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We Are Not Animals – Protest Erupts In Manus Detention Centre

Guards hastily withdrew from Mike Compound in the Manus Island detention centre last night (Saturday 18 March) after a protest erupted in the mess area following Border Force renovations that made the serving area more like a prison.

"It was a provocation," one detainee told the Refugee Action Coalition, "They treat us like we are in Guantanomo Bay."

Detainees had already objected to new arrangement which required detainees to reach over a small fence in front of the serving window for a single tray. But the final straw came when detainees asked security how one of the very short detainees could be expected to reach the tray. "You can lift him up," said the guards.

It was a provocation too far. The protest erupted and detainees tore down the fence in front of the serving window, and overturned table and chairs in the mess area (photos attached).

Wilson Security guards brought food this morning and set up tables inside the perimeter fence. But no guards or Broadspectrum officers are in the compound.

The protest is just the latest as tensions simmer inside the detention centre. It is a year since the PNG Supreme Court ordered that the detention centre be closed.

But moves to deport so-called double negative asylum seekers have started again after an application for injunctions to prevent the removals was strangely dismissed by the Supreme Court.

Just days after the court dismissed the injunction application, a Lebanese asylum seeker was forcibly removed after refusing $30,000 to return "voluntarily".

A directions hearing in the PNG Supreme Court for summary judgement regarding compensation for human rights breaches and consequential orders for the return for all Manus refugee and asylum seekers to Australia is scheduled for Tuesday, 21 March.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713


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Posted by: Ian Rintoul <rintoulian10@gmail.com>

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