

# URGENT ACTION

## REFUGEES FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM DETENTION CENTRE

**There are ongoing concerns for hundreds of refugees as authorities forcibly relocated men from the Lombrum detention centre on 23 November, three weeks after all essential services were shut down. These refugees and asylum-seekers remain at further risk of violence from members of the local community and security forces.**

Papua New Guinea authorities sent police and immigration officials, armed with sticks and knives, into the Lombrum detention centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG) at around 8am on 23 November. Officials announced that the estimated 420 remaining refugees and asylum seekers had one hour to prepare for relocation. However, after several hours of peaceful resistance by the men, the officials destroyed their food and rainwater supplies and forcibly moved some refugees onto buses to transport them to other detention facilities on the island.

PNG officials arrested and detained for more than two hours a refugee, Behrouz Boochani, who is also a leading human rights activist and journalist. Around 40 men were forcibly removed from Oscar Compound on 23 November, with some refugees saying they witnessed others being beaten or injured in the move. Police are threatening to forcibly move the hundreds of men still at the centre.

On 31 October, the Australian government withdrew all personnel and services from the Manus Island detention centre at Lombrum, where refugees and asylum-seekers were sent as part of Australia's cruel and illegal 'offshore processing' policies. The more than 600 men were told to move to so-called 'transit' centres closer to town, increasing risks to their safety. The new facilities at Hillside Haus and West Lorengau are not yet complete and do not have secure fences or a proper power supply.

The refugees and asylum-seekers have peacefully resisted moving as they fear for their personal safety. Locals have previously attacked refugees in the town of Lorengau, sometimes with machetes, and left several individuals badly injured. No action by the authorities has been taken to adequately protect the refugees from such violence.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language urging the PNG and Australian authorities to:**

- Ensure the safety and security of all refugees and asylum-seekers, including from violence by local communities, security forces or private security contractors and for police to refrain from arresting peaceful activists;
- Ensure all refugees and asylum-seekers have access to acceptable living conditions, including access to adequate medical care, sanitation, food and water, electricity and other essential facilities;
- Immediately bring all men to Australia and ensure all those granted refugee status have the right to settle in Australia or safe third countries.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JANUARY 2018 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

Twitter : @PeterDutton\_MP

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister for Immigration and Border

Protection (PNG)

Mr Petrus Thomas

National Parliament

Parliament House,

Waigani

Port Moresby, NCD

Papua New Guinea

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**And copies to:**

Assistant Minister for Immigration and  
Border Protection

Alex Hawke

Phone: 02 6277 4430

Email: minister@border.gov.au OR

alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

Fax: +61 (02) 6277 8522

Twitter: @AlexHawkeMP

**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 third update of UA 184/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa12/7380/2017/en/>

**AMNESTY**  
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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since Tuesday, 31 October, all water, food and power supplies have been cut off from the centre and the men have resorted to digging for ground water and catching rain in bins as their supplies run low. With severely limited access to medical care, and a rapid deterioration of sanitary conditions, these men have faced serious risks to their health and well-being.

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 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, 300km off the coast of 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. However, 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 at Lombrum would be shut down but that the people detained in the centre would not be brought to Australia.

The East Lorengau Transit Centre was reportedly built to accommodate 300-400 people, but there are around 700 people in total on Manus Island, currently at two centres. Not only would the move lead to dangerous overcrowding, the East Lorengau transit centre also 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 so-called transit centre. There are four centres for refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island – the original detention centre, which the Australian government refers to as a 'Regional Processing Centre' based at Lombrum Naval Base (around 20 kilometres from Lorengau, the main town on Manus Island); the East Lorengau Transit Centre (around 5 kilometres from Lorengau), and two new facilities on the one site, located at Ward One, referred to as 'Hillside Haus' and 'West Lorengau' (around 10 kilometres from Lorengau). The last two facilities are still under construction and are not ready for refugees to live there.

The refugees have been subjected to periodic physical attacks and verbal abuse by some local people and members of the PNG police and armed forces. This has left them highly vulnerable but unable to leave PNG except to return to the countries from which they originally fled. Refugees cannot work or travel to other parts of PNG without permission from immigration officials. Amnesty International has documented several incidents of violence, including on 14 April 2017 when multiple bullets were fired into the Manus refugee detention centre by PNG soldiers.

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 other so-called transit centres on Manus Island 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 12/7499/2017 Issue Date: 23 November 2017