

19 March 2016 Refugee Action Coalition Media Alert

Palm Sunday: Thousands Will Rally For Refugees; #LetThemStay; #CloseTheCamps

Tens of thousands of people are expected to be part of the Palm Sunday Welcome Refugee Rallies, taking place in every capital city and scores of regional centres, on Sunday 20 March.

The rallies come in the wake of the February High Court decision and the action of thousand of people demanding that the government allow 267 asylum seekers from Manus Island and Nauru to stay in Australia.

“Action by the staff at Lady Cilento hospital refusing to release baby Asha to be returned to Nauru has taken the campaign to a new level,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“Churches across the country have committed themselves to provide sanctuary to asylum seekers at risk of being sent to Nauru or Manus. Two months after the High Court decisions, the government has not attempted to move any of the 267.”

Interfaith speakers at the rally will highlight the call for sanctuary.

The rally will also highlight the plight of hundreds of Iranian asylum seekers held indefinitely in detention despite the recent of the Iranian Foreign Minister re-affirming that Iran will not accept Iranian asylum seekers being forcibly returned.

Jessica Walker, a teacher from the Yeronga High School in Brisbane will speak about the “Free Mojgan” campaign in support of Mojgan Shamsalipoo, a student taken out of her Brisbane school in August 2015 to be re-detained in Darwin detention centre.

In Sydney, the rally will start at 1pm, with speakers in Belmore Park, followed by a march to Victoria Park.

The rally will be chaired by Professor David Isaacs, a highly- regarded paediatrician who, since witnessing the conditions for asylum seekers on Nauru in December 2014, has openly defied the Border Force Act to call for the closure of offshore detention centres.

Other speakers at the rally include: Jessica Walker (Queensland Teachers Union, Yeronga High School & Save Mojgan campaign) Joel Shakespeare (former Save the Children worker on Nauru) Faith speakers: Rev John Barr (President, NSW Ecumenical Council), Ms Wies Schuiringa (Religious Society of Friends - Quakers), Rev Myung Hwa Park (Uniting Synod NSW/ACT), Rabbi Gad Krebs (Kehillat Masada Synagogue), Fr Shenouda Mansour (Coptic Orthodox Church), Ahmed Malas, (Lebanese Muslim Association) Dr Sue Wareham (Medical Association for Prevention of War) Shokufa Tahiri (Afghan refugee) Ian Rintoul (Refugee Action Coalition)

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