforgivable treatment of those seeking our help," they stated. "And it's one of the few things we can do to raise our voices against a bipartisan policy of deliberate cruelty."

The organisers wish to add their own protest to those of other concerned Australians standing up for asylum seekers – from the passengers on a recent flight who stood up for the forcefully deported Tamil man on board, to religious leaders holding prayer vigils in politicians' offices, and the live TV protest that took place at the Australian Open. They encourage other concerned Australians to come up with new ways to show their profound objection to a policy that is in breach of Australia's human rights obligations, as well as basic standards of decency.

"These vulnerable people in Australia's care have been placed out of sight, but they are certainly not out of mind."

Onlookers and campaign supporters shared their photos of the event using the hashtags #ShutDownManus and #CloseNauru.

When & where:

1pm February 17 2015 above Sydney Opera House

3pm February 17 2015 above Parliament House, Canberra

The messages took approximately 12 minutes to be sky-written

More info: [pozible.com/project/190844#description](http://pozible.com/project/190844#description)

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