

Refugee Action Coalition

8 April 2015
MEDIA RELEASE

NAURU REFUGEES DEFY SAVAGE NEW ANTI-PROTEST LAW

Hundreds of refugees on Nauru have staged a protest (photo attached) against offshore processing in defiance of a new law (attached) that requires protesters to give seven days notice of any protest and gives the police commissioner sole power to allow a protest, or not.

A representative of the Nauruan government has toured refugee camps on the island declaring that protests even in refugee camps is now banned. Astonishingly the penalty for taking part in an unauthorised assembly is a fine of \$3000 or two year's jail or both !

The law also seems to require every participant in a protest (if one was allowed) to have a permit or risk being arrested.

"The law is a breath-taking attack on the democratic rights of refugees and Nauruans in general," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. "While clearly directed at refugees, the laws could just as easily be used against Nauruan protesting against corrupt politicians as they have had to do in the past."

The ban is the latest move by the Nauruan government to crack down on the non-cooperation campaign of Nauruan refugees, and a further step on the road to Nauru becoming a police state.

The new laws come less than a month since the arrests of almost 200 refugees, including children on 4 March. Eleven of those arrested are due to appear in court on Wednesday 8 April.

The protest ban was first announced last Saturday (4 April) following a Good Friday protest in solidarity with Saeed Hansonloo, the Iranian hunger striker, then close to death in a Perth hospital.

On Tuesday (7 April), afternoon, police even came to the Anibare family camp to declare the ban over a loudspeaker system.

"Nobody is interested in their new law; nobody is listening to them," one refugee told the Refugee Action Coalition yesterday (Tuesday, 7 April).

Later on Tuesday, hundreds of refugee gathered a protesting at the Anibare camp.

"The Nauru government is making a big mistake believing that increasing repression can stifle the refugees' non-cooperation campaign. The protests are driven by the stark reality for refugees on Nauru; stranded by the Australian government, they have no future. And refugees will soon amount to a quarter of the adult population on Nauru," said Rintoul.

"As Nauru is turned into a prison island, no amount of Australian money can cover the social cost of offshore processing. With more revelations of abuse in the detention centre and louder calls for a royal commission, the offshore processing regime on Nauru grows more doubtful by the day."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713 . (More photos available on request)

