

Dr U Ne Oo, Ph. D.  
Ryde NSW 2112, AUSTRALIA

Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Hon. Andrew Wilkie MP  
Independent Member for Denison  
GPO Box 32  
Hobart TAS 7001

Dear Sir,

**re: Evacuation of Asylum-seekers from Offshore Detention Centers**

I am U Ne Oo, a resident of Ryde NSW and a refugee rights campaigner. I am the coordinator of the *Network for International Protection of Refugees* – an independent, self-help and self-funded grassroots campaign network. I live and work in Sydney as a full-time sub-contract cleaner to support myself. I am just an Australian citizen activist and not a members of, nor in association with, any other political parties or organisations.

I am writing to you and the Hon. Adam Brandt of Melbourne for your kind helps in regards to ending Australian Government detention of 2,200 asylum-seekers now held in Pacific island nations of Papua New Guinea and Republic of Nauru. In particular, I respectfully appeal to you and Mr. Brandt to initiate, as a matter of urgency, a parliamentary motion in the House of Representatives focusing on evacuating these offshore asylum-seekers to Australia. I understand that a similar motion had been moved in February 2017 in the Senate by Senator McKim<sup>1</sup>, only to be voted down by the Labour Opposition and LNP Government<sup>2</sup>. Because both major parties are in no apparent mood to help with in this case of offshore asylum-seekers, I am compelled to write to you and Mr. Brandt for you kind helps.

Earlier in February, I had communicated this matter to the Hon. John Alexander MP<sup>3</sup>, the Federal Member for Bennelong, and Marise Payne, the Liberal Senator of News South Wales<sup>4</sup>. For your information, I enclosed the copies of my communication to them, along with the reply from Immigration Minister Peter Dutton which I received through<sup>5</sup>. Minister Dutton's reply reiterates the government's position on its offshore detention policy. The leaderships of major political parties, i.e. LNP Government and Labour Opposition, are unlikely to be persuaded by our requests to evacuate these asylum-seekers. Therefore we – the Australian general public – must apply pressure through our own elected Federal Members of Parliament<sup>6</sup>.

As regards Australia's offshore detention policy, we – the general public – are well aware that the Labour Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had reintroduced in 2013. The Rudd Labour Government used the offshore detention as a circuit breaker for the intensified human trafficking activities at that time and that, such detention was not intended for any longer than necessary. However, the incoming LNP Government under Tony Abbott's leadership had exploited the offshore refugee detention regime with the name, Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB)<sup>7</sup>. Whilst the Abbott LNP Government had promoted OSB on public front as its policy for “get tough on refugees”, the operational details had been kept

1 <http://nick-mckim.greensmps.org.au/articles/liberals-and-alp-silent-manus-island-forced-deportations>

2 Coalition of Liberal and National Party (LNP), incumbent government elected in 2013, 2016 general elections.

3 [http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170205\\_john-alexander.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170205_john-alexander.pdf)

4 [http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170209\\_marise-payne.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170209_marise-payne.pdf)

5 [http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170327\\_peter-dutton-reply.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20170327_peter-dutton-reply.pdf)

6 <http://www.netipr.org/saorg/node/45> (Trade Your Vote for Refugees )

7 <http://www.netipr.org/saorg/node/30> (OSB, Turnback and Political Coverups )

under great secrecy. These secretcies surrounding OSB, including bribery payments to Indonesian smugglers had been the subject of several Senate Inquiries <sup>8</sup> .

The LNP Government under the leaderships of both Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull have sought to prolong the offshore detention. Instead of finding a proper and meaningful solution, LNP government has deliberately constructed failures to solve that refugee problem, thus prolonging offshore detention. There was an unrealistic Cambodian Resettlement Deal in 2014 <sup>9</sup> , which promoted by Scott Morrison <sup>10</sup> , has now collapsed. The so-called US-Australia refugee swap deal proposed by Peter Dutton <sup>11</sup> is also designed to delay finding a proper solution for these offshore asylum-seekers.

The purpose for the LNP Government demanding secrecy for its Operation Sovereign Borders, at public relation levels, seems to have been to outdo the Opposition Labour Party on border protection. However, at a deeper analysis, such secrecy has been required so as to cover up one of the primary components of Australia's border protection policy <sup>12</sup> , i.e the bilaterally agreed plan with the Government of Indonesia to turn-back asylum-boats <sup>13</sup> . The purpose of covering up the plan to turn-back asylum-boats has been to legitimise, in the eyes of public, the government's action on maintaining the offshore detention of asylum-seekers. With the benefit of hindsight, there has been an extra-ordinary levels of collusion to cover up the boat turn-back agreement <sup>14</sup> within the elite power groups – i.e. the elected LNP government, the mass media and the political leaders, including those from opposition Labour party <sup>15</sup> , <sup>16</sup> . Such collusion by elite power groups indicates that the leaderships from both sides of politics have been compromised by corporate groups which have vested interests in prolonging the offshore detention.

In this connection, the recent report by the Amnesty International reveals exploitation by Australian Corporations and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) on detention of refugees. The Amnesty notes the offshore detention arrangement as, “ *a clinical, cold-blooded set-up where the Australian authorities set the blueprint for cruelty, and the companies do the dirty work* ”, where as the detention companies are getting extraordinary profits <sup>17</sup> . I also wish to call your attention to last year's Australian National Auditors report <sup>18</sup> , <sup>19</sup> which has reported alarming level of irregularities

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8 [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal\\_and\\_Constitutional\\_Affairs/Payments\\_or\\_turn\\_backs](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Payments_or_turn_backs)

9 <https://time.com/3428735/australia-refugee-immigration-cambodia/>

10 Hon. Scott Morrison MP, The Treasurer and former Minister for Immigration (2013-2014)

11 Hon. Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection ( current )

12 Pp. 7, Amnesty International Report, ASA 12/5942/2017, 5th April 2017 : “The Australian authorities attempt to achieve deterrence through two principal means. One is ....“pushbacks” or “turnbacks”. The second is the policy of “offshore processing”, which involves forcibly taking people who do reach Australia by boat to offshore places of detention on Nauru and on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.”

<https://www.amnesty.org.au/report-treasure-iland-corporate-giant-ferrovial-making-millions-from-australias-torture-of-refugees-on-nauru/>

13 Ibid. 7. OSB, Turnback and Political Coverups by NetIPR, 15 June 2016.

14 Australia: Operation Sovereign Borders, Turnbacks and Political Cover-ups (PDF)

[http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20160615\\_OSB-Coverups.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20160615_OSB-Coverups.pdf)

15 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1648810632007956/permalink/1700185756870443/>

16 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-25/conroy-accuses-campbell-of-border-protection-cover-up/5283442>

17 Ibid. 12. TREASURE I\$LAND: HOW COMPANIES ARE PROFITTING FROM AUSTRALIA'S ABUSE OF REFUGEES ON NAURU. ASA 12/5942/2017, 5th April 2017.

18 <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/offshore-processing-centres-nauru-and-papua-new-guinea-procurement>

19 <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2016/09/17/transfields-11b-offshore-processing-contract-farce/14740344003749> [or]

(PDF) [http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20160917\\_transfield-offshore-processing-contract-farce.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/docs/20160917_transfield-offshore-processing-contract-farce.pdf)

found in the DIBP handing out of contracts to the offshore detention operators. These DIBP irregularities are indicating the existence of corruption .

Certainly, Australia's long-term offshore detention of refugee has been an unacceptable policy failure, both in terms of human rights and humanitarian perspectives. In addition, I do fear that crimes may have been committed by the DIBP and our politicians involving in corruption and the defrauding of Commonwealth funds <sup>20</sup>. I urge you, as a Member of Parliament, to formally approach Australian Federal Police and any other relevant authorities on this matter.

Over the years, the Network has been an independent witness to the political exploitation of refugees by Australian authorities, especially by LNP <sup>21</sup>. Current LNP Government's offshore detention arrangement has been an unprecedented form of exploitation of vulnerable human beings, comparable only to slavery. Whenever the human suffering be involved -- in this case, displaced people and refugees -- a government has the responsibility to resolve the matters humanely and expeditiously as a matter of priority. Given no regards on suffering of these asylum-seekers, the Australian government authorities have sought to prolong the detention, so as to extract our tax payers dollars for themselves and to benefit detention companies. Australian Government, in collusion with elite power groups, in this manner preying upon a group of refugees and displaced people, knowing full well the victims could never mount any form resistance, is a cowardly act and in violation of humanitarian principles. The Government and elite power groups conducting such an act of profiteering from detention of displaced people and refugees, undoubtedly, is a form of slavery and, hence, it is a crime against humanity. As such, the international condemnation of Australian government for its inhuman conduct is no longer enough. I believe that you contacting in 2014 to the International Criminal Court had been a step in the right direction <sup>22</sup> .

In closing, I thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours respectfully and sincerely,



(U Ne Oo)

**Copy to:**

1. UN Secretary-General, c/o Australian Regional Representative of UNHCR, 14 Kendall Lane, 2601 New Acton, ACT.
2. Office of The Prosecutor, International Criminal Court, PO Box 19519, 2500 CM The Hague, The Netherlands.
3. Director, Australian Federal Police, c/o Coordinator OMC, Locked Bag A3000, Sydney South NSW 1232
4. Commissioner, Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid 19.

<sup>21</sup> 26 July 2002, NetIPR Submission to Senate Inquiry into Migration Zone Excision and Further Border Protection Measures Bill (2002). [http://www.netipr.org/saorg/NetIPR\\_20020726\\_SenateSubmission.pdf](http://www.netipr.org/saorg/NetIPR_20020726_SenateSubmission.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/22/asylum-seekers-andrew-wilkie-takes-australia-to-international-criminal-court>