

2016 08 17 Refuge Action Coalition Media Release

Manus Must Be Closed and All Manus Prisoners Must Be Returned To Australia

The Refugee Action Coalition welcomes the announcement from PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill that the Manus Island detention will be closed soon.

But the victims of the unlawful transfer and detention have already been waiting since the 26 April for both the Australian and PNG government to comply with the Supreme Court orders that Manus be closed.

“We are also concerned that the Australian and PNG government are trying to pre-empt the full-bench Supreme Court hearing that is scheduled for this Monday, 22 August. The Manus prisoners have been brutalised and tortured for over three years, said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“At Monday's hearing, lawyers for the Manus asylum seekers and refugees will be seeking orders for the unconditional release of all detainee and the return of all of them to Australia. Anything less than the unconditional release and return to Australia will be a denial of justice.

The PNG Supreme Court decision of 26 April found that the agreement between Australia and PNG to transfer asylum seekers from Australia to Manus, was itself, unlawful. There is no lawful basis that any of the prisoners taken to Manus by the Australian government can remain in PNG.

“We are also calling for the government to immediately release, and provide permanent visas to all the Manus asylum seekers who are being held in Australia's mainland detention centres, or in community detention," said Rintoul.

“None of the people brought from Manus to Australia can be sent back there. They should be released.

“One Syrian refugee in Villawood has been held there over two years and have been unable to contact his family for over seven months. Immigration has told him he cannot be sent to Manus, and he cannot be sent to Syria.

“It is sheer bloody-mindedness by the Australian government that has kept these people in detention.

“It is time to free all the Manus refugees, in PNG and Australia, and to provide the protection they need in the Australian community.”

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