

# URGENT ACTION

## SIXTH DEATH ON MANUS AMID GOVERNMENT INACTION

**The most recent death at Lorengau Hospital, Manus Island, highlights the ongoing and grave risks from violent attacks and inadequate health care faced by refugees in Papua New Guinea. Australia's offshore detention and processing policy on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG), amounts to the systematic abuse of hundreds of individuals.**

The body of a 33 year old Sri Lankan refugee was found in the in the early hours of the morning on 2 October in the laundry of Lorengau Hospital, Manus Island after he was admitted on 29 September to receive medical treatment for physical injuries, arising from self-harm, and mental health issues. Police are investigating the circumstances of his death but have suggested it was a suicide. The Australian government has allegedly asked his family to pay USD 6,000 to have his body returned to Sri Lanka. He is the sixth person to die in connection with Australia's offshore processing on Manus Island since 2014.

His death comes less than two months after the body of Iranian asylum seeker Hamed Shamshiripour was found in the bushes near the Lorengau refugee centre. Despite calls for an independent investigation into his death, no progress has yet been made, and the results from his autopsy have not been shared with his family.

Following the announcement that the refugee centre in Lombrum would be shut down, and all refugees moved to another facility in Lorengau by 31 October, refugee support services including critical medical care are expected to be withdrawn for more than 700 refugees. Uncertainty and anxiety about the proposed plans have been further heightened by the Papua New Guinean government stating on 25 August that it did not agree with the Australian government's decision to withdraw and close the Lombrum centre.

In addition to the increasing fears of refugees for their safety, should they be forcibly relocated closer to town, over 100 individuals are currently residing in a Port Moresby guesthouse waiting for medical care. In some cases, due to limited resources, the required treatment cannot be provided in Papua New Guinea.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language to urge authorities to:**

- Ensure adequate health care for all refugees and asylum seekers suffering injuries and trauma. Where adequate health care cannot be provided in Papua New Guinea, the Australian government should immediately evacuate refugees and asylum seekers to Australia for treatment;
- Fully co-operate in independent investigations into the deaths of six refugees and asylum seekers and promptly update family members on the progress and outcome of such investigations;
- Immediately bring refugees to Australia and ensure all those granted refugee status have the right to settle in Australia or third countries.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2017 TO:**

#### Minister of Immigration and Border

#### Protection

Mr Peter Dutton

PO Box 6022

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Fax: +61 (02) 6273 4144

Email: [minister@border.gov.au](mailto:minister@border.gov.au)

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Julie Bishop

PO Box 6022

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Fax: +61 (02) 6273 4112

Email: [Julie.Bishop.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Julie.Bishop.MP@aph.gov.au)

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (PNG)

Mr Petrus Thomas

National Parliament

Parliament House,

Waigani

Port Moresby, NCD

Papua New Guinea

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER DOWNER, Australian High Commission, Australia House Strand WC2B 4LA, 020 7379 4334, Fax 020 7240 5333, [www.uk.embassy.gov.au](http://www.uk.embassy.gov.au)

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the first update of UA 184/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa12/6899/2017/en/>

**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In August 2012, Australia introduced its offshore detention regime, under which everyone arriving by boat to an external Australian territory would be detained in a Refugee Processing Centre on Nauru or Papua New Guinea. In mid-2013, Australia enacted further legislation that meant anyone who arrived by boat anywhere in Australia – including the mainland – would be barred from seeking asylum in the country. The Australian Government has claimed that its policy deters people-smugglers and protects people who might otherwise undertake the hazardous boat crossing to Australia. The Government however has not publicly recognized that this offshore detention and procession policy is in fact punitive and has subjected thousands of men, women and children to systematic abuse on Manus, PNG and on Nauru.

Asylum seekers and refugees have been sent to Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, as part of a bilateral agreement between Australia and PNG. Nearly 800 refugees and asylum seekers are currently in Papua New Guinea. There are two separate facilities on Manus Island – one is located in the town of Lorengau, the other is on Lombrum Naval Base.

On 26 April 2016, the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea ruled that the transfer and detention of asylum seekers in Manus Island are both illegal and in breach of the right to personal liberty recognized by the constitution of Papua New Guinea. This led to the announcement by the Australian Immigration Minister that the Manus refugee centre would be shut down but that the people detained in the centre would not be brought to Australia.

The Lorengau transit centre was reportedly built to accommodate 300-400 people, but there are close to 800 people in the detention centre. Not only would the move lead to dangerous overcrowding, the Lorengau transit centre moves the refugees closer to local communities, some of whom have perpetrated attacks on them. The recent violence has exacerbated refugees' concerns about the forcible relocation to the transit centre. They have organized protests against the move, and made appeals on social media for help. Amnesty International understands that, in an effort to coerce the refugees to move, the authorities have made the conditions in the detention centre more uncomfortable, and the refugees have been threatened with arrest if they do not move to the Lorengau transit centre. However, the authorities have not confirmed these actions.

Both the government of Australia and the government of PNG are responsible for the safety and rights of the refugees and asylum seekers. The detention centre is run by the government of Australia.

In late September 2017, around 25 refugees were transferred to the United States of America where they were offered asylum. While this is positive news for those accepted, it should not detract from the liability of the Australian government to accept and fairly process refugee claims from asylum seekers arriving in its territory. Hundreds of people remain in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, the majority of whom have been recognised as refugees, awaiting resettlement.

Amnesty International has called for the refugee detention centre on Manus Island to be closed and all refugees and asylum seekers to be brought to safety in Australia. The closure of the detention centre only to move refugees to a transit camp on PNG increases the already grave risks to their human rights. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has publicly expressed its concerns over the deteriorating situation and has said that "the planned closure of the Manus [...] Centre must only take place in the context of continued critical services and in line with Australia's ongoing responsibility for the refugees and asylum seekers it has transferred to Papua New Guinea and Nauru".

Further information on UA: 184/17 Index: ASA 12/7222/2017 Issue Date: 6 October 2017