

2016 11 13 Refugee Action Coalition Media Release

Uncertainty Surrounds Us Refugee Deal: Australia Needs To Bring Them Here'

Lifetime Ban Exposed As a Stunt

The announcement by US Secretary of State, John Kerry and now by Malcolm Turnbull that the US will consider refugees from Nauru referred to it by the UNHCR has done little to settle the issue of offshore detention.

“It is an admission that Nauru and Manus Island are offshore dead-ends, but the deal still leaves the future of asylum seekers and refugees up in the air. The deal means there is no certainty for the asylum seekers and refugees marooned on Nauru and Manus Island. And there is a serious question over the future of the thousands of single men, given the announced priority that will be given to women, children and families.

“The UNHCR has not been involved in the refugee determination process so far on either Nauru or Manus Island. The need for UNHCR determinations and referrals will at the very least mean more delay for people who have been waiting almost three and half years on Manus and Nauru,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“We are very concerned that the deal is not all-encompassing. It is not acceptable that Nauru or Manus stay open for another day, let alone any more months or years. The deal seems to do nothing to resolve the fate of those yet to have refugee determinations or deal with the question of separated families.”

Rintoul also confirmed that despite any deal, the PNG Supreme Court will consider an application on behalf of Manus detainees that all Manus detainees who wish to, be returned to Australia. That hearing is expected in December.

“Given the government has admitted that neither Manus nor Nauru have a future, we would expect the Australian government will abide by the orders of the PNG Supreme Court,” said Rintoul.

“Turnbull’s third country announcement is too shallow and too uncertain. It is shocking that Australia has avoided its responsibility for so long and left asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru. All asylum seekers and refugees should be brought to Australia, so families can be reunited and where they can find the protection they need in the community.”

The deal however, has exposed Turnbull’s lifetime ban on asylum seekers sent offshore from ever entering Australia, as an unscrupulous and desperate political stunt.

“The government is still using refugees as political footballs. It is urgent that Labor, The Greens and Senate cross-benchers maintain a stand against Turnbull's lifetime ban and decisively defeat it when it comes before the Senate in November.”

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