

Mon 1/02/2016 12:09 PM

Refugee Action Coalition
MEDIA RELEASE

MANUS INTIMIDATION STEPS UP; PHONES CONFISCATED, AS COURT DECISION LOOMS

Broadspectrum (formerly Transfield) and Immigration intimidation of asylum seekers and refugees at Manus Island, has been stepped-up in the lead up to Australian and PNG court decisions that could see the detention centre closed.

The future of the detention centre, and the fate of 260 people from Manus and Nauru who are presently in Australia, will be affected by the Australian High Court decision to be handed down on Wednesday.

A PNG Supreme Court challenge to Manus that will also determine the legality of Manus detention centre according to PNG law, will also have its next directions hearing tomorrow, 2 February.

In the last few days, intimidating and violent raids by the Emergency Response Team have been carried out in at least two of the compounds in the Manus detention centre. The riot squad says it is 'looking for weapons' but seems to be more interested in seizing asylum seekers' phones.

At least four phones were taken following raids on rooms Oscar compound last Friday night (29 January). In some cases the guards have removed racks from the rooms on the grounds they could be turned into weapons.

The ERT is also openly marching around the compounds as an open show of force. The detainees have been told that the room searches and increased intimidation will continue to the end of February when the PNG Supreme Court Full Bench hearing of the constitutional challenge is expected to be convened.

Detainees have been threatened that anyone who complains or resists will be sent to jail or isolation units in the detention centre itself.

Meanwhile, Broadspectrum's preparation for an adverse court decision is resulting in deteriorating food quality and out of date food products being used as the company runs down stocks of food. Some Border Force staff have also been told that their future employment contracts cannot be guaranteed.

The PNG administration has also stepped up its refugee determinations ahead of the court cases. Around 400, almost half, of the Manus detainees have been found to be refugees, but are refusing to leave the detention centre to live in the transit accommodation at East Lorengau despite losing access to the canteen, activities and have restricted access to the internet.

“There is no excuse for the raids on Manus or the mistreatment,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. “The use of the ERT, the searches and confiscation of phones just add to the tensions at the detention centre. Immigration and Broadband only take the phones because they don’t want the truth getting to the outside world.”

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

The Refugee Action Coalition has called a snap protest to follow the Australian High Court decision – “Don’t Send Them Back”, Thursday 4 February, 12.30pm at Lee Street, Sydney Immigration offices, to call for the Immigration Department not to return any asylum seekers or refugees to Nauru or Manus Island.