

February 9 2016 Refugee Action Coalition Media Release

Nauru Authorities Ignore Eight Year Old After Father Wrongly Arrested

Two examples from Nauru reveal the lack of law and order and child services and protection on Nauru.

One 44 year-old Iranian refugee father has been in jail since 27 January. He is a sole parent on Nauru. His eight-year old daughter has been cared for by another refugee family since he was abruptly taken into custody.

Neither the Nauruan authorities nor the Australian service provider, Connect, have not lifted a finger to even enquire about the welfare of his daughter.

The Nauruan police were actually called by Connect after the man had moved himself and his daughter into spare accommodation in Nibok on the west of the island. Connect objected to the move.

For almost two weeks, the Iranian man has been held in jail. His daughter is being cared for by another family at the Nibok settlement. There has still been no enquiry concerning the care of his daughter. He appeared in court yesterday (Monday, 8 February), although the exact charge was unclear. But he was returned to jail.

He is expected to make another appearance in court today, Tuesday, 9 February.

The second incident involves a 26 year-old single female Iranian asylum seeker who was arrested after an argument with guards at the mess in the single women's section of the family camp, RPC 3.

Around 7.00pm last night (8 February), the Iranian women tried to take some food out of the mess to her room. The mess closes at 8.00pm – and doesn't open til the morning – so asylum seekers are left without food for a long time.

Wilson security guards confronted her at the mess; there was an altercation and the food was taken from her.

Around 10pm, Wilson security guards arrived at the single women's compound with Nauruan police to arrest the woman.

The Refugee Action Coalition was told, "Around five or six police grabbed her, pushed her and smashed her to the ground. She was handcuffed with her

hands behind her back and she was dragged to the police car. She was put in the back of the car [paddy wagon].”

She was released a few hours later but has been told she will be re-arrested over the incident. She has been left with abrasions and bruises as a result of the incident.

“This is more evidence of the lack of the rule of law on Nauru. The police are simply an extension of Wilson’s and the detention regime on the island,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. “Even worse perhaps, the lack of concern for the eight year-old reveals the complete failure of both the Nauruan and Australian authorities, and the lack of child welfare services on Nauru.

“The on-going inadequacy of effective protection for asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru is a major reason the government the 267 presently in Australia should be allowed to stay.”

Meanwhile refugees continue to be discriminated against. In a previous press release, we referred to the supermarket “near Anibare” that had refused to serve refugees. The particular supermarket is at the Civic Centre near the airport, believed to be Eigigu supermarket.

“The difficulties in specific identification of the supermarket is a direct result of the communication difficulties with Nauru in general. The Nauruan government maintains a media blackout precisely to prevent information about the conditions on Nauru being reported more widely. But we are told that the particular supermarket has a bad reputation for only serving Nauruans or Chinese shop-keepers, particularly if there are shortages, and shortages are routine,” said Ian Rintoul.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul, mob 0417 275 713.