

THE WILFUL KILLING OF REZA BERATI

on February 17, 2014

inside the Manus Island detention centre

media reports and published opinion

1c. Media Reports 10 March – 6 May

FROM NEUTERED INQUIRIES TO SENATE TESTIMONY

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Full Cornall report into Manus events may not be released

PNG and Australian immigration departments will 'assess and merge' findings from their respective investigations

Lenore Taylor, political editor and agencies

theguardian.com

Monday 10 March 2014

Australians may not see the full report by Robert Cornall into the fatal riot on Manus Island, because both the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments will receive an account in which immigration officials have already “merged” the findings of investigations being undertaken by each country.

PNG’s chief immigration officer, Mataio Rabura, told Guardian Australia that after Cornall, a former senior Australian public servant, had completed his investigation “PNG and Australian immigration will assess the reports [his and PNG immigration] and submit a joint report to both governments.”

Rabura’s answer appears to explain a reference by Scott Morrison to the various reports into the incident being “synthesised”.

After a meeting earlier this month the Australian immigration minister and the PNG foreign minister Rimbink Pato issued a statement in which they said they had “agreed that Australia and PNG would work to synthesise, as appropriate, the independent administrative review, the police investigation and the coronial inquiry to ensure a clear statement of the facts and a shared understanding of the findings and implications of these events for the ongoing management of the centre and the resettlement process.”

Morrison has said Cornall would be “asked and tasked to determine exactly what the facts were, to ensure that those facts are available to any authorities for any action that would take place as a result and to ensure that the department is provided with clear recommendations on any improvements that can be made to assist in the management of any potential future incidents.”

Rabura also provided some insight into the kind of visas PNG intends to give asylum seekers on Manus Island who are found to be genuine refugees – although it is understood PNG may need to legislate for refugee visas and details are to be worked out by an expert panel that has not yet been set up.

“Once the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration grants refugee status, the refugee will be granted a refugee visa, renewable until he is eligible to apply for citizenship, normally after eight years residency and other requirements. At any time during his residency he can still opt to return to his country of origin or another where he/she will be accepted,” Rabura said in written answers to Guardian Australia.

He said he hoped the expert team – which the PNG government has said will work out details of refugee resettlement – will be announced late next week and will take about 30 days to complete its work.

The lack of clarity about what will happen to Manus Island asylum seekers in the longer term has been identified as a factor in the build-up of tensions before the riot.

Rabura's clarification came as PNG appointed an Australian doctor, Paul Crouch-Chivers, to inspect the Manus Island processing centre to help a court determine if the human rights of asylum seekers at the centre are being met under PNG's constitution.

The national court on Monday ordered that Crouch-Chivers be allowed to enter PNG unimpeded ahead of a March 17 hearing in Lorengau, the Manus capital.

Crouch-Chivers will "inspect, examine and evaluate the provision of clinical health services at the regional processing centre and give expert evidence, which will be presented at the court in Lorengau".

He will also examine the conditions in which transferees are accommodated and, if necessary, whether they comply with the human rights standards of PNG's constitution and international human rights treaties.

Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati, 23, died and more than 60 others were injured during the violence on 17 February.

A Senate inquiry, set up by the ALP and the Greens, will also seek to determine exactly what happened during and in the lead-up to the riot, and will review Morrison's conduct "before, during and after the incident". It will begin taking evidence in April after the existing Australian and PNG inquiries have reported.

The Greens have suggested it should take evidence on Manus, but PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill has questioned whether this is necessary and has taken issue with how PNG is being portrayed in the media.

He is reported to have said that some sections of the media portray "Manus locals as machete-wielding warriors who knocked down the fence and attacked the asylum seekers. Reports I have received suggest that none of the Manus villagers were involved in this violence."

"... such unverified reports paint a very bad picture of PNG, and Manus, and this upsets me," O'Neill said.

Morrison's office has been contacted for comment.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/10/manus-island-riot-full-report-by-australian-official-may-not-be-released

MEDIA RELEASE: Manus Island unsafe - advocates warn against letting attackers back into camp

Tuesday March 11, 2014
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Refugee advocates are warning of new dangers of attacks on asylum seekers if local staff are re-introduced into the Manus Island detention centre.

Local and national PNG staff and police have been excluded from the detention centre since the night of 17 February when Reza Berati was killed and at least 77 others brutally bashed.

There are now moves by senior detention management to allow local PNG security staff back into the detention centre as soon as today (Tuesday 11 March).

The move has terrified asylum seekers in the camp. Since the 17 February, asylum seekers have been subject to daily threats of being attacked and killed. "Locals" make throat-cutting gestures directed at asylum seekers and there are reports of protests by machete wielding locals outside the perimeter wire of the detention centre.

The asylum seekers are also being pressured to agree to the re-introduction of locals by declining food quality and amount, which is being prepared outside the camp. Authorities have rejected offers by the asylum seekers to prepare and cook the food themselves.

Siren warning letter adds to fears

The [attached] letter, circulated in Mike Compound in the last 24 hours, about a siren warning should police enter their compound has heightened asylum seekers' fears.

"The letter is completely absurd and indicates the Immigration Department is completely unwilling to protect asylum seekers on Manus Island. The very people who killed Reza Berati on 17 February are again being promoted as defenders of the asylum seekers," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"Re-introducing the local staff and police is a recipe for another disaster. Scott Morrison is complicit in the murder of Reza and with the on-going regime of terror on Manus Island.

"The asylum seekers must be brought to Australia to ensure their safety."

The safety of asylum seekers must also be guaranteed before they can give evidence to the inquiry led by PNG Chief Justice Canning.

The first hearings are expected on Manus Island on 17 March.

"Asylum seekers will not be able to give evidence freely while their attackers remain at large. As long as the detention centre is open to those who killed and attacked them, there is a possibility of bloody retribution to rival the 17 February," said Ian Rintoul.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713

Unrest sparked riot preparation weeks before death

Manus Island unrest sparked riot squad preparation weeks before asylum death

G4S reports show timeline of protests in the lead-up to the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Tuesday 11 March 2014

Daily protests on Manus Island resulted in local G4S riot squads “gearing up” a number of times before the unrest that resulted in the death of the Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati on 17 February.

Two G4S reports describing peaceful demonstrations in the Manus camp on 5 and 6 February provide a detailed timeline of events during the protests, which began on 26 January. On both those dates in February, incident response teams (IRTs) consisting predominantly of local security staff “geared up” and on one occasion, the reports note, “aggravated” asylum seekers in one compound.

The documents raise fresh questions over whether the deadly unrest on Manus on 16 and 17 February could have been foreseen and prevented. The Immigration Department was informed of the events on 5 and 6 February.

The reports relate that during the protest on 5 February, between 10pm and 10.10pm 30 asylum seekers in one compound, Oscar, were chanting: “This is not Manus, this is not PNG, this is Guantanamo.” In another, Mike, 70 asylum seekers congregated under banners with one reading: “Get off your gun from your head we are not criminals we are asylum seekers.” In another compound, Foxtrot, 90 asylum seekers “joined hands in centre circle” chanting “freedom” and “we want answers”.

By 10.17pm, according to the incident report, “10 IRT geared up awaiting deployment”.

The Immigration Department was notified numerous times throughout both protests.

The 5 February G4S log also notes one asylum seeker in Oscar compound was seen ushering two others who were “playing cards”, to join the protest. At 10:22pm a “small stone” was thrown at a G4S officer filming the protest. “No injury sustained,” the log says.

By 11pm the two IRT squads were stood down and the protests finished: “All transferees were compliant and peaceful during the incident,” the log reads.

The next day a similar protest occurred, starting after asylum seekers in Oscar compound met lawyers. According to the log, “1x transferee om OSCAR stormed out [of the meeting] upset and trying to get crowd going”.

Many of the same chants were recorded with similar numbers from the same compounds, but those in Mike compound also chanted “we apologise PNG”. At 10.02pm, the log notes, PNG mobile police could be seen “at the back of Oscar fence on the road”, and at 10.22pm, the log notes: “It appears IRT have aggravated FOXTROT compound”.

Three minutes after this, the log says an asylum seeker in Foxtrot compound was injured (“twisted their ankle”) and received medical attention. The log later says this detainee injured himself by stepping into a drain.

The Immigration Department was notified of this protest, which was described as “peaceful”.

The log ends: “All compounds have verbally indicated that the demonstrations will continue on a daily basis until their [asylum seekers] requests have been heard and addressed.”

A former G4S guard, speaking to Guardian Australia on condition of anonymity, said the Immigration Department had been informed that the accommodation in Mike compound was inappropriate for detainees. “It was always meant to be staff quarters, that’s what it was designed for,” the guard said.

Mike compound, where most of the unrest occurred and where Barati was detained, backs directly onto a local village, the former guard said.

Describing its inadequacies, the ex-employee said: “Where do you start? In the far west of that compound in the two-tiered block you were two metres from the fence line. There were a whole range of issues – you were 25 metres from a local settlement.”

A former contractor at Manus also expressed concern about the proximity of Mike compound to the village. “I couldn’t believe that clients were separated from the village by a flimsy fence. There were women and children in that village,” the contractor said.

The former guard said: “Electrical wires were running at the top on a plastic conduit. With your fingers you could pull at it and you’d have access to 250 volts – you could do all kinds of damage to yourself or someone else.”

There were a number of hanging points in Mike compound, the former guard said.

A spokesman for G4S said: “G4S supports the reviews currently being undertaken by the governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, and we are fully cooperating with those reviews. We do not want to pre-empt or compromise the integrity of those reviews by commenting further at this time.”

A spokesperson for the minister for immigration, Scott Morrison, said: “Any and all events that are considered by Mr [Robert] Cornall to have been relevant to the incident that occurred at Manus Island on the night of February 17, will be addressed in his independent review.

“It is appropriate that the investigations into this incident, including Mr Cornall’s review, are allowed to take their course to get to the bottom of what occurred.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/manus-island-unrest-sparked-riot-squad-preparation-weeks-before-asylum-death

Urthboy speaks up and sings out after Reza Barati death on Manus Island

The Age

March 12, 2014

Sarah Whyte

The night Reza Barati died at Australia's offshore detention centre on Manus Island, hip-hop artist Urthboy was already writing a song about Australia's hard-line asylum seeker policy.

"[It] started with me getting my head around how we were using our navy to push back asylum seekers," he says. "A week after I had written it, the riot and the death occurred and it felt like this was almost predictable. The consequence of offshore detention gave the song a sense of purpose."

The song *Don't Let It Go*, released on Thursday with a graphic video by Australian filmmaker Dan Ilic, has had thousands of hits online.

"Put 'em on a one way trip to Manus," Urthboy raps. "Throw a billion on the boatloads make 'em vanish/Wash the blood off our hands that inflict the damage/We can pretend we care when our hearts are savage."

Urthboy - real name Tim Levinson - is the latest artist turning immigration into a hot issue in the arts. The Biennale of Sydney was forced to sever ties with its major sponsor Transfield Holdings - with chairman Luca Belgiorno-Nettis resigning - after artists protested about its shareholding in Transfield Services, which recently won a \$1.2 billion contract to maintain Manus Island detention centre.

Politicians have waded into the debate, with Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull denouncing the "vicious ingratitude" of the artists who forced Transfield's withdrawal from the event.

"I hope the biennale can survive but I think the artists that have done this have potentially driven a stake, not through the asylum-seeker policy, I can assure you of that, but through the heart of the biennale itself," he said on ABC radio.

But Urthboy urges more artists to use their talents to speak out against government policies, particularly immigration, they disagree with.

"We are talking about quite a popular policy, so a lot of these artists are worried about the bottom line and what their audience are going to think about them," he says. "A lot of the time there is this fear of standing up, and I wanted this song to be part of a call to get out there and speak more ... We need artists to come out there and break ranks and stop the double speak."

www.theage.com.au/entertainment/urthboy-speaks-up-and-sings-out-after-reza-barati-death-on-manus-island-20140311-34k24.html

Audio recordings give new insight into detention centre protests

ABC Radio CAF - PM

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Cochrane

Posted Wed 12 Mar 2014, 9:05pm AEDT

The ABC has obtained audio recordings made inside the Manus Island detention centre before and after the deadly violence last month.

The recordings suggest protests in the days leading up to the riot were noisy but non-violent.

They also give new accounts of gunfire and tell of ongoing fears of further attacks.

The audio was provided to the ABC by crime writer and UNICEF ambassador Tara Moss, who has been posting information online from sources on Manus Island.

The ABC has independently verified the recordings, which you can hear in Liam Cochrane's report for PM.

A week before the riots, this is how guards were describing the protests within the detention centre in their radio communication:

Callsign Fox Sierra One: Approximately 50 in the gym. It's not really getting off the ground. People are still watching movies. There's no footwear being thrown, they're still in flip-flops.

Command: Copy.

Callsign Mike Sierra One: Command, Mike Sierra One. They're now singing what I believe to be a national peace song from Iran. And the leaders that were present yesterday are now present tonight.

Command: Copy that.

Callsign Fox Sierra One: Command, Fox Sierra One. Chanting and whistling, clapping has completely ceased. The agitators that came down to the gym have moved away. People in the gym continuing to watch television. So at this stage, quiet.

That quiet did not last long, but gates remained locked and the situation contained.

Chant leader: What do we want?

Group chant: Freedom!

Chant leader: What do we want?

Group chant: Freedom!

Callsign Fox Sierra One: Oscar Bravo, Fox Sierra One, confirm all gate towers of Foxtrot are locked. Over.

These noisy protests were repeated daily. Two expatriates working for security firm G4S at the time say staff warned centre management not to hold a meeting to address questions about asylum processing and resettlement, believing the situation to be volatile.

The meeting went ahead on the afternoon of February 16, with PNG immigration officials reportedly telling asylum seekers the only option for resettlement would be Papua New Guinea.

This came a week after PNG's foreign minister told parliament the government had not decided whether to accept refugees for resettlement.

Hours after the meeting at the detention centre, riots began, turning deadly the next evening.

An Australian working at the centre and two asylum seekers say they heard bursts of automatic gunfire, exceeding police reports of a few warning shots.

The Australian worker interviewed two asylum seekers. The staff member provided this audio at the risk of losing their job and possible legal action for breaching a confidentiality clause.

The Australian asked the asylum seekers how many gun shots they heard:

Asylum seeker B: Five, six times.

Interviewer: So six times. Only six bullets? Or five or six times, many times?

Asylum seeker B: No, no. Five or six - many times. He shoot not one, one.

Interviewer: Yes, that's what we heard.

An asylum seeker says he tried to hide in a room but was dragged outside to where G4S guards, police mobile squad officers, local residents and asylum seekers were clashing.

He says he was stomped, kicked, punched and hit in the face with a heavy object.

Asylum seeker A: Please, please, please don't kill me, don't kill me, don't kill me.

The asylum seeker says a Papua New Guinean G4S guard intervened to get him away from the violence.

That same night, nearby, 23-year-old Iranian Reza Barati was killed.

Days later, a funeral service was held inside the Manus Island detention centre.

The asylum seekers say they live in fear of further retribution.

The ABC contacted G4S and Immigration Minister Scott Morrison for a response.

Both said investigations were underway and declined to comment further.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-12/manus-island-audio/5316700>

We all know the killer: Manus Island detainee

We all know the killer: Manus Island detainee speaks of detention centre attacks that led to Reza Barati's death

The Age

March 14, 2014

This is an edited version of a recent interview conducted by phone between a Farsi-speaker in Australia and an Iranian asylum seeker in the Manus Island detention camp. Both the original recording and an English transcript were provided to Fairfax Media by two independent sources.

Extract from opening statement

This attack was intended and organised ... After they attack the detainees they enter the rooms and destroy anything we had. They left nothing behind and stole anything they wished to keep. One of the boys used his friend's blood and cover himself with blood and hid under the bed, pretending he is badly injured so they leave him alone, but when he was pulled from under the bed and G4S took him away with the ambulance, they realised he had faked his injury and they hit him with the ambulance chair in his head. As a result he had multiple cuts to his eyebrow and forehead.

Some of us tried to use bed sheets to tie the door handles to the bed leg, to stop our doors from opening, but we were not successful and many were attacked brutally and barbarically. The PNG people would not leave until the person had suffered serious injuries, but it didn't stop there, and shooting into the crowd began.

Question: Why do you think the PNG people and others attacked you in the first place?

Answer: Everyone has different views, but when we all gather together and put our heads together we decided ... [to] call for "freedom, freedom" ... [This] began to worry the Australian authorities and they could not personally attack the voice of freedom, however they used PNG and G4S to help to shut us down.

They must have said to the locals that these people speak of freedom and might escape the detention centre and they will attack you, your family and rape your women, so these people got worried and that is what brought the massacre.

But I assure you, it was never our intention to escape. Yes, the internal fence between two camps ... came down, but detainees never ever touched the external one, which leads to the bush or ocean.

Q: What fence came down?

A: The fence separating Foxtrot and Mike [compounds]. It is a weak, wire fence, and this occurred to us as we were running for safety from one to another.

Then they attack people in Mike camp and, when you ask all detainees, they unitedly identify Reza Barati's killer.

Q: Is this person Australian or PNG?

A: No. He is of PNG origin, a local. Everyone is unhappy with him. The detainees saw him a few days ago behind the external fence, making gestures saying we will cut your throat and kill you.

There has been no security and, until today, we work shifts to watch over ourselves. We have people stand shift while some rest. One group work the night shift, another group of us do day shift to ensure we don't get attacked again.

Also we have overtaken the cleaning and other welfare work among ourselves, as we don't want the locals to return to the camp and service us. We have no problem to do it all ourselves, but security and Australian authority don't want this to continue and, just today, they brought three PNG people who attacked us to work in the store/canteen.

Soon Australia authority will bring more PNG people in for cleaning, cooking etc. and we can't do anything to protect ourselves.

This will eventually result in violence. Please put yourselves in our situation; someone who last week hit you to death, you have to face today. Unavoidably, that is a disaster. The authority either doesn't comprehend or they have some further plan for us.

Q: Do you mean that the ones who work in the camp were involve in the attack?

A: 100 per cent, of course. See, one of the boys that I don't wish to name was badly injured in the attack, so one Australian guard threw him over his shoulder to take to the ambulance. On his way out, a PNG guard hit the detainee's head with a wooden pole. As he picked his head up, the PNG guard recognised him as a friend who was giving him cigarettes every day. He was shocked and said, "Sorry, sorry my friend."

This story has become one of the jokes currently in the camp. "Sorry, sorry my friend."

They are all locals who are employed and work here, and yes, many were on shift in full uniform and many were off shift and in personal clothes. At one point there was a G4S PNG guard in full uniform, but he wore thongs as he didn't get a chance to put his boots on.

Q: What kind of weapons did they use?

A: I was in Foxtrot. Mike compound was hit badly with weapons. The Mike detainees describe the weapons as metal/timber poles, sharp knives used to cut the coconuts into half, [machetes] baseball bats, BB guns and rifles, and any sharp objects, rock etc.

Q: Has anyone been injured by machetes or were they used for scare tactics?

A: Yes. If you look at the closet doors, that's where they hit us with machetes. One detainee in Foxtrot was cut badly all around his neck, like they meant to cut his head off.

Q: Anything else you wish to tell me at this point?

A: Please, on behalf of all detainees in this place, regardless of colour, nationality, Farsi, Arab, Tamil, and Kurdish etc. We are all human beings, we refugees came to ask for your protection. All we have is hope, hope for everyone outside this place in Australia or anywhere in the world. HELP US.

Permanent shortened link: <http://goo.gl/aK8jiE>

MEDIA RELEASE: Govt pressures Manus asylum seekers to return home

Govt pressures Manus asylum seekers to return home while allowing attackers back in

Friday March 14, 2014
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
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In the wake of the killing of Reza Barati and the attacks on Manus Island asylum seekers, shamefully, the Australian government is pressuring asylum seekers to return home.

The Australian government has recklessly allowed Dr Jamal Rifi, a Lebanese representative of the Immigration Minister's Council on Asylum Seekers and Detention into the Manus detention centre to speak to the 46 Lebanese asylum seekers.

Rifi told the asylum seekers that they should go home; that 'you will never be settled in Australia, or Port Moresby. If you are a refugee, you will be settled in Manus Island.'

It is the second time that Rifi has been to Manus doing the Australian government's bidding.

Rifi and Sheikh Malek Zeidan, the Australian representative of the Mufti of Lebanon also went to Nauru in early January. But there is no sign of their message having any effect; something that indicates the seriousness of their refugee claims.

The Immigration Department is also pressuring asylum seekers to allow those responsible for the attack back into the compounds. The move comes even though the Manus Island police chief has admitted that the killers of Reza Berati are still working on the island.

Two days ago G4S and Wilson Security met with representatives of at least two compounds about bringing PNG staff back into the compounds. The proposal was rejected by the asylum seekers.

Meanwhile there is no water for the detention centre toilets.

"The Manus Island asylum seekers need support and security, not threats," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. "They need legal support and they need to be brought to Australia. Scott Morrison cannot guarantee their safety on Manus Island."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713

Arrests loom over Manus Island killing, police says

The Age

March 14, 2014

David Wroe and Sarah Whyte

with Michael Gordon and Rory Callinan

Manus Island police say they are poised to charge several men with the murder of Reza Barati, the asylum seeker killed in a violent confrontation at the island's immigration detention centre.

Yet despite concerns about continuing tensions in the centre, at least some of the suspects in Mr Barati's death are believed to still be working at the facility, along with many other staff thought to have taken part in the violence.

The revelations came as further claims emerged about the violent clashes, including how desperate asylum seekers tried to tie bed sheets to the door handles in their rooms to keep their attackers out.

In an account of the violence obtained by Fairfax Media, an Iranian asylum seeker said two detainees were blinded, one had his eye "removed" and one machete attack victim was "cut so badly all around his neck like they meant to cut his head off".

Manus Island provincial police commander Alex N'Drasal said on Thursday that he hoped soon to arrest three to four men and charge them with murder. "Hopefully either this week or early next week, we are going to make arrests," he said. "We are looking at three to four guys to be arrested and charged. We'll probably charge them with murder."

He declined to say who the men were, including whether they were locals or foreigners, or whether they were local staff at the centre.

Mr N'Drasal said he believed most local staff were back at work, including security staff - a direct contradiction of statements made by Immigration Minister Scott Morrison. Asked whether this included the three to four suspects, Mr N'Drasal said he was not certain but added: "I believe they are still there working."

He said he had given instructions that none of the detention centre staff should leave Manus Island while the police investigation was running and therefore it was proper that they should continue working.

Mr Morrison said through his spokeswoman: "I am advised there are no locally engaged staff deployed as security officers within any of the compounds."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said letting workers who were involved in the violence back into the centre was a "recipe for disaster".

A recording of the Iranian detainee's statement - made on Tuesday - along with an English translation, described disturbing new details about the incident. The material was provided to Fairfax Media by Senator Hanson-Young and by a second, independent source.

The detainee said other detainees saw the alleged killer "a few days ago behind the external fence making gestures that we will cut your throat and kill you".

He said machetes and guns had been used in the clashes and that "people were attacked in their beds and their heads were cut open", leaving "blood on closets, pillows and walls".

He told of one detainee who was being carried to safety by an Australian guard when he was hit on the head with a wooden pole by a PNG guard.

"As he lifted his head up to look, the PNG guard recognised him as a friend who had been giving him his cigarettes every day. He was shocked and said, 'Sorry, sorry, my friend.' This story has become one of the jokes currently in the camp - 'Sorry, sorry, my friend'."

Senator Hanson-Young said: "It's clear from seeing this conversation that [inside the camp] the refugees' safety simply cannot be guaranteed."

She said the only "decent and humane" thing to do was to bring the detainees to Australia.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/arrests-loom-over-manus-island-killing-police-says-20140313-34pm6.html

PNG charges looming over Reza Barati death on Manus

PNG police set to charge men over death of Reza Barati in Manus riot

Manus Island police commander says three or four men likely to be arrested for the death of the 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker

Oliver Laughland and agencies
theguardian.com
Friday 14 March 2014

Police on Manus Island are reportedly set to charge a number of men over the death of Reza Barati, the 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker killed during unrest on Manus in February, with witness accounts naming the same local contractor as being responsible for his death.

A graphic hand drawn picture from an asylum seeker on Manus, obtained by Guardian Australia, attempts to depict the moment of Barati's death. It shows him being attacked with a piece of wood and crouched on his knees.

Manus Island police commander Alex N'Drasal said three or four men were likely to be arrested imminently over Barati's death, Fairfax reports.

Manus sources have also provided more photographs from a set published by Guardian Australia last week, which appear to show bullet holes inside the Manus camp.

According to one asylum seeker's statement on Manus, which was provided both directly and through a number of Manus sources, PNG police fired numerous shots at asylum seekers inside the camp: "The worst and the most terrifying behavior of the PNG police was that they were aiming and firing at the innocent transferees with their guns, even now the containers which were transferees shelter and rooms are full of tracks of bullet holes.

"Everywhere was covered by blood," the asylum seeker writes.

In a correspondence with Guardian Australia he added that many asylum seekers inside Manus fear that more unrest will occur in the future.

"All of us were shaking and trembling hard because of fear and stress," he said.

Another asylum seeker's account, provided via Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young, also alleges multiple shots were fired during the unrest. "The attack was so violent, it was like something that you see in movies. They attacked us so brutally that within a few minutes the smoke from gunfire covered the air in Mike compound," the asylum seeker said.

Manus sources say local staff have still not been allowed back onto the site and asylum seekers are being asked to clean their own compounds.

Victoria Martin, of the Refugee Rights Action Network, said one asylum seeker had been left blind following the unrest and would be flown to Brisbane for treatment.

The Department for Immigration has initiated a review into the unrest on 16 and 17 February. The review will be led by former civil servant Robert Cornall. The contents of this review may not be

made public after it was revealed that this account will be “merged” with a separate investigation being conducted by PNG authorities.

An Australian parliamentary inquiry into the violence is set to start in April, with PNG national court officials also set to visit the detention centre on Monday.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been contacted for comment.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/14/png-police-set-to-charge-men-over-death-of-reza-barati-in-manus-riot

Whistleblower: Nothing to lose, desperation on Nauru

Whistleblower Mark Isaacs felt compelled to reveal detainees' mistreatment

The Age

March 15, 2014

Deborah Snow

Witness accounts from inside Australia's detention centres are rare. Walled in behind government secrecy, contracts which bind them to silence, and fear for their future livelihoods, staff and former employees of the organisations running the centres bite their tongues, or confide only in close colleagues, family members or friends.

The few who have spoken to the media have mostly done so anonymously, or through third parties.

Now, the first of what could be a steady trickle of embarrassing whistleblower accounts has emerged in the form of an explosive book, *The Undesirables*, by a former Salvation Army employee, 26-year-old Sydneysider Mark Isaacs. The title is taken from a term Isaacs says a government staffer was overheard using to describe the asylum-seekers at the camp.

Isaacs was only 24 when, on the strength of a single phone call and with no experience, he was hired by the Salvos and dispatched to Nauru with less than a week's notice to "provide support" to asylum seekers detained there.

The date was October 1, 2012, just a fortnight after then prime minister Julia Gillard had reopened the offshore camp in a desperate revival of former prime minister John Howard's "Pacific solution" - an attempt to deter asylum seekers by shipping them to the tiny Pacific nation for indefinite detention.

Isaacs completed five rotations through the camp, each of several weeks. The last he saw of "Topside", as the internment camp on Nauru was known, was in June last year, shortly before inmates burnt much of it to the ground.

There is a rawness and an immediacy to this account because it is so recent. Originally slated for publication next month, the book - available from Monday - has been rushed out by publisher Hardie Grant Books after the chaotic events at the Manus Island detention centre last month which left one man dead, and scores injured.

Isaacs' book constitutes a warning that, no matter how much physical facilities on Manus and Nauru might improve, it may be impossible to avoid violent periodic eruptions inside the camps in the future.

It is because the men have no hope, he argues, and therefore little to lose.

"Criminals were given a sentence to serve: these men were not even given that," Isaacs writes. "They feared they would die in Nauru, that they would be forgotten, that they would become non-people."

Isaacs has heard all the arguments about why imprisoning men in their hundreds on small Pacific islands and leaving them in limbo is the only way to "solve" the asylum seeker problem.

But nothing convinced him the cruelty inflicted in the process was worth it. There were moments of heartbreak for the young, untrained Australian, facing the anguish of these men.

Reza, an internee to whom he'd been giving private English lessons, nearly succeeded in taking his own life with a toxic cocktail of cleaning fluids, mosquito repellent, antidepressants and sleeping tablets.

One of the camp's most respected religious leaders, Ali, descended into three days of psychotic madness which left him rolling in the dirt and barking like a dog before he was removed by health workers.

For Ali's Iranian countrymen, it was deeply shocking to see their revered mullah, a man who until then had been a source of succour, reduced to the state of a rabid animal. Later, Isaacs discovered that Ali had just lost a child, having tried, and failed, to transfer funds back home for the sick youngster's treatment.

A third moment of heartbreak came when the camp poet, Pez - whom Isaacs had befriended - tried to hang himself in the laundry.

Isaacs did his best to lighten the long days with recreational activities for the men, but was left feeling as though he was working in a "death factory".

"There was no way I could deny I was a part of it, because there I was and it was my country and my people and we were putting these men through such torture" he said this week.

"It doesn't matter who you are, or what side of politics you are on, if you had been in the position I was in, having to sit there and have a man's friends show you the cord that he tried to hang himself with, crying with them, the rain coming down ... it was overwhelming."

"The camp was built around destroying men," he writes, "grind[ing] them into the dust."

Isaacs was not a Salvation Army member. He'd done some writing for Oxfam and was working for the state government when a friend told him the Salvos were urgently seeking staff for the hastily reopened Nauru facility. He was hired without even a face-to-face interview.

In passages that will be deeply embarrassing for the Salvos - and for the previous government - Isaacs paints a picture of a camp so hastily set up that the organisations charged with pulling it together virtually had to make it up as they went along.

The new recruits were a "motley crew", he says, some of whom were untrained seniors or university students; some only got their contracts as they arrived at the airport to make the trip north. Some were not even sure what an asylum-seeker was.

"I wasn't given any training before I was sent over" he says. "No preparation, no cultural diversity training, I didn't know anything about Tamils, or people from Iraq and Iran, and I was one of the comparatively well-informed. There was an 18-year-old there! How can you expect an 18-year-old to look after traumatised, war-torn people?"

In a written response on Friday, the Salvation Army - which has not yet seen the book - said Isaacs was "engaged ... in a role that required him to fulfil unskilled duties ... [and that] support worker roles typically do not require individuals to have particular skills or experience."

It also said that in the "early days" of beginning its work on Nauru and Manus Island, "the Department of Immigration ... required an incredibly rapid start-up, which meant that a formal induction was not developed prior to [the Army] getting its first people on the ground."

During Isaacs' time there, hundreds more men were poured into the camp - Sri Lankans, Tamils, Iranians, Iraqis, Hazaras from Afghanistan, Pakistanis and Palestinians. The camp ran on myriad rules that were chopped and changed: no hair dye, swimming for inmates banned because of health and safety concerns, no vocational training for internees because that would break the "no advantage" rule (i.e. they were not, under the policy, to receive any "advantage" over asylum seekers still awaiting processing in UN centres).

Isaacs and his "recreation" team tried to defuse the boredom with cricket and soccer competitions.

There were rivalries between some of the staff attached to different aspects of the camp's operations.

"Each agency wanted to be the lead agency, the head honcho of the island," Isaacs writes. "The disorganisation of the Salvation Army meant it was a long way down the pecking order, and the staff suffered because of this."

Isaacs was mysteriously blacklisted from the camp for a few weeks, and was later told it was because of complaints by security staff that he fraternised too readily with camp inmates.

Staff were repeatedly warned against speaking out about what was going on behind the camp gates. At one stage, Isaacs was told there was an "intel" file on him. "You were not allowed to email your loved ones about what was happening, even what the food was like," he said. "They said that people were checking our emails and Facebook, it felt like being in a horrible fascist state."

Isaacs acknowledges the Salvation Army got more professional over time at the task it had been rushed into, hiring more qualified staff, and sharply reducing the turnover among contract workers. But he says "it was the same situation, just wrapped with a prettier bow".

Isaacs' account is a frank portrayal of the toll on well-meaning Australian men and women who travelled to Nauru to try to ease the inmates' plight. Even coming back for short visits between tours of duty was hard, because few friends really understood the burden staff members were carrying.

Several of the men Isaacs looked after on Nauru have now been moved to the mainland, where they live on bridging visas and minimal benefits. Others have been moved to the Curtin detention centre. Several await court proceedings on Nauru because of their alleged role in last year's riots.

In February this year, the Salvation Army's \$74 million government contract to provide welfare services at Manus Island and Nauru was not renewed. "The Salvos were damned if they did, and damned if they didn't," Isaacs says. "Maybe they are better out of it, because their hands were tied ... maybe they could have pushed harder for the men's rights. But then maybe they would not have been able to do the work they were doing."

www.theage.com.au/national/asylum-seekers-nothing-to-lose-desperation-on-nauru-20140314-34s04.html

PNG court Manus human rights inquiry begins

Manus Island detention centre human rights inquiry launched by PNG court

ABC News Online

By Liam Fox on Manus Island

Posted Mon 17 Mar 2014

A judge in Papua New Guinea is due to begin an inquiry today into the treatment of asylum seekers at Australia's detention centre on Manus Island.

Under PNG law, the Supreme Court can initiate its own inquiries into human rights matters.

Justice David Cannings did just that after last month's fatal riot at the detention centre left one asylum seeker dead and scores injured.

It will examine the conditions at the detention centre and whether they comply with the rights afforded under PNG's constitution and international human rights agreements.

Justice Cannings appointed Cairns-based public health specialist Paul Crouch-Chivers to examine the health services at the detention centre.

He ordered the doctor be granted "reasonable access" to the centre.

The judge has indicated he will visit the centre himself during this week's inquiry.

He has also ordered legal aid be provided to asylum seekers ahead of the inquiry.

Last year Justice Cannings ordered a similar inquiry after a group of police officers used machetes to slash the ankles of more than 70 men involved in a tribal fight in Port Moresby.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-17/png-court-launches-human-rights-inquiry-into-detention-centre/5324844

Manus inquiry judge should be disqualified, say PNG lawyers

Application for disqualification filed on grounds of bias and previous court appearances regarding detention centre

Helen Davidson
theguardian.com
Monday 17 March 2014

Lawyers for the Papua New Guinea government have filed for the judge leading an inquiry into alleged human rights violations at the Manus Island detention centre to be disqualified on the grounds of bias.

In the third of five stages of his inquiry, Justice David Cannings will this week attempt to inspect the Manus Island detention centre and question around 30 detainees who have already been interviewed by officers of the public prosecutor, according to the Post Courier.

The inquiry is investigating alleged violations of human rights at the centre and “disturbances resulting in injuries”, after violent riots led to the death of 23-year-old Reza Barati and injuries to dozens of other asylum seekers.

At the Lorengau hearing on Monday morning, lawyers for chief immigration officer Rabura Mataio filed for Cannings to be disqualified on the grounds of bias and his previous role as a judge overseeing a legal challenge to the centre.

“The application is not made lightly,” Peter Kuman, lawyer for the state of Papua New Guinea and for Mataio, told Guardian Australia.

“It’s a very serious matter. Our reasons were twofold – firstly that his conduct so far in dealing with [the] current human rights matter gives rise to a reasonable appearance of bias,” he said.

The second reason related to undefined statements Cannings had made in previous court appearances regarding the detention centre.

Cannings adjourned his decision regarding Mataio’s application until Monday afternoon. He also adjourned a decision on whether to allow media to accompany him on his inspection of the centre.

Cannings will likely visit the centre on Tuesday if he does not recuse himself, Kuman said, and the PNG government has no issue with this.

“The judge has made orders, so the clients are happy to comply. There is nothing wrong with allowing Justice Cannings to visit the site, but it should be in the company of the parties of the proceedings,” said Kuman.

Cannings has appointed a Cairns-based doctor, Paul Crouch-Chivers, to inspect the health services at the centre, and has instructed that Crouch-Chivers be given “reasonable access.”

At the beginning of Monday’s hearing, Cannings disclosed a longstanding friendship with Crouch-Chivers, AAP reported.

“I have not discussed with Dr Crouch-Chivers the details of this case or the evidence he is expected to give,” Cannings said in his opening statement. “I have not, of course, attempted to influence him as to the conclusions he may reach or the evidence he should give.

“I am of the view ... that Dr Crouch-Chivers is eminently well-qualified and experienced in the area of public health, and that his (37 years of) experience as a medical professional in PNG ... makes him ideally suitable.”

The inquiry, which began on 27 February, is investigating “alleged human rights violations and complaints about the conditions of detention and disturbances resulting in injuries to such persons”, according to Cannings’ opening statement to the PNG national court.

The terms of reference set out Cannings’ line of investigation, questioning what human rights – “if any” – do detainees inside Manus Island detention centre have, whether those rights have been and are being administered to them, and if not, how the court should enforce and protect those rights.

As a judge of the national court, Cannings decided on his own initiative to invoke the PNG constitution sections relating to human rights, his statement said. There was no precedent for how an inquiry of this nature should proceed, he said, but Cannings believed it would include several hearings, questioning of senior government officials, an inspection of the detention centre and interviews with detainees.

The centre was the scene of two violent riots during which Barati was killed and dozens of others injured. Arrests over the death of Barati are reported to be imminent.

Cannings’ inquiry is separate to a constitutional challenge against the centre – which currently holds around 1,300 asylum seekers – mounted by the opposition leader, Belden Namah.

Last month, a five-member bench of the supreme court ruled against the government’s argument that Namah was not eligible to launch the challenge. The ruling also noted that detainees appeared to be unaware they could appeal their detention in a PNG court.

Cannings expects to deliver a judgment by the end of March.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/manus-inquiry-judge-should-be-disqualified-say-png-lawyers

PNG judge says Manus Island centre 'very tense'

Manus Island detention centre 'very tense', says PNG judge conducting rights inquiry

ABC Australia Network News

By PNG correspondent Liam Fox

First posted Tue 18 Mar 2014, 8:03pm AEDT

Updated Tue 18 Mar 2014, 8:33pm AEDT

A Papua New Guinea judge who is conducting a human rights inquiry into the Australian Government's detention centre on Manus Island has described the mood there as "very tense".

Under PNG law, the Supreme Court can initiate its own inquiries into human rights matters.

Justice David Cannings did just that after last month's fatal riot at the detention centre left one asylum seeker dead and scores injured.

He has now visited the centre, and says the first thing he noticed was the large presence of security personnel.

He says the centre appeared to have been put together at short notice with little space for exercise and cramped dormitories.

He did not speak directly with any asylum seekers but says they tried to complain to him that the toilet and shower blocks had been scrubbed up for his visit.

Justice Cannings says the medical facilities were clean and well organised, and the asylum seekers looked healthy and well-nourished.

Lawyers for the PNG government say the asylum seekers seemed healthy, well-nourished, clean and appropriately clothed.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-18/an-manus-island-atmosphere-very-tense/5329420>

Asylum seekers set to testify at Manus centre inquiry

Asylum seekers set to testify at human rights inquiry into Manus Island detention centre conditions

ABC News Online

By Liam Fox on Manus Island

Posted Wed 19 Mar 2014, 7:36am AEDT

Several asylum seekers are set to testify at a human rights inquiry into conditions at the Manus Island detention centre.

The inquiry was told four asylum seekers would give evidence when it resumes this morning.

The public solicitor has collected affidavits from 32 asylum seekers but most are yet to be signed.

The inquiry, initiated by Justice David Canning, is examining the conditions at the detention centre and whether detainees are being denied their human rights.

Justice Canning visited the centre yesterday and said the atmosphere was "very tense".

He said there was little space for exercise, the dormitories were cramped and the dining facilities were not overly clean.

The medical facilities were clean, he said, and well organised.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-19/asylum-seekers-set-to-testify-at-manus-island-inquiry/5330070

Bread at Manus Island detention centre worm-infested

PNG inquiry told bread worm-infested at Manus Island detention centre

Sunday Times

Eoin Blackwell

News Corp Australia

March 19, 2014

AN asylum seeker has told a Papua New Guinea inquiry about eating worm-infested bread and living in prison-like conditions at the Manus Island detention centre.

He's told an inquiry into whether detainees' human rights are being catered to under PNG's constitution that "angry" Immigration Minister Scott Morrison had told them to not even dream about coming to Australia.

The 25-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker told the court that in his six months at the Australian-commissioned detention centre, he often had to pull apart bread to get rid of worms.

"We find worms inside the cereal and bread," he said today.

Speaking through a translator, he said camp authorities had stopped using the cereal but still handed out the bread. "With the bread, we're eating it everyday but we find it has worms," he said. "We throw out the parts of the bread with worms then we eat the rest of the bread."

The man — the first witness to appear before Justice David Canning's inquiry — said Mr Morrison visited the centre and told asylum seekers not to dream about coming to Australia. "Even in your dreams, you are not going to make it to Australia.

"He was a bit angry," the asylum seeker said.

The man, who told the court he left behind his wife and two children in Iraq after he was targeted by a terrorist group, said toilets at the centre were a "miserable situation". "We seldom have soap in the toilets. Most of the time there's no water in the bathrooms," he said.

"Four days ago, because they had knowledge of the delegation coming to the camp, they started to clean. Not just this time, but every time a high figure is coming in."

Justice Canning and a court-appointed party visited the centre yesterday.

When asked by public prosecutor Frazer Pitpit how he felt about coming to court, the asylum seeker said he felt human for the first time in a long time. "I have a right to sit with people and they are going to listen to what I say," he said. "For the first time I feel I am human. No one considered me an asylum seeker.

"I felt that I don't have any rights in this place."

The inquiry is set to hear from up to six asylum seekers today. The hearings continue in Lorengau, the Manus Island capital.

www.perthnow.com.au/news/png-inquiry-told-bread-worminfested-at-manus-island-detention-centre/story-fnhnv0wb-1226859183987

MEDIA RELEASE: Two Manus asylum seekers attempt suicide

Two attempted suicides on Manus Island follow PNG Lawyer's comments

Wednesday March 19, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Two Iranian asylum seekers in the mid-20s, have attempted suicide on Manus Island, after reading comments by the PNG government lawyer, Ian Molloy.

Molloy, was part of a group inspecting the detention centre facilities as part of the PNG National Court enquiry into the Manus Island detention camp and the attacks on asylum seekers on 17 February.

Molloy, was reported as saying that 'the asylum seekers appeared clean, clothed and healthy.'

At lunchtime, the two asylum seekers from Foxtrot compound went to the washroom and cut themselves.

The self-harm attempts followed another attempted hanging last night after an asylum seeker returned from "quarantine" .

The attempted suicides are a dramatic indication of the despair that surrounds the Manus camp.

"Politically motivated comments about the apparent 'health' of asylum seekers who have been the victims of brutal attacks will only deepen the suspicion and frustration of the asylum seekers. Molloy's comments give little confidence that the PNG government is concerned to make an independent assessment of the conditions in the Manus camp," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Reports of Manus Island suicide attempts, worms in bread

The Age

March 20, 2014

Sarah Whyte

There have been three apparent suicide attempts on Manus Island, as detainees continue to protest against poor conditions at the offshore detention centre and the lack of progress in processing their asylum claims.

On Tuesday afternoon two Iranian men, aged between 23 and 25, are believed to have cut themselves with razors in the men's bathroom in the Foxtrot compound of the centre on Tuesday afternoon.

An Iranian asylum seeker who witnessed the incident said the men from the Ahwazi minority group had become angry after the judge heading the Papua New Guinea inquiry, Justice David Canning, toured the centre and described the asylum seekers as appearing healthy and well nourished.

"Today two people try to suicide they cut thier [sic] hands becuase [sic] of png justice report he said people are healthy in camp," he wrote in a Facebook message to a refugee advocate.

Then on Monday night an Afghan asylum seeker tried to hang himself in his room after returning from quarantine.

Another Iranian asylum seeker wrote in a separate message: "Our most important problem is that we are all under mental and spiritual tortures."

Meanwhile, in the PNG-led inquiry into the violence that claimed the life of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati, an asylum seeker has told a Papua New Guinea court about eating worm-infested bread and prison-like conditions in the detention centre.

Speaking on Wednesday at an inquiry into whether detainees' human rights are being met under PNG's constitution, he said that an "angry" Immigration Minister Scott Morrison had told them to not even dream about coming to Australia.

The 25-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker told the court that in his six months at the Australian-commissioned detention centre, he often had to pull apart bread to get rid of worms.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/reports-of-manus-island-suicide-attempts-worms-in-bread-20140319-352w4.html

Amnesty to assist Manus human rights inquiry

Manus Island human rights inquiry to be assisted by Amnesty International

Rights group and legal experts allowed to take part in inquiry into claims of human rights violations against asylum seekers

Oliver Laughland, Helen Davidson and agencies
theguardian.com
Thursday 20 March 2014

Amnesty International, assisted by the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) in Melbourne, has been granted leave to participate in an ongoing Papua New Guinean court inquiry into conditions inside the Manus Island detention centre, raising hopes that serious allegations of human rights violations within the centre will be addressed.

The PNG court inquiry, led by Justice David Cannings, has been examining conditions inside the centre after initiating an investigation following the unrest on 17 February, which left one man, Reza Barati, dead and dozens injured.

The inquiry is interviewing asylum seekers detained on Manus Island as well as a host of PNG immigration officials and has broad powers to order changes to the site's management if human rights violations are uncovered.

Daniel Webb, a lawyer with the HRLC who is on Manus Island, welcomed the news:

“The Australian government has gone to great lengths and great expense to keep asylum seekers in such a remote and isolated location in an attempt to keep them beyond the reach of the rule of law. Well now the rule of law is now going to them,” he said.

Last year Amnesty International produced a damning inspection report of the Manus Island site, raising numerous observations that conditions there were in violation of international human rights law.

“The national court case is an important opportunity to address the key human rights concerns raised in our report last year,” said Kate Schuetz, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific researcher.

On Thursday an asylum seeker detained on Manus Island told the Cannings inquiry he was not informed by authorities of his right to free legal help under the nation's law, as more asylum seekers complain of poor conditions following the unrest.

A 26-year-old Rohingya man from Burma said he had not spoken to a lawyer in six months, the Australian Associated Press reported. “I was not told I could have a lawyer,” the man said on Thursday.

Under PNG law, anyone who is locked up has the right to free legal advice.

An asylum seeker on Manus Island, also told Guardian Australia that food being served to detainees following the unrest on 17 February was inedible and alleged asylum seekers were still being threatened by PNG locals from outside the compound.

“Everyday the food is the same,” the asylum seeker said. “Every time I smell it I want to vomit.” He described the food as “shit in a container”. He said that since the unrest local caterers have not been allowed to serve asylum seekers, who are now required to distribute the food for themselves.

The asylum seeker’s claims were contradicted by lawyer Peter Kuman, representing the PNG government and its chief immigration officer. Kuman told Guardian Australia he visited the camp with Cannings and he found the facility “adequate”. “The food is good, they are given vegetarian or halal,” he said.

Kuman said asylum seekers were free to contact lawyers and family from the centre, and lawyers were free to visit the centre. However Kuman could not say if he knew that any had.

“There’s nothing wrong with it,” he said. “If people want to visit the centre there is a procedure you have to follow. you have to get permission ... It’s not a closed-door detention centre.”

On Tuesday it was reported one asylum seeker had told the Cannings inquiry detainees had been given worm-infested food since the unrest.

The Rohingya man, testifying to Cannings on Thursday, said he had had one interview with an Australian lawyer and two with immigration officials shortly after arriving on Manus Island in August or September, but had heard nothing since.

He is the fifth asylum seeker to testify before Cannings’s inquiry into the centre’s human rights obligations.

The man said he told International Organisation for Migration officials he wanted to go back to Burma because he was suffering, but the request was refused because of the risk to his life. Rohingya people are persecuted and stateless in Burma, he said.

When asked by Cannings what order he wanted the court to make, the man said if the governments of PNG, Australia and Burma could guarantee his safety, he would like to go home.

“Do you want the court to order that the PNG government pay for you to go back to Burma?” Justice Cannings asked.

“I don’t know how the PNG government is able to succeed,” the man said. “But if they can do it, then I will go back.”

The Refugee Action Coalition (RAC), an asylum-seeker advocacy group in Sydney, has also said that three asylum seekers on Manus Island have attempted suicide in the past two days.

Ian Rintoul, a spokesman for RAC, said two Iranians and one Afghan detainee had attempted suicide.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been contacted for comment.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/20/manus-island-human-rights-inquiry-to-be-assisted-by-amnesty-international

Abbott to press asylum seeker processing in PNG

Tony Abbott will press PNG to speed up asylum seeker processing

Intergovernmental talks in Port Moresby expected to cover Manus Island detention centre as well as economic ties

Helen Davidson

theguardian.com

Thursday 20 March 2014

The Australian prime minister, Tony Abbott, will press his Papua New Guinea counterpart Peter O'Neill on speeding up processing of asylum seekers – none of whom have had any claims finalised as yet – during his three-day official visit to the country.

Abbott arrived in Port Moresby on Thursday evening for intergovernmental talks which are expected to cover the controversial Manus Island detention centre as well as economic ties between the two countries. He was met by the deputy prime minister, Leo Dion, and senior government ministers.

“I’m very pleased and very proud of the assistance that PNG has given to Australia in this whole issue of people smuggling and its prevention,” Abbott said in Port Moresby. “I’ll certainly be talking to Prime Minister O’Neill over what we can do to swiftly get people out of the Manus camp and at least some resettled here in PNG, as was agreed with Prime Minister Rudd about nine months ago.”

As part of the arrangement with Australia, PNG agreed to assist any asylum seekers found to be refugees to settle in PNG, although no claims have yet been finalised either way, and there is scant detail on how exactly settlement will be assisted by either government.

The PNG government has set up a committee to establish a policy for processing and settlement, but the foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, on Friday conceded that no processing can take place without a proper policy, local media reported.

The Manus Island regional processing centre currently detains about 1,300 asylum seekers. A recent violent incident in which one man, 23-year-old Reza Barati, was killed, and dozens of others injured, has brought further attention on the centre which has been routinely criticised by international human rights groups and the UN.

Pato on Friday said the government would make public its reports on the incident after it completes its inquiries, and will then establish a separate coronial inquiry into the circumstances around Barati’s death.

A PNG supreme court justice, David Cannings, is in the midst of an inquiry into alleged human rights violations occurring inside the centre, and in the past week has questioned a number of asylum seekers in court and toured the centre with legal representatives of both the asylum seekers and the PNG government.

The inquiry is separate from a legal suit launched by opposition leader Belden Namah, which is challenging the constitutionality of the camp and the agreement between the two countries.

Prior to leaving Canberra, Abbott prefaced the topics to be discussed between the two leaders, and said the focus will be on strengthening economic ties. Australia currently gives more than \$500m per year in aid to PNG, with around \$420m on infrastructure projects tied to the regional resettlement arrangement.

Also expected to be discussed are the Exxon LNG project, and calls for PNG citizens to be granted visas on arrival when travelling to Australia on business. PNG recently banned visas on arrival for Australians in an apparent response to Australia's refusal to return the favour.

Abbott is touring PNG with a number of business representatives, including the managing director of Oil Search, Peter Botten; Rio Tinto executive Peter Taylor; the deputy CEO of ANZ Bank, Graham Hodges; and CEO of engineering company Clough, Kevin Gallagher.

PNG has in recent years seen a boom in the resources industry which has brought increased foreign investment but also greater wealth inequality.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/tony-abbott-will-press-png-to-speed-up-asylum-seeker-processing

Abbott to discuss asylum seeker PNG future

PM arrives in PNG, futures of asylum seekers will be discussed

The Age

March 20, 2014

Michael Gordon

Tony Abbott has raised the prospect of some asylum seekers being “swiftly” released from the Manus Island detention centre and permanently resettled in Papua New Guinea.

But in comments on his arrival at Port Moresby on Wednesday night, the Prime Minister has injected more uncertainty into the fate of the majority of around 1300 asylum seekers being held in the centre.

Mr Abbott meets his counterpart, Peter O'Neill, on Friday and indicated the future of those in the camp that was rocked by violence last month would be discussed.

“I'll certainly be talking to Prime Minister O'Neill about what we can do to swiftly get people out of the Manus camp and at least some resettled here in PNG as was agreed with prime minister (Kevin) Rudd about nine months ago,” Mr Abbott said.

Under the agreement with the former government, all – not some - of those transferred to PNG and found to be refugees were to be resettled in that country.

Having ruled out any being resettled in Australia, Mr Abbott's remarks raise the prospect of a majority of the asylum seekers being settled in a third country, though no contender has emerged since the centre was reopened by the former government.

The UNHCR has expressed grave concern about PNG's capacity to process the asylum seekers, the conditions in the camp and their prospects for resettlement.

Mr Abbott's visit coincides with an inquiry by PNG judge David Cannings that has taken evidence from asylum seekers this week and will see the media allowed into the centre with the judge on Friday.

The Abbott government has consistently refused media access to the centre.

Several of those who appeared before the inquiry said they feared a repeat of last month's violence that saw one asylum seeker brutally killed and several others seriously wounded.

They have also told Justice Cannings they had never been told they were entitled to legal representation, something that is their right under PNG law.

Mr Abbott is also expected to sign a new economic co-operation agreement with PNG during his three-day visit to Australia's nearest neighbour.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/pm-arrives-in-png-futures-of-asylum-seekers-will-be-discussed-20140320-3565d.html

PNG will legislate to resettle some refugees

PNG will resettle some, but not all, asylum seekers found to be refugees

Peter O'Neill says laws will pass in May and resettlement of Manus Island asylum seekers could begin by June

Lenore Taylor, political editor

theguardian.com

Friday 21 March 2014

Papua New Guinea will resettle some, but not all, of the asylum seekers on Manus Island found to be genuine refugees and is seeking other Pacific nations to share the burden, the PNG prime minister has said after talks with Tony Abbott.

Peter O'Neill said his country's parliament would pass the necessary laws for resettlement to occur in May, and resettlement of some the 1,310 asylum seekers now on Manus Island could begin by June.

Asked whether PNG would take all of the asylum seekers, as was pledged in the agreement signed between PNG and the former Rudd government in August 2013, O'Neill said: "Not all ... we will take some, we will take as much as we can, we will also want all the other countries in the region, others in the Pacific, to extend their participation ... we expect everybody to carry a certain burden, as we do."

O'Neill said some PNG communities had already offered to resettle asylum seekers and that it was "pretty hard to speculate [about resettlement] when we don't know the numbers of people we are talking about".

He said he expected a majority of those detained on Manus Island would be found to be "economic refugees" rather than refugees fleeing persecution.

Abbott said he was "extremely gratified to have from Peter this morning his assurance that the people and the government of PNG are committed to staying the course and ... very grateful that the regulatory process is in train so that the settlement process can begin by May or June".

"I understand that, depending on how many of those on Manus are found to be genuine refugees, it might be difficult for PNG to resettle all of them," he said.

A lack of information provided to asylum seekers on Manus about what would happen to them has been cited as a major reason for the escalating tensions that led to last month's violence that claimed the life of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati.

Both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Amnesty International have criticised slow processing and unresolved resettlement arrangements at the detention centre.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has said the original memorandum of understanding with PNG had been "little more than a blank sheet of paper" with the incoming government forced to negotiate the details.

Processing has been underway on Manus Island for some months and Guardian Australia understands several cases are now at “draft decision” level.

Australia is urgently finishing more permanent accommodation, closer to the township of East Lorengau, with the intention of resettling people there for the foreseeable future, while long-term resettlement arrangements are negotiated.

Abbott said Australia could best help the PNG process by “ensuring that those found not to be refugees are swiftly repatriated”.

PNG’s foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, recently told Guardian Australia the initial agreement with the former Rudd government, allowing asylum seekers to be transferred to Manus for one year from August 2013, had been extended to apply for a second year.

Abbott’s two-day visit to PNG coincides with an inquiry into the Manus Island unrest by PNG judge David Cannings, which has taken evidence from asylum seekers this week. That inquiry was due to allow some media into the centre with the judge on Friday.

Both countries are conducting inquiries to report on the incident.

PNG’s chief immigration officer, Mataio Rabura, has told Guardian Australia that after Robert Cornall, a former senior Australian public servant, had completed his investigation “PNG and Australian immigration will assess the reports [his and PNG immigration’s] and submit a joint report to both governments”.

Rabura’s answer appears to explain a reference by Morrison to the various reports into the incident being “synthesised”.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/png-will-resettle-some-but-not-all-asylum-seekers-found-to-be-refugees

Abbott wants PNG to speed up asylum processing

ABC News Online

By Melissa Clarke in Port Moresby

Posted Fri 21 Mar 2014, 7:52am AEDT

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is pressing Papua New Guinea to speed up the processing of asylum seekers held in detention on Manus Island.

Mr Abbott has arrived in Port Moresby for an official state visit and bi-lateral talks with the Papua New Guinean Prime Minister, Peter O'Neill.

PNG is yet to finalise claims and offer permanent resettlement to a single refugee, despite that arrangement being a key part of Australia's border protection policy.

Mr Abbott's visit is a chance to apply some gentle pressure to PNG to speed things up.

"I'm very pleased and very proud of the assistance that PNG has given to Australia in this whole issue of people smuggling and its prevention," he said.

"I'll certainly be talking to prime minister O'Neill over what we can do to swiftly get people out of the Manus camp and at least some resettled here in PNG, as was agreed with prime minister Rudd about 9 months ago."

PNG's role in the Government's border protection policies is crucial but it is difficult for both Mr Abbott and Mr O'Neill to manage.

Recent violence at the Manus Island detention centre saw one asylum seeker killed and around 70 injured.

Human rights groups have decried the living conditions inside the camp.

Protecting relationship

The Lowy Institute's Melanesian Program Director, Jenny Hayward-Jones, expects Tony Abbott won't push Peter O'Neill too hard on the issue.

"It has become a much bigger part of the relationship than either side really wanted to see," she said.

"Now because it involves a very substantial additional aid program and it involves quite a number of inquiries into recent events and general conditions on Manus, it has become a much bigger issue."

"I think both prime ministers will be looking to make sure it doesn't damage other parts of the relationship."

Economic ties and infrastructure will be at the top of the agenda for the bi-lateral talks between the two prime ministers.

There will be a ceremonial welcome at the PNG parliament, including a 19-gun salute.

Mr Abbott will then visit the Governor-General, before meetings with the National Executive Council and business leaders.

The two leaders are expected to sign a treaty on economic development, to mark a shift away from an aid and development-based relationship.

Mr Abbott will also visit schools that have benefitted from Australia's aid funding and see the partnership between Australian and PNG police that has improved security in Port Moresby.

Ms Hayward-Jones says Mr Abbott will be looking to build a good relationship with Mr O'Neill.

"The visit will be crafted so that he can show himself to be a true friend of PNG and develop an open and friendly relationship with Peter O'Neill, such that they can telephone each other regularly and be on good terms," she said.

"I don't think we'll see any major surprises."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-21/abbott-wants-png-to-speed-up-processing-of-asylum-seekers/5335676

Asylum resettlement within three months: Abbott

Asylum seekers may be resettled in Papua New Guinea within three months: Tony Abbott

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 21 Mar 2014, 2:50pm AEDT

Updated Fri 21 Mar 2014, 2:59pm AEDT

Prime Minister Tony Abbott says the permanent resettlement of asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea could begin within the next two to three months.

Mr Abbott has held formal talks with PNG's prime minister, Peter O'Neill, in Port Moresby.

Mr O'Neill says his country is committed to the agreement struck last year to resettle asylum seekers held at the Manus Island detention centre who had attempted to reach Australia by boat.

He says the talks have been constructive and that Australia and PNG will continue to "work together" on resettling asylum seekers.

"For PNG, we are committed to staying the course," Mr O'Neill said. "We have agreed to participate in this program that was signed by our former prime ministers.

"We will of course process those who have now been interviewed for processing and we will be dealing with them as quickly as possible in the coming weeks and months."

Mr O'Neill has indicated legislative changes will come before PNG's parliament in May and resettlement could begin soon after.

Mr Abbott, who arrived in Port Moresby earlier this morning for an official state visit and bilateral talks, says Australia and Papua New Guinea share a close relationship.

PNG's role in the Coalition Government's border protection policies is crucial and Mr Abbott says he knows "the course will be stayed".

He says he knows the resettlement of asylum seekers in PNG is a difficult issue for the country, but he appreciates the "mateship" shown to Australia.

"I'm extremely grateful for PNG's renewed commitment today to resettlement," Mr Abbott said.

"I accept that depending upon how many of those at Manus are found to be refugees, I accept that it might be hard for PNG to take all of them.

"But we're grateful for the fact that some of them will be here in PNG and we're continuing to work with other countries in our region to ensure that people don't come to Australia if they arrive illegally by boat.

"This is the bottom line: if you arrive illegally by boat in Australia, you will never permanently settle in Australia because as long as there is this prospect of permanent settlement in Australia, there is the risk that illegal boats will keep coming."

Mr Abbott's visit coincides with the first media tour of the detention centre on Manus Island since it reopened in November 2012.

Several media organisations, including the ABC, will visit the centre today with PNG judge David Cannings.

Recent violence at the detention centre saw one asylum seeker killed and around 70 injured.

Human rights groups have decried the living conditions inside the camp.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-21/asylum-seekers-may-be-resettled-within-three-months-abbott/5336966

PNG PM says most asylum seekers not 'genuine refugees'

Future of Manus Island asylum seekers unclear as Peter O'Neill says most are not 'genuine refugees'

The Age

March 21, 2014

Michael Gordon

Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister has pre-empted decisions on the refugee status of asylum seekers being held on Manus Island, declaring “a good majority” of those who have been interviewed are not “genuine refugees”.

Peter O'Neill has also made plain that PNG will only re-settle “some” of those whose refugee claims are recognised, insisting other countries in the region should “carry the same burden as we do”.

But Prime Minister Tony Abbott, in a joint media conference with Mr O'Neill yesterday, could not nominate a single country that has indicated it will take refugees from Manus, where around 1300 asylum seekers are being held and not one refugee status determination has been completed since the first transfer of asylum seekers in November 2012.

Mr Abbott accepted that “it might be hard” for PNG to take all whose claims were recognised and said Australia was “continuing to work with other countries in our region to ensure that people don't come to Australia if they arrive illegally by boat”.

As the two leaders met and vowed to “stay the course”, journalists were given access for the first time to the controversial centre, where many of the asylum seekers pleaded for their freedom. During the journalists' visit, asylum seekers made new claims about the murder of detainee Reza Barati, saying he was thrown from a balcony before being beaten to death.

The journalists entered the centre with the approval of PNG judge David Cannings, who is investigating human rights after the incidents last month in which scores of asylum seekers were also injured, allegedly by PNG nationals employed by the security contractor at the centre.

Mr O'Neill made a fleeting reference to the violence, saying he regretted “instances of late”, but gave no indication of when the police investigation into the incident would be complete.

While legislation allowing for resettlement in PNG will not be ready until May and remains highly contentious, a defiant Mr Abbott said Australia could best assist PNG “in ensuring people found not to be refugees are swiftly repatriated”.

“This is the bottom line: if you arrive illegally by boat in Australia you will never permanently settle in Australia because, as long as there is this prospect of permanent resettlement, there is the risk that illegal boats will keep coming,” Mr Abbott declared.

Mr O'Neill recommitted to the centre despite international agencies including the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, and Amnesty International raising concerns about conditions in the centre, the state of processing and requirements that might be attached to resettlement.

Before a PNG official declared that the leaders would take no more questions on Manus, Mr O'Neill said that some communities in the country had offered to participate in a resettlement program.

“It is pretty hard to speculate when we don't precisely know the actual number of people that we are talking about. We expect it to be less because people are expected to go home.” he said.

“Many of them now that have been processed, a good majority of them, are economic refugees. They are not genuine refugees. So, as such they will be sent back to the country of origin.”

It was not clear on what Mr O'Neill based his claim that a majority of those processed were not “genuine refugees”, given that the legislative framework for determining refugee status and resettlement has not been finalised.

In a statement that will concern the UNHCR, Mr O'Neill said the absence of legislation was not an impediment to decisions. “Interview and processing of refugee people at Manus is now taking place as we speak,” he said. “Those proven to be not genuine refugees will be moved on as quickly as possible and those who want resettlement will be resettled under our legislative structure.”

Both leaders were talking after they met at PNG's Parliament House on Friday and signed an economic co-operation treaty.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/future-of-manus-island-asylum-seekers-unclear-as-peter-oneill-says-most-are-not-genuine-refugees-20140321-35896.html

PNG judge starts new inquiry after bias accusations

Manus Island: judge launches new inquiry after PNG accuses him of bias

David Cannings immediately starts another human rights investigation after supreme court halts his first one

Australian Associated Press
theguardian.com
Friday 21 March 2014

Papua New Guinea's supreme court has temporarily halted a judicial inquiry into human rights at Australia's immigration detention centre on Manus Island amid a row over whether the judge carrying out the investigation is biased. But in a dramatic riposte the judge involved, Justice David Cannings, immediately launched another inquiry into the treatment of detainees.

The supreme court issued the stay on Friday afternoon after lawyers for the Papua New Guinean government sought leave to appeal against Cannings' earlier decision not to disqualify himself from proceedings on the grounds of apprehended bias.

The application will be heard before the supreme court on Wednesday.

Cannings had just fixed a timetable for next week's hearings in Port Moresby when news of the stay reached Lorengau, the Manus capital.

After being informed of the stay the judge immediately launched a second inquiry and granted the Australian lawyer Jay Williams one week's access to the detention centre to interview 75 detainees Williams says are his clients.

While Williams cannot appear before the PNG courts as a lawyer, any person can mount a human rights challenge.

The PNG government is likely to appeal against the second inquiry but will probably have to wait until Cannings's paperwork reaches Port Moresby on Monday.

Williams has been granted access to the centre for six hours a day to interview and collect affidavits from the men, most of whom are understood to have declined to be represented by PNG's public solicitor, Frazer Pitpit.

On Friday, a few hours before the stay was issued on the first inquiry, a court-appointed party including media visited the detention centre under court order.

Throughout the week the court heard testimony from 11 asylum seekers about their treatment at the centre.

Pitpit had prepared 32 affidavits from asylum seekers.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/22/manus-island-judge-launches-new-inquiry-after-png-accuses-him-of-bias

Media invited to tour Manus Island detention centre

Media invited to tour Manus Island detention centre with PNG judge

ABC News Online

By Liam Fox on Manus Island

First posted Fri 21 Mar 2014, 9:16am AEDT

Updated Fri 21 Mar 2014, 9:24am AEDT

A judge in Papua New Guinea has allowed several media organisations to join him on a visit to the Manus Island detention centre.

It will be the first time representatives of the media will enter the detention centre since it was reopened in November 2012.

In recent times the media has been prevented from taking pictures of the centre's exterior and even from entering the naval base in which it is situated.

Justice David Cannings has approved, in principle, applications by five media organisations, including the ABC, to join him when he visits the centre later today.

It will be his second visit to the centre as part of his inquiry into the living conditions there and whether asylum seekers' human rights are being denied.

After his first visit on Tuesday he described the atmosphere as "very tense".

Eleven asylum seekers have appeared before the inquiry so far and all of them have likened life in the centre to living in a prison.

Lawyers for the PNG government did not oppose the applications by the media organisations, but they asked for the identities of asylum seekers to be protected.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is currently in Port Moresby for talks with PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill.

He says he wants PNG to speed up the processing of asylum seekers at the Manus Island detention centre.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-21/media-invited-to-judge-inquiry-into-manus-detention-centre/5335738

Reza Barati was 'knocked down stairs and then beaten to death'

Manus Island detainees reveal what they saw as part of inquiry into night of unrest at the island's detention centre

Australian Associated Press
theguardian.com
Friday 21 March 2014

Asylum seekers detained on Manus Island say Reza Barati was knocked down a set of stairs and then beaten to death.

Fresh allegations about the death of the Iranian asylum seeker emerged on Friday during an inspection of the centre, organised as part of a court inquiry into last month's violence.

While Australian Associated Press – one of two Australian media organisations granted rare access to the Manus Island facility – was not permitted to interview asylum seekers, many spoke openly and shouted to the visiting party.

In one part of the facility known as Mike compound, transferees pointed to a black stairwell that snaked up between stacked, white shipping containers that served as four-man bedrooms.

“They hit him and he fell from here and they hit him till he died,” said one asylum seeker. “They hit him in the head until he died.” They did not elaborate on who hit Barati. A number of other asylum seekers made the same claim.

Barati, 23, died on 17 February following violent clashes at the centre.

As part of the court order admitting media, no staff or asylum seekers can be identified. Media were also shown two bullet holes on the side of one of the containers, and another in a support beam of a large, covered area. Later, while visiting a mess hall, one detainee said loudly the bullets came from an MP5 machinegun.

Inside the centre some asylum seekers held pictures of Barati. In an education facility in one compound, a discarded sign on a table read: “Deepest sympathy and condolences to the Reza family from the asylum seekers on Manus. He will be truly missed.”

Journalists were also shown evidence of the disturbances of 16 and 17 February, which left 62 asylum seekers injured – one with gunshot wounds.

Panes of glass were missing from some sleeping areas, while in a dining hall some windows were still cracked. In one dining area there were few tables and chairs. The court officials were told there were fewer tables since the incident.

Staff said there were no tables in the dining area of Foxtrot compound “since the events of last month”. PNG police have yet to make any arrests relating to Barati's death.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/reza-barati-was-knocked-down-stairs-and-then-beaten-to-death

Damage from riots visible during Manus media tour

Manus Island: Damage from riots visible during media's tour of detention centre

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 21 Mar 2014, 5:58pm AEDT

Updated Fri 21 Mar 2014, 8:01pm AEDT

The damage from last month's deadly riots at the Manus Island detention centre was visible when a group of journalists toured the facility in Papua New Guinea (PNG) today.

As part of an inquiry into the human rights of asylum seekers, a handful of journalists including the ABC's Liam Fox, were allowed to join Justice David Cannings on his second visit to the detention centre.

Human rights groups have decried the living conditions inside the camp, and recent violence at the detention centre saw one asylum seeker killed and around 70 injured.

Fox said he saw several broken glass panels in one of the dining rooms as well as bullet holes in the roof of an undercover area in the Mike compound.

He said asylum seekers surrounded the journalists for much of the visit, chanting "Please help us" and "We want freedom".

"The scars of last month's riot are still very plain to see," he said.

"In one dining room several of the glass windows are still smashed, yet to be repaired. When we went to the Mike compound, which is where Reza Berati, the 22-year-old Iranian man who was killed during last month's riot [was held], there were bullet holes in the roof of an undercover area and a nearby white container.

"There were asylum seekers around us for much of the visit and when we were in Mike compound they were saying to us, 'Come with us, come with us. We can show you many more bullet holes in our dormitories'.

"Everywhere throughout the entire compound there were pictures of Reza Berati stuck to walls. People were holding them as they milled about us."

The dormitories were tightly packed, with Fox describing some of the toilet and shower blocks as filthy.

He said in one block only one of five showers looked to be in working order.

"There was a range in quality of facilities. Some of the dormitories were new. Some of them were refurbished buildings that had existed under the previous Pacific Solution of the Howard government.

"Some of the dormitories were air-conditioned, some weren't. All were very crowded and for most of the trip we were surrounded by asylum seekers who were saying things to us like 'Free us, free us. Please help us, please help us. We want freedom!'"

Fox said one of the more confronting images he witnessed was a plaque on one of the fences requesting that all security guards carry a Hoffman knife.

"We were told that it is used to cut down people who have tried to hang themselves," he said.

I've seen many shocking things as a journalist. The inside of the #Manus detention centre is among the most confronting.

— Liam Fox (@liamfoxpng) March 21, 2014

Resettlement 'three months'

Earlier today Prime Minister Tony Abbott said the permanent resettlement of asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea could begin within the next two to three months.

Mr Abbott held formal talks with PNG's prime minister, Peter O'Neill, in Port Moresby where the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the asylum seeker agreement.

PNG's role in the Coalition Government's border protection policies is crucial and Mr Abbott said he knows "the course will be stayed".

He said he knows the resettlement of asylum seekers in PNG is a difficult issue for the country, but he appreciates the "mateship" shown to Australia.

"I'm extremely grateful for PNG's renewed commitment today to resettlement," Mr Abbott said.

"I accept that depending upon how many of those at Manus are found to be refugees, I accept that it might be hard for PNG to take all of them.

"But we're grateful for the fact that some of them will be here in PNG and we're continuing to work with other countries in our region to ensure that people don't come to Australia if they arrive illegally by boat.

"This is the bottom line: if you arrive illegally by boat in Australia, you will never permanently settle in Australia because as long as there is this prospect of permanent settlement in Australia, there is the risk that illegal boats will keep coming."

Mr O'Neill says his country is committed to the agreement struck last year to resettle asylum seekers held at the Manus Island detention centre who had attempted to reach Australia by boat.

He says the talks have been constructive and that Australia and PNG will continue to "work together" on resettling asylum seekers.

"For PNG, we are committed to staying the course," Mr O'Neill said. "We have agreed to participate in this program that was signed by our former prime ministers.

"We will, of course, process those who have now been interviewed for processing and we will be dealing with them as quickly as possible in the coming weeks and months."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-21/media-tour-of-manus-island-detention-centre/5337660>

New inquiry called into Manus Island detention centre

Manus Island inquiry: Justice Canning initiates new inquiry after PNG government stalls current hearing

ABC News Online

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Fox

First posted Sat 22 Mar 2014, 4:41pm AEDT

Updated Sat 22 Mar 2014, 5:07pm AEDT

A Papua New Guinea judge has initiated a new inquiry into the Manus Island detention centre after the PNG government tried to shut down the current inquiry.

Earlier this month Justice David Canning launched an inquiry to examine conditions at the detention centre.

The inquiry has held a week of hearings and yesterday a handful of journalists were allowed to join Justice David Canning on his second visit to the detention centre.

But late yesterday the inquiry was put on hold after lawyers for the PNG government obtained a stay order in the Supreme Court in Port Moresby.

The government is seeking leave to appeal against Justice Canning's refusal to disqualify himself from the inquiry over allegations of bias.

The matter will be heard in the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

But Justice Canning was not to be deterred.

After being informed of the stay order he promptly initiated a new inquiry into whether asylum seekers' human rights are being denied.

He also ordered that Australian lawyer Jay Williams be granted access to the detention centre to speak to 75 asylum seekers he says are his clients.

Abbott: PNG legal system 'robust'

Prime Minister Tony Abbott says he did not discuss the inquiry with his Papua New Guinean counterpart during formal talks in Port Moresby on Friday.

Mr Abbott says the Pacific nation has a robust legal system.

"The judge's work is something of his own motion as I understand it but it is evidence that there is a vigorous and independent legal system here in PNG and that surely is something all Australians should applaud," he said.

Speaking after the talks on Friday Mr Abbott said the permanent resettlement of asylum seekers in PNG could begin within the next two to three months.

PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill said his country is committed to the agreement struck last year to resettle asylum seekers held at the Manus Island detention centre who had attempted to reach Australia by boat.

"For PNG, we are committed to staying the course," Mr O'Neill said.

"We have agreed to participate in this program that was signed by our former prime ministers.

"We will of course process those who have now been interviewed for processing and we will be dealing with them as quickly as possible in the coming weeks and months."

'Filthy' detention conditions

The ABC's Liam Fox was among the journalists allowed into the detention centre on Friday.

Fox said he saw several broken glass panels in one of the dining rooms as well as bullet holes in the roof of an undercover area in the Mike compound.

He said asylum seekers surrounded the journalists for much of the visit, chanting "Please help us" and "We want freedom".

"The scars of last month's riot are still very plain to see," he said.

"There were asylum seekers around us for much of the visit and when we were in Mike compound they were saying to us, 'Come with us, come with us. We can show you many more bullet holes in our dormitories'.

"Everywhere throughout the entire compound there were pictures of Reza Berati stuck to walls. People were holding them as they milled about us."

The dormitories were tightly packed, with Fox describing some of the toilet and shower blocks as filthy.

Fox said one of the more confronting images he witnessed was a plaque on one of the fences requesting that all security guards carry a Hoffman knife.

"We were told that it is used to cut down people who have tried to hang themselves," he said.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-22/new-manus-island-inquiry-after-png-govt-stalls-current-hearing/5338820

Sam Dastyari lashes ALP asylum seeker policy

ALP powerbroker Sam Dastyari lashes party's asylum seeker policy

The Age

March 22, 2014

James Massola

NSW Labor powerbroker Sam Dastyari has lashed his own party's asylum seeker policies and predicted Australians will one day be as embarrassed by offshore processing as they now are by the White Australia Policy.

In a hard-hitting speech that creates a political headache for Labor leader Bill Shorten, Senator Dastyari calls for renewed debate in the ALP over the offshore processing measures adopted by former leader Kevin Rudd.

In a clear sign of the gulf between the NSW Right factional powerbroker and the federal leader, who hails from the Victorian Right, Senator Dastyari concedes that while offshore processing has proven to be effective, "it is not something I am entirely comfortable with".

Labor has been critical of the government's handling of offshore processing on Nauru and Papua New Guinea since the election, including the secrecy of Operation Sovereign Borders but there has been no suggestion it is preparing to rethink its policies.

But Senator Dastyari said the ALP needed to adopt policies that were "both firm and fair".

"I think that future generations will look back on this period in our history with the same sense of embarrassment that we look back on the White Australia Policy," he says. "Labor is and continues to need to be prepared to have an open debate about the future of our migration policies. The fact is, over the past few years we have tossed and turned on these issues."

The speech on Saturday to mark the Iranian new year festival of Nowruz is also the first time the Iranian-born senator has spoken publicly about the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati on Manus Island last month.

Senator Dastyari said he was shocked by the "brutal murder" and vowed he would "not allow the government of Australia to criminalise and further persecute young families fleeing their homes". "Because it could easily have been me, and my sister. My parents fled from a country at war in 1988. I was five years old when I left Iran. My family is part of this story," he will say.

Senator Dastyari said five principles should underpin the offshore processing regime if it is to continue - greater transparency in the form of open access to offshore processing facilities, fair access to legal assistance, faster processing and improved care for asylum seekers.

Most significantly, Senator Dastyari has called for an independent review of every asylum seeker case by the refugee tribunal.

www.theage.com.au/national/alp-powerbroker-sam-dastyari-lashes-partys-asylum-seeker-policy-20140321-358ql.html

Abbott: Most Manus asylum seekers not genuine

Tony Abbott: most Manus asylum seekers won't be declared genuine

PNG and Australian prime ministers hint that most detainees will be found to be economic refugees and not fleeing persecution

*Australian Associated Press
theguardian.com
Saturday 22 March 2014*

Tony Abbott has backed his Papua New Guinea counterpart's suspicions that most detainees on Manus Island will not be found to be genuine refugees.

The first asylum seekers found to be genuine will be resettled in PNG as early as May, as soon as the country's parliament approves the program, Abbott said.

But they are likely to be a minority, with the PNG prime minister, Peter O'Neill, and now Abbott hinting that most will be found to be economic refugees, rather than in fear of persecution in their home countries.

O'Neill said on Friday he suspected "a good majority" of asylum seekers would not pass muster. Abbott said he would wait to see what the outcome of the PNG processing was, but he agreed with O'Neill.

"I think there's a lot that we've seen that justifies that suspicion," Abbott told reporters during his first official trip to Port Moresby on Saturday.

O'Neill has said PNG was prepared to resettle some but not all of the refugees. He and Abbott have reiterated calls for other countries in the region to "share the burden".

Abbott said after his discussions he was confident there would be "swift processing, swift repatriation and swift resettlement".

The PNG cabinet would be finalising matters in April for it to be dealt with in parliament in May, paving the way for the first detainees to be released from detention in May and June, he said.

It would be a matter for the PNG government as to when those people would get citizenship or family reunion rights, he added.

Abbott would not comment on the criticism levelled at the conditions of detainees at the Manus Island detention centre, saying he would not comment on ongoing inquiries. He claimed the Manus Island detention centre - together with temporary protection visas and Australia's preparedness to turn the boats around - as a success.

"The boats are stopping," he said. "It's now more than three months since we had a successful illegal people-smuggling venture to Australia."

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/22/tony-abbott-most-manus-island-detainees-wont-be-found-to-be-genuine

PNG trip dominated by asylum seeker discussions

Tony Abbott's Papua New Guinea trip dominated by discussions about asylum seekers

ABC News Online

By political reporter Melissa Clarke in Port Moresby

First posted Sun 23 Mar 2014, 7:22am AEDT

Updated Sun 23 Mar 2014, 7:31am AEDT

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is returning to Canberra after an official state visit to Papua New Guinea, with the trip dominated by questions about where and when asylum seekers detained on Manus Island will be resettled.

Mr Abbott leaves Port Moresby satisfied that PNG will begin resettling asylum seekers, as it had agreed to last year, in May or June.

But problems at Manus Island, including overcrowding and distressed asylum seekers, are far from resolved.

PNG will not accept all the asylum seekers currently held at the Manus Island detention centre and no other country is offering to resettle them, despite efforts by the Federal Government to convince other Pacific nations to strike a similar deal.

Having PNG and other nations resettle asylum seekers would mean a reduction in the number of people detained on Manus Island.

That would ease tensions and overcrowding in the camps.

It would also make it easier for security to manage the centre.

An outbreak of violence last month left 27-year-old Iranian Reza Berati dead and about 70 people injured.

A recent tour of the camp by the ABC as part of a PNG judicial inquiry revealed asylum seekers there are distressed and housed in filthy conditions.

Delays in the processing of refugee claims has added to tension within the camps, along with confirmation they will never be granted residency in Australia.

Despite being a key element of bi-lateral talks, Mr Abbott and PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill had prioritised economic development for the visit.

The leaders signed an economic cooperation agreement to strengthen business and trade ties.

They also agreed to annual prime ministerial talks, an arrangement Australia has struck with China as well.

Mr Abbott also used his time in Port Moresby to visit schools and organisations benefitting from Australia's \$500-million-a-year aid budget for PNG.

He no doubt made himself more popular with the locals by bringing some rugby league stars to promote an initiative to help schoolkids learn through sport.

Despite Papua New Guineans having mixed views about Australia's resettlement policy, Mr Abbott was warmly welcomed when he visited schools and markets in Port Moresby.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-23/abbott-leaves-png-after-discussions-on-asylum-seekers/5339194

No human rights inquiry for Manus Island

Abbott and O'Neill agree: No human rights inquiry for Manus Island

The Age

March 23, 2014

Michael Gordon, Port Moresby

The Abbott government was consulted and strongly backed the decision of the Papua New Guinea government to shut down a human rights inquiry into the Manus Island detention centre, Fairfax Media has been told.

PNG's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Rimbink Pato, has also confirmed that the two governments would move to deny access of a human rights lawyer to the centre on Monday.

"It's a joint effort. We're the best judges in terms of what's happening on the ground, but we're in concert because this is a partnership. We're together," he said in an exclusive interview.

He said Immigration Minister Scott Morrison and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop shared his concern that the inquiry carried dangers and should be challenged. "They were concerned as well that we should do something like this. It's a joint thing."

Prime Minister Tony Abbott appeared unaware of the joint nature of the move, insisting to reporters on Saturday that PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill had not flagged it with him when they met on Friday.

Mr Pato said the government was moving on the basis that Justice David Cannings, a former human rights lawyer, was presiding over the inquiry he had initiated and that the inquiry was calling experts without complying with "proper processes under PNG law".

Mr Pato said lawyers who were not admitted to practise in PNG and medical doctors who were not registered to practise medicine in PNG would not be permitted to be involved in the inquiry.

Justice Cannings instituted his inquiry into human rights at the centre after an asylum seeker was killed and scores of others injured, allegedly after PNG nationals employed as security guards entered the centre.

When the government secured a stay on the proceedings at least until Wednesday, Justice Cannings instituted new proceedings allowing refugee lawyer Jay Williams access to the centre to see 75 of the more than 1300 asylum seekers in the centre.

But Mr Pato said the PNG government, acting in concert with Australia, would move on Monday to extend its action to include these proceedings, and so deny Mr Williams access to the facility.

He also signalled that PNG would announce the first tranche of negative decisions on asylum seeker claims as early as the next fortnight, suggesting almost 20 negative decisions would be communicated to asylum seekers.

The move to stop the inquiry came after a PNG government official shut down questions on the centre at a joint press conference of Mr Abbott and Mr O'Neill on Friday.

Mr Abbott insists he was not given advance warning of the move against the inquiry during what were described as close, constructive, candid talks on the Manus detention centre and defended PNG's "robust legal system".

He also backed Mr O'Neill's pre-emptive assessment that most of the asylum seekers interviewed so far were not "genuine referees" but "economic migrants".

"There's a lot that we've seen which justifies that suspicion," he told reporters on Saturday, citing the opinion of former Labor foreign minister Bob Carr that "the vast majority" of those coming by boat were not in genuine fear of persecution if they remained in their homelands.

Mr Abbott refused to be drawn on when and why the government had accepted that not all of those at the Manus centre found to be refugees would be resettled in PNG, or on the state of negotiations with other possible resettlement countries in the region.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/abbott-and-oneill-agree-no-human-rights-inquiry-for-manus-island-20140322-35a6e.html

Ben Eltham: The Truth About Reza Barati Must Be Told

Is the Federal Government encouraging Papua New Guinea to bury what happened during the attack on Manus Island detention centre? Ben Eltham on our best chance to learn the truth

New Matilda

1 Apr 2014

By Ben Eltham

When will we know the truth about the death of Reza Barati? The Iranian asylum seeker was killed while under Australia's care following a riot at Australia's offshore detention centre at Manus Island, in Papua New Guinea, on 17 February.

We still don't know exactly what happened. No-one has been charged. Several investigations are ongoing, but these too have been dogged by controversy. So many questions remain.

For instance, why is G4S, the global security firm responsible for the Manus Island detention centre at the time of the riot, reportedly refusing to cooperate with the Papua New Guinea police investigation?

Why was barrister Jay Williams deported? Williams was appointed by a PNG judge, Justice David Cannings, to interview witnesses.

Why did the PNG government of Peter O'Neill move to quash the human rights investigation initiated by Cannings in the PNG Supreme Court?

Why are asylum seekers still being held in manifestly inadequate facilities, in the now-ruined detention centre at Manus Island? In March, ABC correspondent Liam Fox was allowed to see the compound, in a supervised visit with Cannings. He described it as "one of the more confronting things I've seen as a journalist".

Fox told ABC listeners of filthy toilets and shower blocks, shattered windows, bullet holes in dormitories, over-crowding, desperate asylum seekers calling out "Freedom! Freedom!" He described a notice on the wall of the compound which required security guards to carry a Hoffman knife. "We were told it was used to cut down people who tried to hang themselves," he said.

Perhaps the most salient question of all is this: is the Abbott government covertly encouraging the PNG government of Peter O'Neill to shut down human rights investigations about Manus Island?

According to Fairfax's Michael Gordon, the answer is yes. Gordon claims that PNG's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Rimbink Pato, confirmed that the human rights investigation by Cannings was shut down after consultation with Australia.

Pato told Gordon that, "It's a joint effort. We're the best judges in terms of what's happening on the ground, but we're in concert because this is a partnership. We're together."

According to Gordon's story, "Immigration Minister Scott Morrison and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop shared his concern that the inquiry carried dangers and should be challenged."

"They were concerned as well that we should do something like this. It's a joint thing," Pato told Fairfax.

The Abbott government appears to support the cover-up. Immigration Minister Scott Morrison is not exactly a shining light of transparency when it comes to matters related to his portfolio. When asked about the move to quash the human rights inquiry, he told journalists that "we support the actions they consider are necessary to take, upon their own initiative, within their own sovereign jurisdiction and consistent with their own constitution."

Pato later confirmed he consulted with Scott Morrison on the issue, in an interview with the ABC's Emma Alberici.

For anyone still of the belief that the Australian government was doing everything it could to get to the bottom of Berati's violent killing, recent news has not been encouraging.

Today, the Australian Federal Police announced that they would not be assisting PNG police with the Berati investigation. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary had requested an independent observer to sit in on witness interviews.

"The AFP does not have any personnel deployed to Manus or operational jurisdiction in PNG, therefore the AFP suggested the RPNGC look at alternative options," the AFP told New Matilda today, in a statement.

"The AFP advised RPNGC that more appropriate options for an independent observer would be the contracted social welfare provider, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) or diplomatic consular assistance."

"Further to this, as the AFP undertakes an advisory role to the RPNGC, it was not considered appropriate to act as an independent observer in a witness interview."

New Matilda understands that the RPNGC request was not a direct request for assistance in the criminal investigation.

Even so, the AFP's reluctance to assist the PNG police in the investigation is in marked contrast with the muscular presence of Australian police throughout the Pacific region. Australian police are a feature of our diplomatic efforts throughout the region. For example, the AFP also plays a central role in assisting the Solomon Islands' police force, under the RAMSI agreement for regional assistance.

The AFP is also heavily involved in PNG. Under Phase 4 of the "PNG-AFP Policing Agreement", signed last November, Australia has deployed 50 AFP officers to PNG to provide "advice, guidance and assistance." According to a media release issued by AFP Commissioner Tony Negus last year, the cooperation extends to "criminal investigations".

The Minister responsible for the Australian Federal Police is Justice Minister Michael Keenan. A staffer in Keenan's office directed New Matilda to the Australian Federal Police.

Labor's shadow Justice spokesperson, David Feeney, told New Matilda that "it seems to be an usual decision and I don't comprehend why it has been made".

"Obviously the objective of the Parliament and the stated goal of the Opposition is that there should be an exhaustive and independent inquiry," Feeney continued.

“What transpired at Manus needs to be well understood, there needs to be lessons learned, and if a murder has been committed there needs to be investigation and justice.”

“And for that to be realised there needs to cooperation between PNG and Australia at every level.”

The Greens’ Sarah Hanson-Young is also concerned. She plans to write to Keenan to urge him to assist the PNG authorities in the investigation. “This is the latest in a long line of moves from the Abbott Government that point to a coordinated cover-up,” Hanson-Young said in a statement.

“The Government is playing a risky game in its attempts to avoid scrutiny, hiding the truth about what happened to Reza Barati in the hope that the public will forget about it.”

While Labor and the Greens continue to pressure the government on the issue, six weeks after Berati’s death the Australian public does seem to be forgetting about it. With discussion focussed on knights and dames and the Racial Discrimination Act, the events of the night of 17 February continue to fade from the public consciousness.

The Australian public’s best chance of finding out what really happened that night on Manus Island appear to lie with Justice Canning. If that is so, then we should be very worried indeed. Canning is currently the subject of a Supreme Court action in Port Moresby, in an effort to remove him from the human rights investigation.

<https://newmatilda.com//2014/04/01/truth-about-reza-barati-must-be-told>

Manus Island asylum seekers lawyer deported - again

Australian lawyer Jay Williams, who represents Manus Island asylum seekers, deported from PNG again

ABC News Online

Posted Tue 1 Apr 2014, 5:24pm AEDT

An Australian lawyer who is representing asylum seekers at the Manus Island detention centre has been deported from Papua New Guinea for a second time.

Sydney barrister Jay Williams flew back to Port Moresby on Sunday, two days after he was first deported from PNG.

Mr Williams was detained by immigration officials at the airport, guarded by police at a hotel overnight, then put on a plane back to Cairns yesterday morning.

Mr Williams is representing 75 detainees on Manus Island.

He had sought to appear in court to ask that several of his clients, who say they witnessed the murder of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati during a riot at the centre, be placed into protective custody.

Mr Williams was first deported on Friday after being ejected from the Manus Island centre despite having a court order granting him access.

The PNG government says Mr Williams was deported because he does not have a certificate to practice law in PNG.

"What it means is that if you're an admitted lawyer but don't have a current practising certificate for 2014, you cannot practise law in this country," attorney-general Kerenga Kua said last week.

The court order had been granted by PNG National Court judge David Cannings.

Justice Cannings set up a human rights inquiry in March to examine the conditions of asylum seekers at the Australian facility.

The PNG government put the inquiry on hold on March 21 after it obtained a stay order from the Supreme Court. Justice Cannings responded by initiating a new inquiry.

The PNG government is now seeking to appeal against Justice Cannings's refusal to disqualify himself from the inquiry over allegations of bias.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-01/lawyer-jay-williams-deported-from-png/5359916>

AFP refuses to help PNG investigation into Reza Berati

Federal Police refuses to help PNG's investigation into death of Manus Island asylum seeker Reza Berati

ABC News Online

First posted Tue 1 Apr 2014, 9:39am AEDT

Updated Tue 1 Apr 2014, 10:26am AEDT

The Australian Federal Police has refused a request from Papua New Guinea to help with the investigation into the death of an asylum seeker in the Manus Island detention centre.

Police in Papua New Guinea requested an independent observer for interviews in relation to the death of Iranian man Reza Berati, who died during a riot on Manus Island on February 17, the AFP said.

A spokesman for the AFP said Australia does not have jurisdiction and PNG police are responsible for the investigation.

"The Royal Papuan New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) has responsibility for investigating this matter," the spokesman said.

"The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary asked the AFP to provide an independent observer during a witness interview.

"As the AFP undertakes an advisory role to the RPNGC, it was not considered appropriate to act as an independent observer in a witness interview.

"The AFP does not have any plans to provide any further support to RPNGC in this matter, however any requests for assistance from the RPNGC will be considered."

The AFP has suggested PNG instead ask the social welfare provider in the detention centre or seek diplomatic consular assistance.

Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young said she would write to Justice Minister Michael Keenan to call for Australian police to assist.

"I think this is a really important matter and for Australia not to help and not to participate looks like we're more worried about covering things up rather than getting to the truth," she said.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-01/afp-refuses-request-to-help-reza-berati-investigation/5358212

PNG request for police help on Manus Island denied

The Age

April 1, 2014

David Wroe

The Australian Federal Police refused a request from Papua New Guinea for an officer to help interview witnesses to the killing of asylum seeker Reza Barati on Manus Island.

PNG police said they needed the Australian help because some witnesses to the violence at the immigration detention centre in mid-February were reluctant to speak to local Manus Island investigators and had demanded instead to speak to Australians.

But the request last week for help was declined. "The AFP does not have any plans to provide any further support to [the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary] regarding this matter," an AFP spokesman said.

"A request was made by the RPNGC to provide an AFP member as an independent person to an interview with a witness in this investigation. This request was declined due to the AFP having no operational jurisdiction in PNG, and suggested alternative options for the RPNGC to consider."

Mr Barati, 23, from Iran, was killed by multiple blows to the head during violent confrontations in the Manus Island centre, which was set up to process asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat. A further 62 asylum seekers were injured.

The AFP has about 70 officers performing various roles assisting PNG police. Last week, police sources in Port Moresby indicated they believed that Australia would meet the request for help.

A spokesman for the PNG police could not be reached for comment.

Fairfax Media asked the AFP why jurisdiction was an issue given an invitation had been extended, as well as what other options were proposed to PNG. The AFP had not replied by deadline on Monday.

Fairfax Media asked Justice Minister Michael Keenan's office whether the Abbott government had any involvement in the decision, but had not received a response by deadline.

The AFP previously arranged for two Australian forensics specialists to travel to Port Moresby to help with the autopsy on Mr Barati's body.

There have been mixed messages about the investigation in recent weeks. Manus Island provincial police commander Alex N'Drasal said more than two weeks ago he expected to make arrests within days.

Since then, PNG police have claimed that security firm G4S, which until recently was managing the detention centre, was not fully co-operating with investigators - a claim the company denies.

It was also revealed last week PNG police suspect that two Australian security guards employed by G4S were among those involved in Mr Barati's death.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/png-request-for-police-help-on-manus-island-denied-20140331-35u8p.html

PNG police: G4S refuses interviews over Manus riots

PNG police say G4S refusing to be interviewed over Manus Island detention centre riots

ABC News Online

Posted Wed 2 Apr 2014, 8:28am AEDT

Papua New Guinea police say the former security management firm at the Manus Island Detention Centre is refusing to be interviewed about February's deadly riots.

Manus Island police are investigating the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati who was killed by multiple blows to the head during the riots.

Deputy Police Commissioner, Simon Kauba, says the inquiry is nearing completion, but security firm G4S is proving to be a stumbling block.

"We are at the final stages, we want to tidy a few things where we thought it was vital to interview G4S management and one or two of the asylum seekers before we actually interview the suspects," he said.

"We are unable to get a favourable response from the G4S management."

Commissioner Kauba says the PNG police need to interview several key personnel before they lay charges.

"My team of investigators led by the provincial police commander in Manus are still negotiating trying to get the sort of assistance that we want from the G4S." he said.

G4S was in charge of security at the centre when the violent riots occurred at the centre on February 16-18, but handed over operations to Wilson Security last week.

Sixty-two people were injured in the protests, including one man who was shot in the buttocks.

Several G4S staff left Manus Island after the incidents suffering severe post-traumatic stress.

ABC News has contacted G4S seeking a response. In a statement last week, the company said it was cooperating fully with the PNG police investigation. "G4S strongly refutes any suggestion that it has in any way hindered or not fully co-operated with the PNG police investigation. It has complied with all requests for local and expat staff to attend interviews with the police." it said.

"PNG police have interviewed 10 expatriate G4S officers and taken statements from eight of those officers."

Both the PNG police and Australian Federal Police are conducting separate investigations into the riots and Mr Berati's death.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-02/an-png-police-say-g4s-refuse-interview-over-manus-riots/5360710

Don't put Australia back on table: Marles

AAP / The Australian
April 02, 2014 9:43AM

The opposition has challenged Immigration Minister Scott Morrison to return from Papua New Guinea with a crystal-clear guarantee that asylum seekers detained on Manus Island and found to be refugees won't be resettled in Australia.

Mr Morrison will travel to Port Moresby this week for talks with his PNG counterparts.

Labor immigration spokesman Richard Marles said resettlement arrangements had become murky since PNG said last month it would resettle some but not all of those found to be genuine refugees.

Mr Marles warned that if some have to be repatriated back to Australia, there could be dire consequences for the flow of asylum seeker boats.

Australia should not be put back on the table, Mr Marles said.

"The challenge for Mr Morrison this week is to make it crystal-clear that's not what is going on," he told ABC Radio.

"Nothing would be more detrimental to Australia's strategy to reducing the flow of boats from Indonesia than that."

The federal government is in talks with other Pacific countries about sharing the resettlement of refugees.

The first asylum seekers found to be genuine will be resettled in PNG as early as May, as soon as the country's parliament approves the program.

Mr Marles has also renewed calls for the Abbott government to release an interim report into the February violence at the Manus Island centre which left one asylum seeker dead.

The review is being conducted by a former secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, Robert Cornall.

Mr Marles said it was important to understand why Manus Island was "melting down" under Mr Morrison's watch.

A spokeswoman for Mr Morrison said the department has received the progress report and will brief the minister. The government was following the same processes as Labor did when the Nauru centre was burned down last year. "The final report will be released, consistent with those same processes," she told AAP in a statement.

Labor did not release the report into the riot at Nauru in July 2013 until after the election, and had delayed other similar reports.

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/dont-put-aust-back-on-table-marles/story-fn3dxiwe-1226872073095

Manus Island: all refugees to settle in PNG

Manus: two thirds of asylum seekers have had refugee status interviews

All asylum seekers found to be refugees will be resettled in Papua New Guinea, Australian and PNG governments confirm

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Thursday 3 April 2014

Two thirds of asylum seekers detained on Manus Island have had their initial refugee status determination interviews completed, according to the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments.

They confirmed that all asylum seekers found to be refugees on Manus will be resettled in PNG, seemingly contradicting comments made by the PNG prime minister, Peter O'Neill, last month who said "not all" refugees would be housed in the country after determination.

"Ministers reiterated that all persons transferred to PNG under the RRA [Regional Resettlement Arrangement] will be resettled in PNG," stated a joint communique by immigration minister Scott Morrison and his PNG counterpart Rimbink Pato, following the first joint ministerial forum on the so-called "PNG solution".

It also revealed that those found to be refugees on Manus will be granted work rights and freedom of movement in PNG and says that the first refugees could be resettled in June.

Last month prime minister Tony Abbott said that most asylum seekers on Manus were "economic migrants", despite no cases having reached completion.

The communique states that Australia will offer "all assistance necessary" to the PNG police investigation into the unrest on Manus which resulted in the death of 23-year-old asylum seeker Reza Barati. It will also "facilitate interviews of persons of interest who are no longer in PNG".

On Tuesday, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) said it would not be assisting the PNG police to interview witnesses on Manus who requested Australian police presence. The AFP maintain this is because it cannot act as independent witnesses to the process as it also operates in an advisory role to the PNG police.

Two Australian guards are reportedly wanted for questioning on the matter, but the AFP says it has only received two requests for assistance from the PNG police. The other was to offer assistance with the postmortem on Barati's body.

"Any requests for assistance from the RPNGC [Royal Papua New Guinea Police Constabulary] will be considered," an AFP spokeswoman said.

The communique adds that Transfield Services are now fully managing the detention centre after taking over from G4S.

An asylum seeker on Manus confirmed to Guardian Australia he had been interviewed for the first time in his refugee determination status process.

He added, however, that many detainees were suffering from “depression and panic” and were considering self-harm.

“The food is full of bugs, especially rice and bread,” he said. “Low quality and quantity.”

The Greens immigration spokeswoman, Sarah Hanson Young, described the communique as a “smokescreen” for conditions on Manus and the refugee determination process was likely to be a “sham”.

“The Coalition’s scant regard for the safety of refugees was revealed recently when Tony Abbott declared that most of those on Manus Island would be sent home,” Hanson-Young said.

“Concerning statements like these have left the impression that any refugee determination process established in PNG will be a sham.”

A high court constitutional challenge to the offshore detention regime will be heard in Canberra on 9 May. Proceedings began last August when the Labor party was still in government.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/03/manus-two-thirds-of-asylum-seekers-have-had-refugee-status-interviews

About-turn as PNG will resettle refugees and AFP offers help

The Age

April 3, 2014

Sarah Whyte

Papua New Guinea will now resettle all asylum seekers who are found to be refugees and the Australian Federal Police will assist the investigation into the death of asylum seeker Reza Barati if requested, it was announced on Thursday.

The announcement comes only weeks after Prime Minister Peter O'Neill made plain that PNG would only resettle "some" of those whose refugee claims are recognised, insisting other countries in the region should "carry the same burden as we do".

Now all asylum seekers who are found to be refugees will be resettled in PNG, with the first group of refugees moving into temporary accommodation as early as June, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said.

"They will then move into a resettlement phase and we have been building transitional accommodation at east Lorengau on Manus Island now for some months," Mr Morrison told Sky News on Thursday afternoon.

Those who are not found to be refugees will either be sent back to their country of origin, or will be resettled in another country, he said. But not one asylum seeker will be resettled in Australia.

In his second monthly meeting in PNG, Mr Morrison confirmed two-thirds of asylum seekers have now had their initial interviews at the PNG regional processing centre.

The renewed co-operation between the two countries, means the AFP will now offer PNG officials help into the investigation of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati who was killed in February's violence.

Only last week, the AFP declined to help the investigation, saying many of their staff could not be independent witnesses to the investigation by the police as they had been mentors. "The AFP does not have any plans to provide any further support to [the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary] regarding this matter," an AFP spokesman said at the time.

But Mr Morrison reconfirmed Australia's commitment to the investigation.

"Anything we have to do to assist the Papua New Guinean police, or any other formal enquiries, to take witness statements or to have access to persons of interest who may no longer be in Papua New Guinea, then we will make that happen," Mr Morrison said. "We are very committed to ensuring there has been a full and thorough investigation and a review into these matters and then we can move on to address the things that arise from those reports."

On Thursday afternoon, the AFP confirmed their offer to help.

"The AFP has not received any further requests for assistance at this time, but any requests for assistance from the RPNGC will be considered," a spokesman said.

But this was news to the director of PNG police, Dominic Kakas who said they had not yet heard from the AFP.

"The AFP will still not be involved," Mr Kakas said. He said that investigations into the death of Mr Barati were still continuing, and had been delayed due to the "unco-operative" nature of security contractor G4S. "The G4S, they refuse to talk," he said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/aboutturn-as-png-will-resettle-refugees-and-afp-offers-help-20140403-zqqc.html

Manus assessments delivered within a month: Morrison

Refugee assessments for Manus Island detainees to be delivered within a month, says Scott Morrison

ABC News Online

By political correspondent Emma Griffiths

Posted Thu 3 Apr 2014, 6:08pm AEDT

The first refugee assessments will be delivered to asylum seekers at the Manus Island detention centre within a month, according to a statement from Immigration Minister Scott Morrison.

Mr Morrison also says the first of those found to be refugees could be resettled in Papua New Guinea in June.

The Minister yesterday held the first of what are planned to be monthly meetings about the offshore resettlement program with his Papua New Guinean counterpart, Rimbink Pato, in Port Moresby.

About 1,300 people are currently being held in the Manus Island centre.

The first group of asylum seekers were transferred there from the Christmas Island facility in August last year.

Mr Morrison says the Government is making "tremendous progress" in developing the offshore resettlement program with PNG.

"This was an arrangement that was frankly a blank sheet of paper six months ago and I think we're putting some real meat on the bone here," he told Sky TV.

In a joint statement, the two countries say the PNG cabinet has decided to allow "the first tranche of initial assessments to be delivered to transferees within a month" and that it was "anticipated the first refugees could be resettled in June".

The PNG government has also approved the creation of a refugee visa that will provide work rights and freedom of movement to asylum seekers found to be refugees.

The ministers confirmed that all refugees will be resettled in PNG - despite a statement from PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill last month that his country would take only "some" of those whose refugee claims are approved.

Mr O'Neill made the comment during an official visit by Prime Minister Tony Abbott, which was dominated by discussion of the offshore resettlement program.

"I don't know why that was ever in doubt. That's how this arrangement was to work," Mr Morrison told Sky.

But then he added that "to have that codified in that way is a major step forward".

The statement from Mr Morrison and Mr Pato also said two thirds of the asylum seekers on Manus Island have had initial interviews and that a review process for those asylum seekers not found to be refugees will be established by the end of this month.

The ministers also discussed the "urgency and need to complete" the investigations into the riot at Manus Island in mid-February, that resulted in the death of one asylum seeker and left dozens injured.

But Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young says the process with PNG is a "facade designed to reject as many refugees as possible".

The previous Labor government reopened the centre in November 2012 after closing it down shortly after coming to power in 2007.

It was first set up by the Howard government in 2001.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-03/manus-refugee-assessments-to-be-delivered-within-month-morrison/5365832

High Court challenge to Manus asylum seeker processing

High Court agrees to hear challenge to processing of asylum seekers on Manus Island

ABC News Online

First posted Thu 3 Apr 2014, 11:55am AEDT

Updated Thu 3 Apr 2014, 3:33pm AEDT

The full bench of the High Court has agreed to hear a case which could lead to the end of processing of asylum seekers on Manus Island.

Lawyers for an asylum seeker in detention on Manus are alleging that the regional processing centre is unconstitutional.

The plaintiff, known as S156, is suing the Immigration Minister and the Commonwealth, alleging the processing centre and the decisions to send him there were unlawful.

There is also an alternative argument that it was unreasonable of the Minister to send him to Manus Island because it lacks adequate facilities to house refugees.

In 2011 the High Court halted a plan for offshore processing in Malaysia.

The case will be heard on May 9.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-03/high-court-agrees-to-hear-challenge-to-processing-of-asylum-see/5364360

Manus Island death inquiry report will stay secret

Report on inquiry into Manus Island death won't be revealed

The Age

April 3, 2014

Michael Gordon, Sarah Whyte and Emma Partridge

The Abbott government is not planning to release the interim report of its inquiry into the death of one asylum seeker and injuries to more than 60 others on Manus Island in February.

It also intends to keep the final report under wraps, citing the practice of the former Labor government's inquiries into incidents at detention facilities on Christmas Island and Nauru.

The lack of information comes as the Immigration Department pressed ahead with transporting 83 asylum seekers to Curtin Immigration Detention Centre, many of whom were due to give evidence against the department on Friday.

Lawyers failed to get an injunction on Wednesday afternoon in the Federal Circuit Court. Some will be moved to Western Australia on Thursday, and others on Sunday.

Judge Rolf Driver said the directions hearing on Friday would only involve legal argument. "At the present time there is no persuasive reason to interfere with the ordinary operation decisions of the Minister's department," Judge Driver said.

Michaela Byers, a solicitor representing many of the Villawood detainees, said the result was "really disappointing".

"It's impossible to represent 40 people interstate as a pro bono practitioner," she said.

Barrister Wayne Flynn argued the government was being "hasty" by transferring the detainees the day before their matter was to be heard.

The detainees are challenging the government for leaking their personal details published on the Immigration Department's website in February. Details of up to 10,000 people were leaked, including their names, date of birth, location and arrival date.

Meanwhile, Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young accused the government of working "feverishly to cover up" what happened on the night of February's Manus Island violence, describing the refusal to release the report as "unacceptable".

"It seems the Australian government is working hard to make sure that the truth is kept hidden," she said.

She cited the rejection of PNG police requests for assistance from the Australian Federal Police, complaints security contractor G4S had not fully co-operated with the PNG police probe and the deportation of an Australian lawyer who had obtained statements from eye witnesses.

A spokeswoman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said the department had received the progress report from an independent inquiry headed by Robert Cornall this week, saying the minister would be briefed on its content "as appropriate".

Mr Morrison is due in PNG this week to be updated on the police investigation.

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles has called on the government to release the progress report without delay "to make sure whatever safeguards are needed can be put in place to avoid such a tragic incident occurring again".

Mr Morrison's spokeswoman said under Labor, the Nauru centre had burnt down, yet an inquiry report was not released before the election.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/report-on-inquiry-into-manus-island-death-wont-be-revealed-20140402-35yvv.html

Asylum seeker: witnessing Reza Berati's death

Manus Island riot: Asylum seeker speaks of allegedly witnessing Reza Berati's death

ABC-TV - Lateline

By Kerry Brewster and Deb Richards

First posted Fri 4 Apr 2014, 8:19pm AEDT

Updated Sat 5 Apr 2014, 7:42am AEDT

The ABC has obtained an eyewitness account of the murder of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati during the February riot inside the Manus Island detention centre.

The account is one of 12 from asylum seekers obtained by Lateline.

They detail a series of alleged violent incidents leading up to and including the clashes on February 17 which left more than 60 asylum seekers injured.

The accounts, which Lateline cannot independently verify, have now been lodged with Papua New Guinea's authorities and come as separate official inquiries continue.

A spokesman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says a range of independent inquiries, including police and coronial investigations, are underway and are fully supported by the Australian Government.

The account of Mr Berati's death claims he was beaten with a wooden stick and kicked before being hit on the head with a rock.

The fellow Iranian asylum seeker says Mr Berati went to the detention centre's internet room to raise the alarm during the detention centre riot, then he returned to his room.

The asylum seeker describes how a local PNG man was the first to attack Mr Berati outside his room.

"When Reza came up the stairs (censored) was at the top of the stairs waiting for him," the witness claimed.

"He was holding a large wooden stick, a metre-and-a-half long. It had two nails in the wood. The nails were sticking out.

"(Censored) said: 'F*** you m***** f*****!' (Censored) took a big swing at Reza, hitting him on top of the head."

The account suggests the presence of two Australian G4S security staff.

"Ten or 15 guards from G4S came up the stairs. Two of them were Australians. The rest were PNG locals, I know who they are. I can identify them by their face," the asylum seeker said.

"They started kicking Reza in his head and stomach with their boots."

The account says a local man landed a final blow on Mr Reza.

"There was a local ... I recognise him. He picked up a big rock," the asylum seeker said.

"He lifted the rock above his head and threw it down hard on top of Reza's head."

Human rights lawyer Julian Burnside says it is evidence the Australian Government failed to protect hundreds of innocent people.

"Whichever way you look at it, the people who are placed by Australia in the detention centre, to guard the refugees, have been involved in assaulting and killing one of them," he said.

Threats and bashings

The 12 statements all describe appalling conditions at the centre, variously described as intensely hot, filthy and mosquito-infested.

They also claim abuse by local and Australian security guards, alleging a black market trade in drugs, racist insults and bashings.

One of the statements says an Australian guard told asylum seekers: "You are smelly ones, get back to your boat and go back to your country."

Another asylum seeker described an Australian G4S guard attacking his friend.

"I saw one of the security guards, Australian, punch my friend and then throw him to the other side of the wall," the statement said.

Asylum seekers staged non-violent protests for three weeks leading up to February 17, requesting information about when their claims would be processed and where they would be settled.

But on February 16 they were officially told they had no chance of getting to Australia.

They reportedly grew violent, abusing local guards and denigrating PNG.

Iranian interpreter Azeta Bokan described how a mood of despair preceded a violent reaction.

"The men had no weapons so they threw fruit at the guards, mostly peaches," she said.

"The response of the guards was to use rocks and metal legs of dismantled tables destined for junking to attack the detainees."

Local man cut his throat

A total of 30 asylum seekers reportedly escaped when the gates were opened on the February 16.

When they were caught by locals they were allegedly bashed and one man said his throat was cut.

"We were surrounded by PNG guys. I saw an arm and a knife come from behind, and he cut my throat, from side to side. He cut me again on the left side," the man said.

"The PNG local grabbed me by the hair from behind and pushed my head down.

"There was a lot of blood. When I saw the blood on my t-shirt, I realised that my throat had been cut. My t-shirt and clothes were soaked in blood.

"When I got to the gate, there was an Australian G4S, called (censored). He was kicking me with the bottom of his shoes.

"After two hours a doctor came and stitched my wound."

Security company G4S's role on Manus Island ended last week when it handed responsibility to Wilsons Security.

G4S says it has fully cooperated with the PNG police investigation, facilitating interviews with 10 expatriate G4S guards and numerous local PNG officers.

It says it will not comment on specific allegations while investigations are underway.

A spokesman for the Immigration Minister says Australia is happy to give assistance to the PNG investigation.

"The Australian Government is committed to continue to provide all assistance necessary, if requested by PNG authorities, to finalise their official police investigation into the incident, including providing legal assistance for witnesses to alleged criminal acts," the spokesman for Mr Morrison said.

The spokesman says Australian and PNG ministers also agreed to facilitate interviews of persons of interest who are no longer in PNG and agreed that all relevant information from the independent administrative reviews would be handed over to the police investigation to enable swift prosecutions.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-04/manus-island-asylum-seekers-witness-statements-reza-berati-death/5367118

Asylum seekers speak of witnessing Reza Berati's death

Manus Island riot: Asylum seekers speak of allegedly witnessing Reza Berati's death

ABC News Online

By Rachael Brown

First posted Fri 4 Apr 2014, 8:19pm AEDT

Updated Fri 4 Apr 2014, 8:23pm AEDT

The ABC has viewed written statements from asylum seekers who claim they witnessed the killing of asylum seeker Reza Berati on Manus Island.

One claims he saw Mr Berati being beaten with a wooden stick, kicked and hit on the head with a big rock during the riots inside the detention centre in February.

Human rights lawyer Julian Burnside, QC, says the accounts should be enough for authorities to lay charges but they have yet to interview the witnesses.

It is also still unclear whether Immigration Minister Scott Morrison will release the details of investigations into the incident on Papua New Guinea.

The asylum seeker witness statements detail fear and violence within the detention centre in the lead up to the riots in which Mr Berati was killed and another asylum seeker was shot.

"One of them describes a person having his throat cut, another describes a person begin beaten with metal bars," Mr Burnside said.

He says the most crucial describes the killing of Mr Berati.

"In circumstances where Reza Berati was first attacked by one of the PNG-based G4S guards, he was attacked by a person who had a long plank with two nails through it and he was beaten with that which lacerated his scalp terribly," Mr Burnside said.

"He fell to the floor and then someone brought a very large rock down on his head and that killed him."

An excerpt from that witness statement reads:

*"When Reza came up the stairs (censored) was at the top of the stairs waiting for him. (Censored) said 'f*** you mother f***' then swung back behind his shoulder with the stick and took a big swing at Reza, hitting him on the top of the head.*

...

After everything, an Australian G4S stood on the balcony and said: 'We win, we win, go back to your country'."

PNG did nothing with testimony: Burnside

Mr Burnside claims PNG investigators have not interviewed these witnesses.

"If these people have been interviewed by police, the PNG police have done nothing about it," he said.

"I mean, the eyewitness accounts very clearly make out a case of murder.

"You would expect that in those circumstances the PNG police would interview the person who is identified as having committed the murder and at the very least you would expect to hear that charges were being brought or, for whatever reason identified, the police decided that they believed a different version of events.

"But so far all we've had is silence."

Mr Burnside says the PNG government has shut down two local inquiries, and Australia's review, led by former Attorney-General's Department secretary Robert Cornall, has been suppressed.

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles says this is not good enough.

"We need to have the Government being up front with the Australian people about what is going on at Manus," Mr Marles said.

"Where are we up to with the investigation? Even knowing whether or not people who were witnesses to this incident have been interviewed.

"Right now all of us are in the dark and that's why we're relying on the comments of Julian Burnside in the way that he's given them to you."

Witnesses describe tense atmosphere

The witness statements detail the tense climate leading up to Mr Berati's death.

One of the asylum seekers claims he was told by a guard that the PNG locals wanted to kill asylum seekers.

They say this tension followed a series of protests over their concerns about how much longer they would be detained, then where they would be sent.

They claim local police and G4S staff beat them over trivial things.

One asylum seeker claimed:

"The value of a transferee's life had come down to only one pack of cigarettes. After beating a multitude of asylum seekers they stated, 'You all must go back to your countries, we do not want you to be in our lands'."

Mr Burnside questions why asylum seekers are being sent to "a dangerous place".

"Why is it alright for Australia to send people to a dangerous place where they face being murdered by the locals instead of keeping them safe whilst their asylum claims are processed?" he said.

According to the Australian and PNG governments, two-thirds of asylum seekers detained on Manus Island have had their initial refugee status determination interviews completed.

Mr Morrison was in Cambodia today, where he has held talks with the country's interior minister to follow up on an earlier request for the country to help resettle asylum seekers.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott says he would welcome a decision by Cambodia to accept asylum seekers from Australia.

In regards to the Manus Island death, a spokesman for Mr Morrison says all events considered relevant will be addressed in the independent review and these investigations should be allowed to take their course.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-04/manus-island-asylum-seekers-witness-statements-reza-berati-death/5367118

Guard: Manus centre was ‘tinderbox ready to ignite’

Manus detention centre was ‘tinderbox ready to ignite’ before disturbance

Guard tells inquiry he expressed major concerns about crisis response before disturbance that led to death of Reza Barati

Paul Farrell and Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Friday 18 April 2014

A Manus Island detention centre guard says he described the facility as a “tinderbox ready to ignite” and expressed serious concerns about crime scene preservation training months before the disturbances that led to the death of an Iranian asylum seeker.

A Senate inquiry is investigating events at the processing centre in January, which led to injuries for dozens of asylum seekers and the death of one, Reza Barati. The Papua New Guinea police are investigating the death but no charges have been laid at this stage.

In one of the first submissions made public for the inquiry, Paul Skillen, who was employed as a supervisor at the facility until March, has submitted what appear to be emails to other G4S staff, outlining major concerns about training and crisis response procedures at the facility in November last year.

In the submission, Skillen says staff with no supervisory experience, no knowledge of incident response training and limited leadership capabilities were placed in senior incident response roles. He is also critical of the training received by local contractors.

“As you will see from the content of the emails I previously forwarded,” he says, “although the PNG nationals were keen, and willing to learn, the level of training was woeful, and I was gravely concerned that the tension was rising within the centre and they would not be up to the task of dealing with a serious disorder.”

After an attempted hanging, Skillen describes having to place evidence in black bin bags because proper evidence collection tools were not available, and says that: “It was very apparent from the incident this morning, that even basic scene preservation training is needed.”

“If we are unlucky enough to have a death in custody, we may all end up before a PNG coroner, and these simple steps would assist us and the PNG constabulary greatly,” he writes in the email.

In another email he writes that the incident responses training and leadership could leave both G4S and the individuals concerned “liable should anything untowards occur”.

Guardian Australia has previously revealed that G4S managers “lost control” of the local riot squad and members of the team “dispersed into the immediate area of Mike compound,” according to official incident logs from G4S.

A spokesman for G4S said the company denied the allegations made in the submissions and would be addressing them in its own submission to the Senate inquiry, as well as a range of other matters.

In a separate submission, one of the architects of Australia's offshore processing regime says the Manus Island processing centre is not meeting basic human rights standards.

The former Labor government reintroduced a regional processing centre on Manus Island after an expert panel recommended establishing a broader regional framework for asylum seekers in the Asia-Pacific. The panel recommended establishing a centre in Papua New Guinea with appropriate accommodation, physical and mental health services and asylum claim processing and assistance.

But one of the panel members, Paris Aristotle, has written to the Senate inquiry investigating disturbances at the Manus Island facility, in his role as CEO of Foundation House, indicating that he does not believe the processing centre is meeting the human rights standards set out in that report.

“The current government has not resiled from the recommendation that the treatment of people transferred to PNG should be in accordance with international human rights standards,” Aristotle wrote, but “reports from UNHCR and other sources indicate strong concerns that the recommendation has not been comprehensively and properly implemented.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/18/manus-detention-centre-was-tinderbox-ready-to-ignite-before-disturbance

Guard warned Manus facility a 'tinderbox'

Guard warned that Manus Island facility was unprepared for major incident before Reza Barati death

The Age

April 18, 2014

Lisa Cox

A Manus Island security guard warned colleagues the detention centre was “totally unprepared” for any major incident, months before an Iranian asylum seeker was killed in violent clashes.

Paul Skillen, who worked as a G4S security supervisor at the centre, emailed colleagues in November expressing concerns that poorly trained workers were manning the facility, which was “a tinderbox ready to ignite”.

The emails have been submitted to a Senate inquiry set up to investigate events at the centre in February, which left 62 asylum seekers injured, one with gun-shot wounds.

Reza Barati, a 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, was killed by multiple blows to his head during the violent confrontations.

In his emails, Mr Skillen warned that local Papua New Guinea workers were being assigned to high-risk roles with no experience and limited training.

He said the entire structure of the incident response team was not working and needed revision.

“I understand there are some plans afoot, however, I feel the centre is currently a tinderbox ready to ignite,” he wrote.

“The intelligence being received at the moment, I am led to understand, supports my thoughts.

“In the event that the tinderbox ignites, the centre will be totally unprepared, and members of the IRT and other staff will undoubtedly get hurt, some badly.”

Mr Skillen said questions about the consistency of the training and leadership “leaves both G4S as a company, and the individuals concerned, liable should anything untoward occur”.

On Friday, a spokesman for G4S said the company refuted the allegations in the emails “and we will be addressing them in our submission to the Senate inquiry”.

In a second email that was part of his submission, Mr Skillen wrote that basic crime-scene preservation measures were not in force at the facility after a hanging attempt in one of the compounds.

He described having to remove evidence in plastic garbage bags and said there was no control over who entered and handled items in an area that was potentially a crime scene.

There was also no means of documenting evidence besides “a scrap piece of paper”.

“We also need to locate a secure area to store any potential evidence, somewhere big enough for numerous items, and secure enough that only certain staff [maybe duty ops managers] have a key,” he said.

“If we are unlucky enough to have a death in custody, we may all end up before a PNG coroner, and these simple steps would assist us and the PNG constabulary greatly.”

In a separate submission, one of the architects of Australia’s offshore processing regime said he was concerned Australia was not protecting the human rights of asylum seekers.

Foundation House chief executive Paris Aristotle wrote that “the current government has not resiled from the recommendation that the treatment of people transferred to PNG should be treated in accordance with international human rights standards.”

“Reports from UNHCR [the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] and other sources indicate strong concerns that the recommendation has not been comprehensively and properly implemented,” he said.

The submission cites a UNHCR report which found the legal framework and physical conditions for the detention of asylum seekers was below international standards and neither safe nor humane.

Earlier this month, it was revealed the Abbott government was not planning to release the interim report of its inquiry into the violent clashes.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison did not respond to specific questions about Mr Skillen's submission.

A spokeswoman for Mr Morrison said in a statement the government was assisting Papua New Guinea in finalising its police investigations.

“Ministers agreed that all relevant information from the independent administrative reviews would be handed over to the police investigation to enable swift prosecutions,” she said.

“The outcomes of the investigations will inform a coronial inquiry in PNG.

“In addition, both governments will expedite the implementation of recommendations arising from the investigations.”

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/guard-warned-that-manus-island-facility-was-unprepared-for-major-incident-before-reza-barati-death-20140418-zqwh6.html

Manus security guard still haunted by experience

Security guard still haunted by what he witnessed at Manus Island detention centre

Anthony Deceglie

PerthNow

April 19, 2014

ANOTHER security guard has come forward with details about the hellish conditions facing detainees at the Manus Island detention centre.

The Australian, who worked at the facility with multinational security company G4S for six months last year, said he is still haunted from what he saw.

“In the end I had to leave because my conscience couldn’t take it anymore,” he told *The Sunday Times*.

“It weighs on your mind. I’m not saying I’m the most caring person in the world – but the conditions were simply inhumane.”

The guard, who asked not to be named, said sexual assaults among detainees were common.

He recalled how he was left to care for one victim who was given no medical care.

“I sat with him for 24 hours,” he said.

“It was just me. They just threw him in an empty shipping container.”

The insider said locals employed to work as guards were cheap labour and not trained properly.

“We were given three weeks to train up locals,” he said.

“We couldn’t even communicate with them properly because they didn’t speak English properly and we didn’t know their language.”

The guard also claimed detainees were actually encouraged to use social media or call home so they could relay the terrible conditions at the centre to put off others wanting to seek asylum in Australia.

And, he produced correspondence from his time at the centre revealing the toxic culture among staff.

“It has become quite apparent over the past week or so that some staff members have become a target for ‘gossip’,” a senior G4S official says in one email.

“Let me make it quite clear that this type of behaviour needs to cease and will not be tolerated.”

The email warns employees to “steer clear” of topics like “alcoholism”, “drug addiction”, “infidelity” and “sexuality”.

Last week, a security guard at Manus Island told *The Sunday Times* detainees were being forced to endure “hell on Earth”.

He said the detention centre was a “horrendous chicken pen” where guards often had to cut down detainees trying to hang themselves.

The guard said the February 17 riot at the facility during which 23-year-old asylum seeker Reza Berati was murdered was inevitable because of the poor management of the centre at the time by multinational company G4S. That company’s contract ended in March and security is now being handled by Wilsons Security.

A spokesman for G4S said the company ran security and other garrison services in “an effective way” despite “the enormous challenges faced in delivering services on a remote island on the end of a tenuous supply chain”.

A spokeswoman for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said during a recent he “affirmed the urgency” of the review into the February riots with his PNG counterpart.

“Both Governments will expedite the implementation of recommendations arising from the investigations,” she said.

www.perthnow.com.au/news/security-guard-still-haunted-by-what-he-witnessed-at-manus-island-detention-centre/story-fnhnv0wb-1226889990984

New Manus video shows guards' violence

Manus video showing guards' violence undercuts Morrison statements

The immigration minister has already been forced to concede that most of the events happened inside the centre's perimeter

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Monday 21 April 2014

A video from the Manus Island processing centre shows guards throwing a range of objects on the night before a major disturbance, raising further concerns about the accuracy of early reports by the immigration minister, Scott Morrison.

Protests on Manus Island in February escalated into violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. One asylum seeker, Reza Barati, was killed and several were seriously injured.

Morrison has already been criticised after being forced to revise his account of where the events took place, conceding that most happened inside the perimeter of the centre.

And new footage published by Fairfax Media showing guards throwing a range of objects raises further concerns about the early statements from the minister.

“G4S utilised personal protection gear but no batons or other weapons were in situ and were in control of the centre for the entire period,” Morrison said in his first press conference on 17 February.

The new footage shows guards throwing chairs and other smaller projectiles being used as weapons as they attempted to enter a building. Comment has been sought from the minister’s office regarding the use of the objects as weapons.

The minister had earlier denied a communication breakdown with the service provider G4S, after he was forced to issue a correction stating that events during the disturbances occurred largely within the perimeter of the compound.

In a submission to the upcoming Senate inquiry into events at the facility, a former G4S guard, Paul Skillen, has published emails where he describes the centre as a “tinderbox ready to ignite” and expressed serious concerns about crime scene preservation training months before the disturbances.

The new footage is the third set of videos from the disturbances that have emerged from the centre. The ABC published the first footage from 16 February that shows some of the lead-up to the unrest, and Guardian Australia published footage from the floating Bibby hotel that was being used as a makeshift hospital on 17 February.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/22/manus-video-showing-guards-violence-undercuts-morrison-statements

PNG nationals attacked asylum seekers on Manus

Reza Barati death: Papua New Guinea nationals attacked asylum seekers on Manus Island

The Age

April 22, 2014

Michael Gordon

Papua New Guinean nationals employed as security guards on Manus Island attacked asylum seekers at the detention centre more than 24 hours before Iranian Reza Barati died in a night of shocking violence, new footage shows.

The footage, obtained by Fairfax Media, shows the security guards attacking a group of asylum seekers who had absconded from the centre after being told they had no prospect of being settled outside PNG if their claims for refugee status were eventually recognised.

There are also images that show no action was taken to rope off the scene of Mr Barati's killing before evidence was either compromised or completely cleared away, including the rock that witnesses say made sure he was dead.

The footage and images raise new questions about what was done to reduce the risk of violence at the centre and the adequacy of the subsequent investigation.

The morning after the violence, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison reported that the centre would resume "normal operations" and maintained: "G4S utilised personal protection gear but no batons or other weapons were in situ and were in control of the centre for the entire period."

But the footage clearly shows security guards throwing stones and other objects at asylum seekers seeking refuge in a room after being chased back into the centre by the guards.

Fairfax Media has also obtained images that show how the fence at the compound was pushed in by PNG nationals who entered the centre, allegedly enraged by offensive chants by asylum seekers.

They also show bullet holes within the complex at "stomach" level, challenging the assertion that the only shots fired were warning shots in the air; and they show damage to an asylum seeker's door from a machete as asylum seekers say they were hiding inside.

Interviews with security guards support the emails of an Australian who warned colleagues that the detention centre was "totally unprepared" for any major incident, such as the violence of February 16 and 17, when Mr Barati died and more than 60 others were injured.

It was reported on the weekend that Paul Skillen, who worked as a G4S security supervisor at the centre, emailed colleagues in November expressing concerns that poorly trained workers were staffing the centre, which was "a tinderbox ready to ignite".

The emails have been submitted to a Senate inquiry set up to investigate the violence at the centre.

Security guards who asked that they not be identified also claimed those managing security at the centre had been urged to develop a "dedicated investigative capacity", but had failed to act.

They also accused security contractor G4S, since replaced by Transfield, of failing to conduct a skills audit of its staff. "They didn't know who they had on the ground and who could do what," one source said.

They also claimed:

- The training of PNG nationals employed as security guards was totally inadequate, with the nationals unprepared to perform many of the duties assigned to them, including being part of an emergency response team.
- Command and control on the night of the extreme violence was hampered because many security guards did not have radios. "Hardly anyone had a radio, regardless of what they say," one said. "They ordered new radios in and they forgot to order spare batteries, so they get used for four or five hours then on charger for four or five hours. How can you control a riot when you've got no communications?"
- Control on the night was also hampered because of a lack of torches when the power was cut to two compounds.
- Acts of self-harm and attempted suicides were common at the centre. "The fortunate thing was that they are that crammed in that someone would raise the alert," a source said.

Security guards and local residents also criticised the failure of those managing the centre to allow for interaction with locals that, they say, would have built a level of trust and goodwill and dispelled damaging rumours.

They also say the refusal to allow detainees any capacity to humanise their environments by growing plants contributed to the tensions. Asylum seekers were not allowed to have brooms to sweep their quarters because of concern that they could be used as weapons, a source said.

The decision to cover the view of the ocean with a screen to prevent media from taking pictures was also cited as a contributing factor.

A spokesman for G4S said the company would not comment in detail on individual allegations.

“Suffice it to say it is not G4S’s role to investigate any crimes that may have been committed on Manus Island; that is the role of the PNG police, which has jurisdictional authority.”

The spokesman said: “we are and will continue to fully co-operate with all investigations and reviews by the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea.”

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said he would await the outcome of an independent review and the police investigation before commenting further on the Manus incidents.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/reza-barati-death-papua-new-guinea-nationals-attacked-asylum-seekers-on-manus-island-20140421-zqxai.html

The Manus Island escape plan that went badly wrong

The Age

April 22, 2014

Michael Gordon

It was a plan hatched in a hurry, driven by anger, frustration and desperation and doomed to fail almost as soon, and as shambolically, as it was activated.

About 35 asylum seekers rushed out of the gate from the Oscar compound of the Manus Island detention centre, as if on impulse, when it opened for the truck carrying their evening meals to enter.

Their aim was to seek refuge at a church a few kilometres away, but sources say they ran straight into a group of angry PNG locals who were walking towards the camp to begin their shifts as security guards employed by the contractor G4S.

It was about 6.15 on the evening of February 16 and the tensions that had been simmering for weeks had just been ramped dramatically up by a meeting with camp officials that confirmed the asylum seekers' worst fears.

The take-out of the meeting, as one security guard described it, was that they faced years in detention in PNG and, even if their claims for refugee status were recognised, they would not be going anywhere.

Their rage and despair manifested itself in a dramatic change in the tone of their nightly protests, which had until then mainly involved peacefully marching around their compounds and pleading for their freedom.

Now they were angry, and their ire was directed not at the Australian government that sent them here, but at the country holding them, prompting guards in riot gear to enter their compound.

"F... PNG!" some of the asylum seekers chanted. A few, according to security guards and local residents, said worse, more hurtful, things. "PNG, AIDS country!" A small number, according to Australians who were working as security guards, even exposed themselves to those outside the centre.

The PNG nationals walking up the road were not of a mind to sympathise with their predicament, or rationalise that the statements came from a small minority of the 1300 who are detained in conditions described by Amnesty International as hopelessly inadequate and by the UNHCR as unsafe.

Untrained in conflict resolution, unprepared to deal with situations like this one and possibly riled by malicious rumours spread about the asylum seekers' intentions if they escaped, they turned on the hapless escapers, quickly outnumbering them.

Some of the asylum seekers were armed with sticks and ready for a fight, an Australian security guard says. Most turned and ran for the safety of the centre they had fled. A few tasted freedom of sorts before being rounded up and taken to the local prison. Some suffered frightful beatings and broken bones. One had his throat cut.

The video footage obtained by Fairfax Media captures one scene of this drama, when asylum seekers who ran back into the centre sought refuge in a building and were pursued by PNG nationals in their G4S uniforms. An Australian guard restrains them.

Earlier, some of the asylum seekers and some of those outside the fence began throwing the same rocks at each other. Who threw the first rock is unclear, though asylum seekers insist their area was cleared of any potential missiles before the disturbance and they were simply returning fire.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison reported the next day that 19 detainees had attended the clinic for medical attention, none of whom were “exhibiting life-threatening conditions”. The next morning, five remained at the clinic. It is also clear that some security guards were injured, mostly when hit by rocks thrown into the centre.

The carnage that unfolded 24 hours later invites the question of who bears greatest responsibility for what occurred the following night. Clearly, there were many contributing factors, including the lack of training of PNG nationals, the climate of suspicion and fear, the failure of centre management to act on intelligence that violence was inevitable and the provocative chants and hostile behaviour of some detainees.

But the inescapable conclusion is that this was the consequence of the decisions of both the major parties in Australia to send asylum seekers to a remote island, detain them indefinitely in harsh conditions, give them no certainty about how and when their claims for refugee status would be determined and insist they would never be able to leave PNG unless they returned to the countries they had fled.

PNG’s unsuitability was unwittingly highlighted in a report carried in News Limited papers on Monday under the heading “Rioters suffer in lap of luxury”. It told how nine of those injured in the violence had been put up at an “expensive” Port Moresby hotel after being transferred to the PNG capital for medical treatment.

The report said the asylum seekers regularly had room service in a hotel with a lagoon-style pool, bars, restaurants and a pizza outlet. It did not report that all had been seriously injured, that they were under guard the whole time and they were the last of the asylum seekers allowed to make a phone call to family members.

One of the “guests” at the hotel was the man shot in the buttocks on February 17. He says doctors have not been able to remove the bullet. “I’m dying from this pain but they do not do anything for me,” he said in a Facebook message over the weekend. “I fill out medical request every day, but nothing happens.”

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/the-manus-island-escape-plan-that-went-badly-wrong-20140421-zqxaj.html

Labor, Greens call for release of Manus report

Labor and Greens call for report on Manus violence to be released immediately

The Age

April 22, 2014

Sarah Whyte

Labor and the Greens have called for the immediate release of the federal government's report into the fatal violence on Manus Island after graphic images surfaced showing Papua New Guinea guards attacking asylum seekers.

The footage, obtained by Fairfax Media, showed security guards attacking a group of asylum seekers who had absconded from the centre after being told they had no prospect of being settled outside PNG if their claims for refugee status were eventually recognised. The footage was taken 24 hours before Iranian asylum seeker 23-year-old Reza Barati died on February 17.

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles said the revelations were "deeply disturbing".

"The footage was taken during the events of 16-18 February, which are the subject of a government inquiry due to report this month," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

"This final report must be made public as soon as the government receives it, unlike the interim report into the incident, which has been sitting on Minister Morrison's desk for three weeks..

"The Australian public have a right to know what exactly took place at the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre in February. We need to be assured the proper safeguards will be put in place to ensure the facility is run in a safe manner."

Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young called for the interim report into the violence to be released.

"The interim report has been sitting on the Minister's desk for weeks. It's time he released it," she said.

"The Abbott government's desperation to cover up the incident that occurred on their watch gives little confidence that the Manus Island gulag will improve."

The Greens are now pushing for Labor's leader Bill Shorten to support a Senate committee to independently inspect the detention centre on Manus Island.

"Australian-paid guards were beating asylum seekers, these are Australian taxpayer guards, beating them up inside the detention centre," Ms Hanson-Young said.

"What we have seen from this government on this issue is more denial and cover-up.

"It's time now for the committee to visit Manus Island detention camp. It's time that the Australian Parliament took responsibility. I'm calling on Bill Shorten to throw his weight behind [this]."

But the Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, said he would not speculate on the footage until he had the findings of the final independent report.

"I saw that footage this morning and look there is a police investigation and an independent review going into all of these things that's why I haven't been providing a running commentary on every piece of information that has come out," he told 2GB radio on Tuesday morning.

"Clearly the media have got access to a lot of asylum seeker stories and they are putting their case and that's what journalists do, I don't have any issue with that. But the formal investigation and inquiry will find out what there is to be found out here and I'm sure that will cover the issue very comprehensively."

Mr Morrison also denied claims that the relationship with Australia's other offshore processing centre on Nauru was "deteriorating", saying that was "rubbish".

"The centre in Nauru is running well and we have not had the same sorts of problems there we have had on Manus Island."

It comes as Mr Morrison's office has confirmed Guardian Australia that an unexploded bomb was located in the detention centre on Tuesday after heavy rainfall. A spokeswoman for Mr Morrison said the unexploded bomb was considered "inert".

"The Minister has been advised that unexploded ordnance (UXO) was found at the Nauru Offshore Processing Centre (OPC) on 15 April 2014," the spokeswoman said.

"Safety of transferees and service providers is paramount.

"As a precautionary measure, an exclusion zone was temporarily established around the ordnance until the device was deemed inert and removed by the Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation, in co-operation with the Nauru Police Force.

"The transferees were relocated to areas of the OPC at an appropriate distance beyond the perimeter of the exclusion zone.

"The department will engage a specialist survey company to review the need for a more detailed UXO survey."

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/labor-and-greens-call-for-report-on-manus-violence-to-be-released-immediately-20140422-zqxc.html

Revealed: growing tensions before deadly Manus riot

Fresh details revealed of growing tensions before deadly Manus riot

- *Exclusive: power cuts and food delays partly blamed*
- *Presence of local guards was 'an aggravation'*
- *PNG police dog squad entered compound twice*
- *G4S report excerpts add to picture of night Reza Berati died*

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Saturday 26 April 2014

A series of power cuts and a delay in serving meals contributed to immediate tensions in the Manus Island detention centre on the night that Reza Barati died, according to part of the official G4S incident log seen by Guardian Australia.

The extract adds to the forensic timeline constructed by Guardian Australia of the night of 17 February and also confirms as has previously been revealed that the PNG police dog squad was invited into the camp before the rioting occurred, aggravating the situation. It raises questions over whether a failure to deliver basic provisions inside the camp contributed to unrest in which dozens more people were injured, many seriously.

The report sheds more light on how tensions over the night ebbed and flowed – at one point, around 9pm, the situation had eased and the “situation was calm enough for a shift change in G4S personnel and discussion about standing down the mobile squad [the PNG police squad who had been placed on alert]”. But half an hour later “information was received that tension would escalate after evening meals”.

The report notes that a number of power cuts due to generator failure occurred throughout the night and “increased the tensions” inside Mike compound where the majority of the rioting took place and where Reza Berati died.

At around 6.30pm the perimeter lights in Mike compound failed. They were eventually restored but the report observes: “After light was restored to Mike at 1849 there was an increase in tension between Oscar and Foxtrot compounds, which were exacerbated by the Iranian nationals in the compounds threatening non-participants in any protest action.”

A few hours later, after 9pm, “generators for Mike compound stopped which meant that there were no lights”, the report continues. “This incident saw a significant increase in tension.”

Contractors who have worked on Manus have told Guardian Australia that generator failure and food supply were regular issues at the centre.

After 8pm asylum seekers in the camp also complained of “slow food deliveries”, the report observes. “It is possible that slow food deliveries again added to the elevated stress levels in compounds.”

The report shows that earlier in the day, at 5.12 pm, all non-essential staff were removed from the centre as protests grew larger – around 70 people were participating in one demonstration in Oscar compound.

After 6pm, according to the report, the PNG mobile police squad began conversing with asylum seekers inside Oscar compound. More tension was observed as a result of this interaction. At this point two incident response teams (IRTs) – riot squads consisting of local people – were on standby.

Just after 7.30pm a disturbance inside Mike compound was reported. The report states a local employee passed the compound and was “jeered and whistled at by transferees [asylum seekers]”. This incident is described as a “significant event” involving more than 100 asylum seekers. As a result the G4S manager of the site made a decision to remove all local guards and “other personnel” from the centre “as their presence was proving an aggravation”, according to the report. It is unclear whether this order was followed, as the log later notes that a G4S manager at 11.30pm “lost control” of her IRT squad as they dispersed into Mike compound.

Roughly after this point, around 9pm, the log observes that tensions began to ease. “The situation was calm enough for a shift change in G4S personnel and discussion about standing down the mobile squad.”

However things got worse again around the time the PNG dog squad entered the camp. Guardian Australia has previously reported an eyewitness guard’s statement that the dog squad were invited into the “green zone” – an area between Mike and Foxtrot compound – at 9.44pm. The G4S report states that police dog squads entered the camp twice, at one point going into the green zone.

After this moment, the report says, “code greens” – escapes – were observed. Guardian Australia understands that the escapes refer to asylum seekers in Mike compound and Foxtrot compound breaching internal fences, not the external perimeter.

Guardian Australia understands a version of the G4S report was filed on 18 February, the day after the unrest. On that morning immigration minister Scott Morrison said “PNG police did not enter the centre” and said all the violence occurred outside of the perimeter. It is not known if the minister had access to the G4S report, which would have been filed to the immigration department.

While this new extract of the log provides more forensic detail on the night of the unrest, there are still gaps in the timeline from 10-11.20pm.

As previously reported the log later continues that at 11.20pm the fence at Oscar compound was breached.

“At this time,” the report says, “multiple code greens were reported in Oscar compound where transferees had armed themselves with improvised weapons.”

Seven minutes later guards witnessed “police units inside Mike compound”. The log continues: “Observation of ongoing violence between a) police on transferee and b) transferee on transferee.”

At 11.30pm, according to the report, the police mobile squad withdrew from Mike compound and the evacuation of casualties began. But the report says that at exactly the same time the officer in charge of the local G4S riot team “lost control” and members of the team “dispersed into the immediate area of Mike compound”.

Footage of the scenes on the makeshift hospital at the floating accommodation block for contractors, the Bibby, reveals that at 12.41am on 18 February an asylum seeker suffering a gunshot wound was rushed in for treatment.

Morrison did not respond when asked if the latest evidence from the log highlighted that a failure to deliver basic provisions inside the camp contributed to the immediate tension in the the run-up to the unrest.

A spokesman for Morrison's office said there would be no comment until the investigation run by former civil servant Robert Cornall, which is being "synthesised" with a PNG police investigation, was complete.

"Any and all events that are considered by Mr Cornall to have been relevant to the incident that occurred at Manus Island on the night of February 17 will be addressed in his independent review," the spokesman said.

"It is appropriate that the investigations into this incident, including Mr Cornall's review, are allowed to take their course to get to the bottom of what occurred."

Contacted by Guardian Australian about the latest details, G4S said it was co-operating with both the PNG police and Cornall inquiries, including making staff available for interview, and would not comment on "individual allegations" about the Manus Island incidents.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/27/power-cuts-food-delays-manus-riot>

Four Corners: The Manus Solution

Video and Transcript: <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2014/04/28/3991401.htm>

ABC-TV, Monday 28th April 2014

Four Corners

By Geoff Thompson and Karen Michelmore

First posted April 28, 2014 12:57:00

Updated April 28, 2014 16:48:00

The Manus Island Regional Processing Centre, located off the north east coast of Papua New Guinea, is eight hundred kilometres from the country's capital, Port Moresby, and even further away from Canberra. Last July, when Kevin Rudd announced that asylum seekers arriving by boat would be sent to Manus and settled in PNG, many thought they would be out of sight and out of mind. All that changed earlier this year.

On the 16th and 17th February violent confrontations at the centre left one man dead and dozens injured. There are now at least four inquiries under way investigating the violence. There is still no official public explanation of what happened during those two days.

Next on Four Corners, reporter Geoff Thompson puts together the most comprehensive account yet of what took place in and around the processing centre in February this year.

Video and Transcript: <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2014/04/28/3991401.htm>

Manus protests peaceful until stones thrown

Manus protests peaceful until stones thrown from outside, says G4S officer

G4S employee made claim in teleconference with immigration department, according to recordings obtained by Four Corners

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Monday 28 April 2014

A senior G4S officer told the Immigration Department the night after widespread disturbances at the Manus Island detention centre in February that asylum seekers had been protesting relatively peacefully until stones were thrown at them from outside the facility, according to audio recordings obtained by Four Corners.

The program revealed new details about the two nights of disturbances, which led to the death of one asylum seeker, Reza Barati, and serious injuries to dozens of others. Steve Kilburn, a guard who was present during the disturbances and a former Labor MP, also spoke out on the program.

The audio recording was said to be from a teleconference between the Immigration Department, G4S, the Salvation Army and International Health and Medical Services the day after Barati's death.

In the recording, an individual identified as a senior G4S officer could be heard saying tensions escalated after stones were thrown by people – believed to be local Papua New Guineans – outside the facility.

“When the compounds started their relatively peaceful protesting there was stone throwing involved outside the compounds into the compounds. That elicited a return response from the transferees,” the officer said.

A man said to be a senior officer from the Immigration Department could also be heard saying the immigration minister had “strong resolve” about offshore processing. But he said the minister believed they needed to make changes at the facility in order for the policy to be sustained.

“I think he’s actually more concerned about what are we going to do different,” he said.

“They’re not going to change their policy, they’re not going to change their approach. They’ve got very strong resolve. He won’t be able to I think sustain that in the face of no obvious change.”

Kilburn said he believed the only outcome of the detention centre was that events would end in serious harm occurring.

“Within a week of arriving on Manus Island I formed the opinion, and I made comments to my wife and people that I know, that there is only one possible outcome here and that is bloodshed,” he said.

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, also appeared to ease back from an earlier statement he had made about being able to guarantee the safety of asylum seekers at the centre.

“It is absolutely my aspiration, it is my commitment, to ensure that these places are safe, but it is difficult I think to do that in every instance,” he said.

"These are difficult places to manage, but it is certainly my expectation and it is my instruction to those who run these centres that that's the level of care and support that needs to be provided."

On Monday Guardian Australia published an interview with Martin Appleby, another G4S whistleblower from the facility. Appleby said Morrison contributed to months of escalating tensions there when he addressed asylum seekers.

He also said the PNG incident report teams responsible for responding to crises were given "probably three days" of training, which he said was not adequate to respond to serious incidents.

A spokeswoman for Morrison said there was "no basis in fact" for the allegations that the minister's trip in September increased tensions at the facility.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/29/manus-protests-peaceful-until-stones-thrown-from-outside-says-g4s-officer

'Difficult' to ensure safety on Manus Island at all times: Morrison

Manus Island riots: Scott Morrison backs down from guaranteeing safety of asylum seekers in PNG detention

ABC-TV - Four Corners

By Geoff Thompson and Karen Michelmore

First posted Mon 28 Apr 2014, 6:56am AEST

Updated Mon 28 Apr 2014, 7:16am AEST

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has backed away from guaranteeing the safety of asylum seekers inside the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre in Papua New Guinea.

Riots at the centre on February 16 and 17 this year resulted in violent clashes that left one man dead and 62 people injured.

A 23-year-old Iranian Kurd, Reza Barati, was beaten to death.

In the wake of the violence, Mr Morrison said on February 18 that he could guarantee the safety of asylum seekers who remained in the centre.

"I can guarantee their safety when they remain in the centre and act cooperatively with those who are trying to provide them with support and accommodation," he said.

But when asked by Four Corners whether he could guarantee the safety of asylum seekers within the Manus Island centre, Mr Morrison said it was "difficult" to ensure safety at all times.

"It is absolutely my aspiration, it is my commitment to ensure that these places are safe, but it is difficult I think to do that in every instance," he said.

"These are difficult places to manage, but it is certainly my expectation and it is my instruction to those who run these centres that that's the level of care and support that need to be provided."

A Four Corners investigation has revealed that pressure points inside and outside the Manus Island centre led to a situation which eyewitnesses allege made "bloodshed" inevitable.

"Within a week of arriving on Manus Island I formed the opinion, and I made comments to my wife and people that I know, that there is only one possible outcome here and that is bloodshed," says one whistleblower featured in tonight's program.

"One of the things that led me to the decision that I could no longer work there was when I had young people, refugees, who were terrified saying to me 'Please, please keep us safe - don't let them kill us' and I said 'I will'. "In the back of my mind I was thinking I can't. And that's difficult."

Both sides 'armed up'

Former G4S guards and other witnesses interviewed by Four Corners allege that "both sides" in the violence were "arming up" before it occurred.

One guard claims that G4S had repeatedly advised against a meeting with asylum seekers going ahead on Sunday, February 16, because of fears it could trigger trouble.

"Post riots I attended a meeting with centre management and a number of other employees, where centre management said that that decision was overturned by Immigration in Canberra," he said.

The former G4S guard claims the Sunday meeting "was the catalyst for the riots that occurred later on that evening".

Another eyewitness says he saw PNG police enter the centre and open fire on the night of February 17.

"They were firing as they came in. They were followed by locals, nationals ... they came into the compound and they went with the police," he said.

Four Corners can also reveal that the day after the worst violence, G4S management advised the Immigration Department that it was stone-throwing from outside the centre which turned relatively peaceful protests into violent ones.

It was four days after the riots before Mr Morrison could confirmed that most of the rioting and the response to it took place within the centre.

But he still will not say whether this involved the PNG police or other locals.

"It's a matter for the final report to confirm. It's a matter for the police investigation to confirm the facts of the incident on that evening," he said.

Not a single asylum seeker detained on Manus Island has had their claim finalised since former prime minister Kevin Rudd reached a resettlement agreement with Papua New Guinea in July last year.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-28/manus-island-safety-difficult-to-ensure-at-all-times-morrison/5414272

G4S Whistleblower speaks out about Manus tensions

Scott Morrison visit sent Manus tension soaring, says G4S whistleblower

- Former security officer Martin Appleby talks exclusively to Guardian Australia, the first guard to speak out
- Minister 'put security at risk' when he told asylum seekers they would never see Australia
- Detention centre beset by lack of proper procedures, unprofessional conduct and atrocious conditions, Appleby says

Oliver Laughland, Christian Bennett and Bill Code

theguardian.com

Monday 28 April 2014

Scott Morrison directly contributed to tension in the Manus Island detention centre during a late September visit, according to an explosive set of allegations made by former G4S guard Martin Appleby, who is the first guard to speak publicly since the unrest on Manus in February that left one asylum seeker dead.

In an exclusive interview with Guardian Australia, Appleby, who worked as a safety and security officer and a training officer on Manus between July and late December 2013, alleges:

- The immigration minister addressed a compound in late September, resulting in a state of “high alert” being called for riot, fire and self-harm. Appleby made these observations in a video diary that was recorded just days after Morrison’s address. The minister, according to Appleby, told asylum seekers: “You will never see the shores of Australia.” The decision to address asylum seekers in this manner, “put people’s security at risk, including his own”, and was a turning point in tensions within the camp, according to Appleby.
- Papua New Guinean nationals in the incident response teams (IRTs) were given “probably three days” of training. Appleby describes this as not at all adequate. Local IRTs are alleged to have been involved in the violence that erupted on the evening of 17 February, when Reza Barati was killed. A G4S incident report extract of that night seen independently by Guardian Australia observes a manager “lost control” of her IRT that evening. Appleby, who has a decade’s experience in corrections, says the training of the local IRTs should have been a “minimum six intensive weeks”.
- As the numbers in the centre began to swell after the introduction of the “PNG solution”, G4S “couldn’t afford any more time to give to training and it was a sort of a snowball effect”, Appleby says. “It was a failure that was always going to fail,” he adds.
- There was no proper procedure in place to count the number of asylum seekers in the centre. Appleby says he has “no doubt” detainees absconded from the camp.
- Facilities in the detention centre were atrocious: “No one should be made to live under those conditions. No one.”

A spokeswoman for Morrison’s office said there was “no basis in fact” for the allegation that the minister’s September trip had exacerbated tension on Manus. “Claims that the minister was ‘evacuated’ or had ‘increased tensions’ are false. They have no basis in fact,” she said.

Morrison said in an Operation Sovereign Border press conference on 30 September that he had addressed asylum seekers on Manus: “I gave them a very clear message, and it was this; they will not be getting what they came for. They would remain there at that centre until they went home or were settled in a country other than Australia.”

Asked for a response to all of Appleby’s allegations, the spokeswoman responded: “The government inherited a facility on Manus Island that had been rushed by the previous government.” A full statement can be read [here](#).

Guardian Australia has produced three films of Appleby’s allegations. They feature never-before-seen footage from inside the detention centre and use evidence obtained by a sustained investigation into the unrest.

None of the footage or documents used were provided to Guardian Australia by Appleby.

He also alleges that there was no process to permanently separate vulnerable asylum seekers from the main population. Appleby says he was given the task of caring for one sexual assault victim for 24 hours; the detainee was “very scared” of what would happen to him when he returned to his compound.

Appleby was present during the evacuation of the centre on 18 October, after an altercation between the PNG navy and police outside the main gate. His is the first detailed account of that event. He says PNG forces turned on G4S staff who rushed out to stop the confrontation. Personnel were evacuated single file along a beach behind the centre, leaving asylum seekers alone in the compound. He says there were no evacuation procedures. “We didn’t know how many staff at that point were being evacuated,” he said. “Was it mismanagement? Was it lack of procedure? Was it all of the above? For people from professional backgrounds to act in such a way was just disgraceful.”

Since leaving Manus, Appleby has announced he will stand as an ALP candidate in the Victorian state elections. He says none of his allegations are politically motivated.

A spokesman for G4S did not respond to Appleby’s specific allegations. “G4S will not comment in detail on individual allegations with regard to the Manus Island incidents of 16 and 17 February, as we do not wish to pre-empt or compromise a number of Australian and PNG reviews that are currently under way,” he said.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/28/scott-morrison-visit-sent-manus-tension-soaring-says-g4s-whistleblower

MEDIA RELEASE: It will never be safe: Close Manus Island !!

Refugee supporters to protest at Abbott's Sydney Institute speech

Monday April 28, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Refugee supporters will gather, from 6pm tonight (Monday 28 April) at Star Casino Sydney, Pirrama Road entrance, to call for the closure of offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru.

"Immigration Minister Scott Morrison had admitted the Australian government cannot guarantee the safety of asylum seekers they are sending to Manus Island," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The truth is that the Minister cannot be trusted with the safety or the welfare of the asylum seekers. Scott Morrison is complicit in protecting the killers of Reza Barati and is responsible for leaving the asylum seekers vulnerable to further attack.

"The killers of Reza Barati remain on the payroll of the detention centre management, Transfield, with government approval. And the PNG police who covered for the attackers and shot asylum seekers that night are still guarding the perimeter fence of the detention centre.

"The Manus Island detention centre will never be safe. The asylum seekers live with the constant fear of another attack."

There have been a number of attempts to re-introduce that local staff into the detention centre -- but, so far, all the attempts have been prevented by opposition from the asylum seekers.

But tensions are sky high. Last Friday, 25 April, Transfield attempted to use one of the local guards, who was involved in the attack on 17 February, as a driver to transport asylum seekers to the medical centre. On the 25th, a Wilson security guard assaulted an asylum seeker outside the internet room, knocking him to the ground.

"Shamefully, the Australian and PNG governments have conspired to thwart any independent PNG inquiry into the Manus Island detention centre and the murder of Reza Barati," said Ian Rintoul.

"The PNG police enquiry is a joke. Despite the incontrovertible evidence, the PNG police inquiry has already cleared PNG police of any involvement in the attacks and killing of Reza.

"Reza's blood is on the hands of Tony Abbott and Scott Morrison. The asylum seekers on Manus must be brought to Australia where their safety can be guaranteed."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713.

Documents show Manus warnings were made in November

The Age

April 30, 2014

Sarah Whyte and Rory Callinan

Major upgrades to security at the Manus Island detention centre, including the installation of CCTV cameras and better fencing, had been recommended by the commander of Operation Sovereign Borders three months before the deadly riots in February, but were not acted on, new documents show.

Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, commander of the government's Operation Sovereign Borders, told the government in November that the security at the detention centre was not appropriate.

He made multiple recommendations including improvements to fencing, lighting and the installation of CCTV, according to newly released senate estimate documents.

Lieutenant Campbell's report was received by both the immigration department and Immigration Minister Scott Morrison on November 5. But three months later, as violence erupted in the Papua New Guinea centre that killed one asylum seeker and injured 62 others, not one of those changes had been implemented.

Witnesses to the brutal attack, who have spoken to Fairfax Media, say the fencing was so unstable it was pushed over by PNG nationals, including those employed as security guards; and there were major power outages just before the violence causing confusion and panic among asylum seekers.

There is also no suggestion that any of the violence was captured on CCTV footage during February 16 and 17.

Labor immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, said Mr Morrison had been negligent and reckless in not immediately implementing Lieutenant Campbell's suggestions.

"It is clear the Minister failed to act – he has demonstrated gross incompetence in managing this facility," Mr Marles said.

"There were clear recommendations to address security including fencing raised – Minister Morrison has shown negligence and recklessness in not actively making sure these issues were fixed."

When Scott Morrison came into power as Immigration Minister in September, he ordered a "full force protection assessment to be undertaken at all offshore processing centres and at Christmas Island."

The order, he said at the time, was based on his own "concerns about the status of security arrangements and adequacy of security infrastructure put in place by the former government."

The review was to be undertaken by Lieutenant Campbell, who was to look at any "weaknesses that could be exploited or whether there are potential threats against the centre from within and outside in particular".

Now, nearly six months since that final assessment was handed down, an order has reportedly been placed for prison-grade perimeter fencing.

In a statement on Tuesday night, Mr Morrison's office said: "The need for such an immediate assessment was necessitated by the clearly unsuitable state of infrastructure and security arrangements on Manus Island put in place by the previous government.

"In November following completion of the review the minister authorised implementation of all recommendations and secured funding to enable their implementation.

"This occurred at the same time that he initiated a review of the contracting arrangements for all service providers on Nauru and Manus Island which resulted in the decision not to continue the contracts for G4S and The Salvation Army at the conclusion of their contract term in February. The recommendations of the report continue to be implemented."

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/documents-show-manus-warnings-were-made-in-november-20140429-zr199.html

Manus detainees seek witness protection

The Age

April 30, 2014

Michael Gordon

Lawyers acting for asylum seekers who say they witnessed the killing of Reza Barati at the Manus Island detention centre in February have launched a High Court action to have them placed in protective custody in Australia.

The asylum seekers, who are still to be interviewed by Papua New Guinea police investigating Mr Barati's death, say they have received death threats and fear for their safety while they remain in the centre.

A writ issued on Wednesday also accuses the Australian and PNG governments of committing crimes against humanity by exposing asylum seekers to arbitrary and indefinite detention in "tortuous, inhuman and degrading conditions".

The action is aimed at securing the return of the asylum seekers to Australia for processing and preventing any more being sent to PNG. It will be vigorously defended by the Abbott government.

The legal action coincides with renewed tensions at the facility, amid speculation that several asylum seekers will be told their claims for refugee status have been rejected.

One Iranian was told on Wednesday that he had received a "positive initial assessment" and "may be eligible to participate in more activities in the PNG community". But a letter to the asylum seeker said this did not mean he was a refugee, and a final decision would be made by PNG immigration minister, Rimbink Pato.

Mr Barati was killed and more than 60 others were injured when PNG nationals entered the centre on the night of February 17 armed with machetes, guns and other weapons.

Lawyers acting on behalf of 354 of around 1300 asylum seekers being held in the Manus Island facility have also called for a royal commission-style inquiry into arrangements, events and conditions at the centre.

They are seeking an urgent hearing on the application for the asylum seekers to be given witness protection. One of the witnesses, who says he can identify most of those involved in Mr Barati's death, has already told a PNG court that he fears for his life if he reveals what he saw on February 17. He says PNG guards, PNG locals and expatriate Australians were involved in the death.

Lead counsel Jay Williams took detailed statements from the witnesses before being deported from PNG last month, but the asylum seekers have refused to speak to police investigating Mr Barati's death until their safety can be guaranteed.

Instructing solicitor Ruth Hudson, who is senior associate with the Sydney law firm Stacks Goudkamp, said the action by the PNG government to shut down a human rights inquiry initiated by PNG judge Justice Cannings underscored the case for an inquiry to be established in Australia. She proposed that former High Court judge Michael Kirby head the inquiry.

Among the claims made in the writ filed on Wednesday are that the asylum seekers were forcibly deported from Australia in violation of international law and have been detained without access to legal representation, judicial review or a fair hearing.

They say they have been exposed to murder, attempted murder, threats of cannibalism, grievous bodily harm and other "gross humanitarian violations". Fairfax Media has asked Immigration Minister Scott Morrison for his response to the court application.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-detainees-seek-witness-protection-20140430-zr1vb.html

Manus eyewitnesses want protection

Eyewitnesses to death of Reza Barati apply for protection in Australia

Five witnesses claim they have received death threats and that neither PNG nor Australia can ensure their safety

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Wednesday 30 April 2014

Five eyewitnesses to the death of Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati during unrest at Manus Island detention centre have applied for protective custody in Australia, saying they fear for their safety in Papua New Guinea.

Guardian Australia has been told by sources on Manus that PNG police have started interviewing asylum seekers who witnessed the violence on the night of 17 February when Barati, 23, was killed.

But five witnesses claim they have received death threats and that neither the PNG government nor the Australian government can ensure their safety. They are being represented by barrister Jay Williams.

It comes as 354 Manus asylum seekers lodged an action in the Australian high court, accusing the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, of committing crimes against humanity.

The 354 asylum seekers, or “Group of 354” as they are being called, claim that Morrison forcibly deported them to Manus and that they have been detained in degrading conditions indefinitely without access to legal advice, in violation of international law.

Ruth Hudson, solicitor for the Group of 354, said: “In addition to the orders being sought from the high court in these applications, we are of the view that there is an urgent need for an inquiry or a royal commission in relation to the arrangements, events and conditions on Manus Island regional processing centre.

“In our view, such an inquiry could and should be headed by former justice of the high court Michael Kirby, as he recently did in relation to North Korea.”

In a separate development, Guardian Australia understands that at least one asylum seeker on Manus, an Iranian man, has had a positive initial refugee assessment interview.

According to sources, PNG immigration officials played asylum seekers a film on Monday telling them that anyone found to be a refugee would be given freedom of movement and the right to work in PNG.

But one asylum seeker who spoke to Guardian Australia on Tuesday described the mood in the camp as “depressed” and “disappointed”. Tensions within the camp are still high following the unrest.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/30/eyewitnesses-to-death-of-reza-barati-apply-for-protection-in-australia

G4S guard describes 'tribal mode' Manus standoff

G4S guard describes standoff between asylum seekers and PNG guards

Manus expat guards had to 'jump on' asylum seekers to stop PNG guards from kicking them, says Australian guard

Australian Associated Press
theguardian.com
Wednesday 30 April 2014

An Australian G4S guard has told of a standoff between asylum seekers and Papua New Guinea guards in a "tribal sort of mode" during the violence on Manus Island that resulted in the death of an Iranian man.

The unnamed former Australian soldier, who served in the army for 20 years in Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor, was working for G4S at the detention centre and has made a submission, including photos and videos, to a Senate inquiry into the riot.

The man, who has sought to remain anonymous, describes in detail the initial flare-up on 16 February and says the expatriate guards had to "jump on" the asylum seekers to stop the PNG guards from kicking them.

"Initially, the PNG guards didn't stop kicking," he said. "I remember being struck many times but my adrenaline level was quite high so I didn't feel pain until later that night."

He estimated the days of violence, which culminated in the beating to death of 23-year-old Iranian Kurd Reza Barati, involved 100 PNG guards and 30 asylum seekers.

"This caused a Mexican stand-off situation," he said.

The man describes the behaviour of the PNG guards in his submission.

"The problem with the PNG guards was they went into a tribal sort of mode," he said. "They were in a trance-like state of mind and nothing was going to get in their way."

"They wanted to drag all the [asylum seekers] out and maybe not kill them but show them that 'this is our country'."

The man said there was no crisis management plan at the centre and limited communication options to provide situational reports to managers about the incident. He also claimed a senior manager told the expatriate guards to withdraw halfway through the incident.

"We, the expat G4S guards stated 'no, no we're not leaving'," he said. "We were the only thing stopping the PNG guards."

He said Indian, Sri Lankan, Rohingya and Asian detainees weren't involved in the clash, which mainly involved Iranian, Iraqi and Middle East-based groups.

"The thing that absolutely pissed me off the most was officers had previously warned duty operation managers of the problems ... but this had fallen on deaf ears," he added.

The guard told of ripping the shirt off one asylum seeker, whose throat had been slashed, to stop the bleeding.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/01/g4s-guard-describes-standoff-between-asylum-seekers-and-png-guards

PNG delivers first assessment of refugee claim

PNG govt makes 'positive assessment' of Iranian's refugee claim

ABC News Online

By PNG Correspondent Liam Cochrane

First posted Wed 30 Apr 2014, 4:30pm AEST

Updated Wed 30 Apr 2014, 5:23pm AEST

Papua New Guinea has taken the first step towards granting refugee status and resettling refugees currently detained on Manus Island.

The ABC has obtained a letter from a PNG immigration official informing a 40-year-old Iranian man of the "positive initial assessment" to his asylum claim.

The letter, dated Wednesday April 30, states the man is not yet considered a refugee.

The final decision must come from PNG's Foreign and Immigration ministers.

The document refers to resettling refugees in Papua New Guinea, an issue which asylum seekers and former staff at the Manus Island detention centre say set off riots that left an Iranian Reza Barati dead.

The asylum seeker in question is from the centre's Mike Compound, the same place where Mr Barati was killed.

More than 1,300 male asylum seekers have been waiting up to 10 months for their asylum claims to be processed.

Staff at the centre are believed to be on alert as asylum assessments are delivered.

Earlier this month, Australia's Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said the first of those found to be refugees could be resettled in PNG in June.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-30/an-png-govt-makes-27positive-assesment27-of-refugee-claim/5421608

Witnesses to Berati's death 'need urgent protection'

Lawyers say witnesses to Reza Berati's death need urgent protection

ABC News Online

By the National Reporting Team's Lorna Knowles and Alison McClymont

First posted Wed 30 Apr 2014, 5:03pm AEST

Updated Wed 30 Apr 2014, 5:09pm AEST

Lawyers acting for Manus Island detainees today filed an urgent application to the High Court to have witnesses to the death of Reza Berati returned to Australia. They say local guards at the centre have made death threats against the five witnesses and they should urgently be placed in protective custody in Australia.

The lawyers have also lodged a writ in the High Court, alleging crimes against humanity by both the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments.

Meanwhile, asylum seekers are circulating a petition calling on Prime Minister Tony Abbott to send them back to Indonesia. Berati, a 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, died during a riot at the Manus Island detention centre in February.

One eyewitness told the ABC Mr Berati was brutally beaten by a group of guards. "Two of them were Australians, the rest were PNG locals. They started kicking Reza in the head and the stomach with their boots," he told the Lateline program earlier this month.

"Reza put his arms up to cover his head but they were still kicking."

Five witnesses to the alleged murder have told their lawyers that local guards at the centre have made death threats against them.

Ruth Hudson from the Stacks Goudkamp law firm says the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments cannot protect their safety.

She says the identity of one of the witnesses has already been published on the front page of the national newspaper in PNG.

"Reports have been made to the police in Papua New Guinea who have tried to have access to investigate the complaints and have access to the eyewitnesses, and their attempts to get access have been routinely thwarted as well," Ms Hudson said.

"And so we are gravely concerned about the safety of those eyewitnesses and so the application incredibly urgent to get them back here to Australia."

'Crimes against humanity' by Morrison

In a separate application to the High Court, the lawyers have lodged a habeas corpus writ on behalf of more than 350 detainees on Manus Island.

"A writ of habeas corpus effectively requires the detainer or the person - in this instance, the governments - to bring the detainees before the court and to demonstrate to the court the lawfulness of his or her detention," Ms Hudson said.

The writ alleges gross human rights violations and international crimes against humanity by the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments, as well as Immigration Minister Scott Morrison.

Ms Hudson said the writ alleged the detainees were forcibly deported in violation of article seven of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

"Secondly they claim that they are being arbitrarily and indefinitely detained for five or more years," Ms Hudson said.

"The other allegation is that they are being involuntarily detained in torturous, inhumane and degrading conditions including being exposed to possible murder, attempted murder, threats to kill, threats of cannibalism, grievous bodily harm and obviously the very unfit living conditions.

"The next allegation is that they are being detained without access to any legal representation or to the right to judicial review or a fair hearing."

The detainees have also asked the High Court to establish a judicial inquiry into the alleged human rights violations, to be headed by former High Court judge Michael Kirby.

They say they have suffered serious and profound harm and are seeking damages for pain and suffering.

Meanwhile, a petition is being circulated in the Manus Island detention centre asking Prime Minister Tony Abbott to send the detainees back to Indonesia.

A copy of the petition, obtained by the ABC says: "Mr Prime Minister, we have been under military attack that caused us to lose one of our friends forever after more than seven months of suffering from continuous pressure and humiliation in this prison."

"Therefore, we all of Manus Island asylum seekers made up our mind and do not want to be settle in Australian anymore, neither in PNG. You are kindly requested to stop wasting Australian's [sic] taxes here on us and send us back to Indonesia."

The petition, signed by at least 140 detainees, states that unlike Australia, there were people in Indonesia with "unlimited kindness" that they could stay with while they applied for asylum.

It concludes by saying that if they are sent back to Indonesia, "all humans may forgive Australians for committing crimes against humanity".

A spokeswoman for Mr Morrison said the Government would not comment on any matters before the court.

"Transferees at the Manus Island processing centres are lawfully in Papua New Guinea," she said.

"Transferees wishing to return to a country where they have a right of residency can have such travel facilitated."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-30/manus-island-reza-berati-witness-protection-application/5421892

Reza Barati set upon by PNG contractors

Reza Barati was set upon by local PNG contractors, says expat guard

In an account of the 17 February unrest on Manus Island, the guard also alleges PNG police fired between 20 and 40 shots

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Thursday 1 May 2014

Reza Barati was set upon by a group of local PNG contractors working for a cleaning company and security company G4S and was beaten over the head with a “lump of wood”, according to one of the most graphic accounts of the unrest on Manus Island on 17 February, authored by an anonymous guard and submitted to the Senate inquiry into the violence.

The expat guard’s account, submitted on his behalf by independent MP Andrew Wilkie, also alleges that PNG police fired between 20 and 40 shots on the night and attempted to collect shell casings afterwards, “I believe to cover up their actions that evening”, the guard writes.

The submission also contains never before seen video footage purportedly of a peaceful protest on 15 February – the night before the first day of unrest in the centre – during which asylum seekers on Manus cry “Tony, shame on you!” and “Freedom.” It also carries more photographs of bloodied cells and bullet holes following from the violence on 17 February.

Barati, a 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, died in the violence at the Australian-run immigration processing centre, which is also the subject of an Immigration Department review led by former civil servant Robert Cornall, and a PNG police inquiry.

The guard describes how local contractors went into “tribal mode” on both nights, resulting in “brutal and savage behaviour”.

The guard writes that on 17 February local contractors and police even turned on expat G4S staff. He says: “I’m under the belief they wanted to kill every single one of the clients [asylum seekers]. At the rear of Mike [a compound in the centre where most of the rioting occurred], an Australian G4S guard was shot at, as the PNG police yelled out ‘traitor’ because he was trying to help wounded clients from being attacked further.”

Many of the guard’s observations match Guardian Australia’s detailed timeline of the night Barati was killed, which has been constructed using multiple accounts of the night.

The guard also writes a detailed account of the violence on 16 February, when about 10 asylum seekers attempted to escape the centre and were pursued by “about 100 G4S PNG staff”. The guard says one asylum seeker had his throat slashed and had “started to bleed out”.

“He went white in the face,” he says, “and I believe that if we’d waited for medical staff we would have lost him so we carried him to IHMS [the private medical contractor on the island].”

Violence between local guards and asylum seekers then continued and PNG guards pulled apart a metal bunk bed to create improvised weapons. The guard says the expat G4S staff “were like mediators in the middle” during the incident, which developed into a “Mexican standoff type

situation”. At one point, the guard writes, expat guards were asked by a senior G4S manager to withdraw from the compound. According to this account the guards refused.

After the incident diffused, the guards received “no debrief”.

The guard’s account raises criticisms of the training offered to G4S staff similar to those voiced by Manus whistleblower Martin Appleby. The guard, who served in the army for 20 years, says the training on Manus was “the poorest form of instruction I’ve ever seen in my life”. He also criticises the lack of an evacuation procedure, which chimes with Appleby’s observations.

The guard says that on the day after the violence he witnessed a G4S supervisor “lining up star pickets and metal-type weapons just in case the clients tried to riot on the third day”.

G4S has been contacted for comment. Wilkie was unavailable for interview but stated in the submission: “I am confident of the former guard’s bona fides and that his motive is true. I was struck by the impact the incident has had on the former security officer who has a long military background.”

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the submission was a further indication that “no one on Manus Island is safe, including Australian staff”.

“This report shows just how callous, poorly informed and deceitful the immigration minister was in the days following the attack,” she said.

“As long as brave people who were there are willing to speak up, the truth will come out.

“The Senate inquiry needs to be able to travel to Manus Island so that it can get to the bottom of what actually happened that night.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/01/reza-barati-was-set-upon-by-local-png-contractors-says-expat-guard

Manus malaria drug a safety concern for asylum seekers

AAP / The Age

May 5, 2014

Asylum seekers on Manus Island are being given a type of anti-malaria medication that detention centre staff have been warned not to take because of serious side effects.

Centre staff were warned not to take Mefloquine, also known as Lariam, because of adverse health effects.

Salvation Army worker Simon Taylor says in a submission to a Senate inquiry that he is aware asylum seekers have been given the drug despite the warnings to staff.

Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration warns that patients with a history of depression, anxiety disorders or other major psychiatric illness should not be prescribed the drug.

It's common for asylum seekers in detention to suffer depression, post traumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses.

The US military developed the drug in the 1970s and has curbed its use among troops after it was linked to permanent brain damage, suicide, murder and domestic violence.

During his time on Manus Island between last September and February 2014, Mr Taylor experienced several camp "lockdowns".

"Locals with machetes attempted to breach perimeter fences," he said.

Many asylum seekers had contracted food poisoning from poor kitchen hygiene and insects that had been found in meals.

At times drinking water at the centre had the taste and smell of detergent because Papua New Guinea staff used inadequate processes.

Asylum seekers are allowed one to two hours of afternoon leisure time when they can play card games and soccer.

"Under no circumstances" are they given access to leisure equipment outside that time.

Mr Taylor said the Salvos had more sports equipment such as baseballs and skipping ropes but these were "deemed too dangerous" and were never used as it would require diverting security staff resources.

He had also worked at the Nauru detention centre and said its activity programs had not been allowed to be replicated on Manus for "operational reasons".

Comment has been sought from International Health and Medical Services, which provides health care to asylum seekers at offshore detention centres.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-malaria-drug-a-safety-concern-for-asylum-seekers-20140505-zr4rs.html

Ex-Manus Island workers report beatings, rapes of asylum seekers

Sydney Morning Herald

May 5, 2014

Sarah Whyte and Michael Gordon

Disturbing allegations of regular beatings, racist slurs and unwanted sexual advances by G4S guards on Manus Island have been made by a former Salvation Army worker.

Nicole Judge, a worker on the island, said she was "shocked and distressed" at the conditions on Manus Island when she arrived in September last year to work in a general support role.

In the three months Ms Judge was on the island, she claims in the submission to the Senate inquiry there was sexual activity in the so-called "rape dungeon" in one of the compounds and was told by the guards to carry a "rape whistle" while inside the centre. When she told Salvation Army staff that a young Myanmar asylum seeker was walking away from a toilet block in pain, her Salvation Army team leader dismissed her concerns, saying that "because these transferees are Muslim and actively engaging in prayer that any sexual activity would have been consensual". No follow up occurred, she says.

When another asylum seeker was being beaten against a wall and a metal bed frame to the point he was unconscious by two G4S guards, Ms Judge again complained to Salvation Army management, but was told she was "stupid" and "good luck".

Mentally ill asylum seekers were kept in a separate compound called "Delta 9" Ms Judge says. "I have heard transferees screaming inside this area, and shaking the fence as I walked past." The compound, with no recreational facilities and poor lighting, was monitored by G4S guards, she says.

Ms Judge also claims expat guards told her "the Cronulla riots was the best thing to happen to Australia", while also telling asylum seekers to "f--- themselves" and to "return to their f---ing country" if they didn't stop complaining about their situation. She says she was often referred to by a number, where expat guards would rate the female staff on their attractiveness. Ms Judge says she still has contact with asylum seekers via Facebook.

Last year, an independent report by Robert Cornall found that alleged incidents of transferees being sexually abused, raped and tortured with the full knowledge of staff, "did not happen".

In a separate submission, another former Salvation Army staff member, Simon Taylor, claimed asylum seekers on Manus Island were being given a type of anti-malaria medication that detention centre staff had been warned by International Health and Medical Services not to take.

"Staff was [sic] told that they needed to take anti malaria medication as a precaution but to not take Mefloquine because it can cause serious side effects. I became aware from IHMS staff clients on Manus Island were given Mefloquine despite the warnings to staff," Mr Taylor wrote in a submission.

The governor of Port Moresby has taken the extraordinary step of talking out advertisements in PNG's national newspapers to express his "grave concern" about the treatment of asylum seekers in the Manus Island detention centre.

In an open letter, Powes Parkop describes their treatment as "repugnant to our traditional and contemporary culture and to our Christian values". He also laments that PNG has shown a tendency

to "blindly or otherwise incorporate Australian treatment and attitude into our culture and our country".

The letter acknowledges popular opposition to the resettlement in PNG of those recognised as refugees, but argues that "qualified professionals" including engineers and doctors should be granted work permits while their claims are processed.

It also urges the country's Foreign Affairs and Immigration Minister, Rimbink Pato, not to "allow Australia to wash its hands of this matter and leave the burden to us".

G4S and the Salvation Army did not respond in time for deadline. IHMS referred the matter to the Immigration Department.

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/exmanus-island-workers-report-beatings-rapes-of-asylum-seekers-20140505-zr4uv.html

Former worker: Manus Island block a 'rape dungeon'

Manus Island block a 'rape dungeon', Salvation Army worker tells inquiry

Parliamentary inquiry also told of inadequate medical care, poor workplace safety and fears of violent attacks

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Tuesday 6 May 2014

Part of Manus Island detention centre was known as a “rape dungeon” to some guards, a former Salvation Army worker has alleged. In a submission to the Manus Island parliamentary inquiry, Nicole Judge said concerns she raised about possible sexual assaults in another part of the camp were ignored.

Other submissions make allegations of inadequate medical care, poor workplace safety and fears of violent attacks from local staff.

“I have heard P1 block in foxtrot being referred to by G4S guards as a ‘rape dungeon’,” Judge’s submission said. “I have been told never to enter this building due to heightened sexual activity in this particular building.”

Judge said she reported the sexual assault claims to her Salvation Army case management team leader.

“I pointed out both transferees to this team leader; this particular team leader stated to me that because these transferees were Muslim and actively engaging in prayer that any sexual activity would have been consensual,” her submission said. “No follow-up occurred.”

Judge said some G4S expatriate officers would act inappropriately and sexually harass her, and that two expatriate guards beat an Iranian asylum seeker “against a wall and a metal bed frame”.

There have now been almost 20 submissions to the Senate inquiry, with a number of former guards, lawyers and case workers delivering scathing assessments of the facility, the policy of offshore processing and the adequacy of management following unrest at the centre that led to the death of Reza Barati and serious injuries for dozens of asylum seekers.

Elizabeth Thompson, a former migration agent who spoke out to SBS Dateline about the facility, said her efforts to represent her clients were significantly hampered during her time at the centre, and called for its closure.

“MIRPC must be closed down and its inhabitants transferred to the Australian mainland. DIBP has created such an environment of hostility to the transferees on MIRPC that there is no prospect of safe resettlement,” she wrote in her submission.

She said a document that appeared to be a Papua New Guinea government document was drafted by an employee of the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Thompson said an unaccompanied 17-year-old – who was moved off Manus Island following a report by Guardian Australia – had documents proving his identity at the time he was on the island,

and that staff members from IHMS and the Salvation Army had expressed concern the boy had been sexually assaulted on the island.

“During our interview he became very distressed and had to seek medical assistance,” she wrote.

Steve Kilburn, who spoke out on a Four Corners program last week, said in his submission he was given two boxes of Panadol and told to “go out as required” to assist with serious injuries sustained during the unrest including broken bones and eye injuries.

Poor workplace health and safety, inadequate toilet facilities and dangerous fumes from mosquito fogging that led to one asylum seeker with asthma collapsing were all raised as concerns by Kilburn, although he stressed that he believed G4S management and expatriate G4S staff acted appropriately.

Kilburn reiterated his concerns about racism at the centre, and said many Papua New Guinea guards “told me in personal conversation that they resented the Muslims and that they felt that it was offensive to their Christian religion to have them on the Island”.

Martin Appleby, a whistleblower who told Guardian Australia a visit from the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, caused tensions to soar at the centre, has also made a submission to the inquiry and said he wished to provide the committee with more information in the public hearings.

“I believe that the insufficient training package, the lack of post orders and procedure delivered to both the expats and PNG nationals played a significant part in to the riots that were reported to have taken place.”

G4S has said it is preparing its own submission to the inquiry and will address some of the issues raised about its staff there.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia, Human Rights Law Centre, Australian Lawyers Alliance and Immigration Advice and Rights Centre have also made submissions raising their concerns about the state of the centre.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/manus-island-block-rape-dungeon-claim>