

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Saturday, 4 November 2017

Support us by making periodic donations: <https://www.safecom.org.au/donate.htm>

1. 'F---ing disgraceful': Russell Crowe unloads on Manus Island crisis
2. The Manus Island agreement is a failure. Turnbull and Shorten need to accept it
3. Manus standoff: Papua New Guinea's grand chief says Australia's hypocrisy 'astounding'
4. Behrouz Boochani wins Amnesty International award for writing from Manus
5. Behrouz Boochani: Diary of disaster 30/10/2017: the last days inside Manus Island detention centre
6. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 31/10/2017: The refugees are in a state of terror on Manus
7. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 1/11/2017: A merciless fear provoked by last night's events has gripped...
8. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 2/11/2017: Manus is a landscape of surreal horror
9. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 3/11/2017: The breath of death on Manus Island: starvation and sickness

ROLLING MANUS ISLAND NEWS REPORTS – FROM NEWEST TO OLDEST

10. PNG says it will remove refugees from Australian detention camp by force if necessary
11. Bill Shorten urges PM Malcolm Turnbull to consider Jacinda Ardern's offer to help resolve crisis
12. Shorten says Turnbull should consider New Zealand offer to take refugees
13. Manus navy will remove detainees by force if necessary, base commander says
14. Manus Island asylum seekers digging to find water as stand-off continues
15. Pleas for New Zealand, Papua New Guinea to intervene in Manus Island crisis
16. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus refugees to defy siege
17. Manus Island: UN says new accommodation 'not ready' for refugees
18. Greens label Dutton 'a serial human rights abuser' as mental health concerns mount
19. Power shut off to final Manus compounds as 600 men refuse to leave
20. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus 'Alliance Against Human Rights Abuse' presents petition to Governor
21. Manus Island: locals are 'looting the camp', detainees claim
22. 'Calm before the storm': Refugees brace for disaster after refusing to leave Manus Island facility
23. Peter Dutton says detainees trying to force asylum policy change
24. Manus Island detention centre to permanently close today, 600 men refusing to leave
25. Manus Island refugees secure fences, barricade themselves inside processing centre as closure looms
26. Manus Island: locals are 'looting the camp', detainees claim
27. Manus Island detainees fear for safety after police squads armed 'like it's a war'
28. MEDIA RELEASE: Time is running out on Manus Island
29. Manus Island detainees launch legal action over Australian centre's closure
30. MEDIA RELEASE: Govt must act to stop Manus closure: No forced locations, bring them here!
31. MEDIA RELEASE: As the closure deadline looms, Manus refugees secure the fences
32. 'Powderkeg': Papua New Guinea issues warning to Turnbull government on Manus detainees
33. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauruan driver arrested day after death of Bangladeshi asylum seeker

1. 'F---ing disgraceful': Russell Crowe unloads on Manus Island crisis

Canberra Times

Thursday November 2, 2017

Fergus Hunter

Actor Russell Crowe has lashed out at Australia's handling of the escalating situation at the Manus Island detention centre, labelling it a "nation's shame" and offering to house and support refugees himself.

More than 600 men are refusing to leave the now-decommissioned centre in Papua New Guinea and relocate to alternative accommodation. They have expressed concerns for their safety, and asylum seeker advocates say the facilities are not ready.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has also reiterated her country's offer to take 150 refugees annually from Australia's detention centres, and said she would raise the issue of Australia's tough treatment of asylum seekers, including the men on Manus, in her first meeting with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull this weekend.

Ms Ardern said New Zealand was "lucky" not to be dealing with a situation like Australia's.

"I am looking forward, though, to having a conversation directly with the Prime Minister on Sunday about some of those issues - and New Zealand's role and view on Manus Island in particular," she said.

The Turnbull government has maintained that PNG authorities are responsible for protecting the detainees and has previously declined to take up New Zealand's offer.

As the stand-off enters its third day, the men have been drinking and washing in water collected in rubbish bins at the centre.

A long-time resident of Australia, the New Zealand-born Crowe weighed in on Twitter on Wednesday night.

"Manus. A nation's shame. Lives held in limbo. Lives lived in fear and despair. It's f---ing disgraceful," he said.

He said he had contemplated what he could personally do to help.

"I believe I could house and find jobs for six. I'm sure there'd be other Australians who would do the same," he added.

Best-known for his roles in *Gladiator* and *A Beautiful Mind*, Crowe has in the past indicated support for progressive politicians such as former Labor prime minister Julia Gillard and former US president Barack Obama.

Ms Ardern's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Winston Peters – whose decision to enter into a coalition agreement propelled her to power – has criticised the offer to resettle refugees in New Zealand in the past.

"That was an offer made by the previous administration. At this point in time, we've had no discussions on it inside this coalition," he told Fairfax Media last week.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the men should move to the new accommodation and said advocates were making a "very difficult situation even worse".

"We've got a deal with the United States to move 1200 people. I want to close Manus as quickly as possible, but it doesn't help when you've got the Greens and others who are telling people not to engage, not to move," he told the Nine Network.

As of last month, about 50 detainees from Manus and Nauru had left for the US.

Lawyers are hopeful the PNG government could dramatically intervene in the desperate situation by reopening the abandoned centre or striking a resettlement deal with New Zealand.

PNG lawyer Ben Lomai has applied for an injunction that would force the local government to re-establish the facility's essential services. He is expecting a decision from the Supreme Court on Thursday.

Mr Lomai and Australian barrister Greg Barns suggested PNG could deal directly with New Zealand to solve the crisis.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/fing-disgraceful-russell-crowe-unloads-on-manus-island-crisis-20171102-gzdaxr.html>

2. The Manus Island agreement is a failure. Turnbull and Shorten need to accept it

The Age

Thursday 2 November 2017

Robert Manne, John Menadue, Tim Costello and Frank Brennan

There is now a humanitarian disaster on Australia's doorstep. And it's our responsibility. The refugees on Manus Island must be resettled promptly. After four years, all options other than Australia have come to nothing or have been rejected by our government. There is now no option but to resettle them in Australia.

There are 600 persons, most of them proven refugees, who are at risk on Manus Island. They were taken there under an agreement between the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea. They have been there more than four years.

The original agreement provides: "Australia and Papua New Guinea take seriously their obligations for the welfare and safety of any persons transferred to Papua New Guinea under this arrangement."

"Australia will provide support, through a service provider, to any refugees who are resettled in Papua New Guinea or in any other participating regional, including Pacific Island, state"; and "Australia will bear the full cost of implementing the arrangement in Papua New Guinea for the life of the arrangement. If this requires additional development of infrastructure or services, it is envisaged that there will be a broader benefit for communities in which transferees are initially placed."

The agreement has failed. It's never worked. It's now completely unworkable. It is now unprincipled. It has not provided protection, security or safety for these 600 persons. It has not conferred broader benefits on the affected communities. It has placed the lives of refugees at risk, and it has disturbed affected communities.

Under the formal memorandum of understanding between the two governments, the government of Papua New Guinea was to "conduct all activities in respect of this MOU in accordance with its constitution and all relevant domestic laws". It's 18 months since the PNG Supreme Court found that the arrangement between the two governments for the detention of the asylum seekers was unconstitutional. It's 14 months since the service providers gave notice that they were leaving. Now they've left.

The agreement between the governments was to be reviewed every 12 months. The reviews have come to nothing. The two governments established a joint committee with responsibility for the oversight of all practical arrangements. The committee has failed to clarify responsibilities between the two governments.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/the-manus-island-agreement-is-a-failure-turnbull-and-shorten-need-to-accept-it-20171102-gzdb0x.html>

3. Manus standoff: Papua New Guinea's grand chief says Australia's hypocrisy 'astounding'

Sir Michael Somare accuses both countries of playing 'football with the lives of refugees on Manus' and says many Australians who oppose 'boat people also arrived by boat'

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Thursday 2 November 2017 18.20 AEDT

The "grand chief" of Papua New Guinea has blasted the Australian and PNG governments over the Manus Island standoff, accusing them of lacking human dignity and respect.

Sir Michael Somare said Australia's behaviour showed "astounding" hypocrisy.

More than 600 men are refusing to leave the detention centre, which officially closed on Tuesday with all services, electricity and water withdrawn, saying they feared for their safety in the Lorengau community.

The men were ordered to move into community accommodation, but the UN has said at least one of the three compounds is not ready.

Somare said he was watching with sadness as Australia and PNG "play football with the lives of refugees on Manus Island".

"Acts of violence have been perpetrated with impunity and worse still lives have been lost. Yet your governments are indifferent about why people risk so much making the perilous journey to start new lives."

The founding prime minister of PNG said retirement allowed him the liberty to speak about "the miserable manner in which Australia is trying to offload the Manus Island refugees".

Australia is a large enough developed economy that should be addressing their problems on their own shores, he said.

“To exploit the vulnerabilities of neighbours like PNG and Nauru is disgraceful enough but to treat human beings with complete apathy is ruthless and insensible. Descendants of many Australians who are opposed to boat people also arrived by boat before and after federation in Australia.

“The hypocrisy is astounding.”

Somare said when he became prime minister for the third time in 2002 an arrangement was already in place to detain and process Australia’s asylum seekers on Manus Island, and he honoured the agreement.

He said the onus was on Australia to ensure the integration of refugees into the small island community of Manus.

“I am sure that many of the refugees are skilled people and with the right assistance can adjust well into our communities,” he said.

On Thursday the commanding officer of the Lombrum PNG naval base, which contains the detention centre, said there would be no “arbitrary action” taken against the detainees. However he added that if ordered by navy headquarters to respond to any incident, the navy would remove detainees by force.

The detainees are facing their third night without power and water inside the centre. Lawyers representing the group are still seeking a supreme court hearing for their application, alleging their human rights have been breached.

The Guardian understands the lawyers are hoping to meet with PNG government lawyers to find a reasonable solution to the impasse – potentially a short-term reopening of the centre with food, water and security restored, until a more long-term solution can be found.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/02/manus-standoff-papua-new-guineas-grand-chief-says-australias-hypocrisy-astounding>

4. Behrouz Boochani wins Amnesty International award for writing from Manus

Refugee honoured for writing for Guardian and Saturday Paper, while Guardian Australia’s Calla Wahlquist wins award for Indigenous reporting

The Guardian
Guardian staff
Thursday 2 November 2017 09.13 AEDT

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian Kurdish journalist and recognised refugee who has been detained on Manus Island for more than four years, has been honoured at the Amnesty International Australia media awards.

Boochani, who has been publishing a vivid and remarkable diary on the closure of the Manus camp over the past week, won the award in the print, online and multimedia category for his work last year for the Guardian and the Saturday Paper.

Guardian Australia’s Calla Wahlquist won the award for reporting of Indigenous issues for her penetrating coverage of the death of the Indigenous woman Ms Dhu in Western Australia.

The judges said Wahlquist’s coverage was “second to none”.

“Her reporting led the way in achieving social justice for the family of Miss Dhu. We can’t undo what happened but her journalism helped to keep it in people’s minds and focused public attention on this appalling death in custody.”

Boochani has been indefatigable in his reportage from the Australian-run detention centre.

In a pre-recorded video, he told the audience at the awards ceremony in Sydney. “It is such a big honour for me, that you have recognised my work and my job in Manus prison camp. When I have started my work on this island, I felt that this is my mission and this is my duty. After four years when I get this award and this recognition, it is very important for me.”

The judges said Boochani’s work “hits all the criteria in spades”.

“Furthermore, his work, delivered under very difficult circumstances, is powerful, courageous and extraordinary. Its currency, its emotion, its credibility all combine to make it really special.”

Ben Doherty, Guardian Australia’s immigration reporter, accepted the award on Behrouz’s behalf. “This is an extraordinary honour to be accepting this on behalf of Behrouz, and it couldn’t be more timely,” he said. “Behrouz filed for us about two hours ago: Manus is on the verge of meltdown and Behrouz’s future swings on the next few days, but still he writes on.

“I don’t know that I have met, in my life, a journalist with the commitment, the belief and the passion for our vocation than Behrouz Boochani.

“Behrouz, rightly, sees himself as a working journalist on Manus Island, whose job it is to be bear witness to the injustices and the violence and the privation of offshore detention. He does that not just for himself but he does it for all the men on Manus, and he does it for us, for Australians, to know what is happening in that place.”

The Guardian’s Nauru files reporting team were a finalist in the print, online and multimedia category.

The other winners were the cartoonist Cathy Wilcox of the Age and Sydney Morning Herald, in the cartoon category; Kate Geraghty for her pictures from Mosul; Sarah Dingle and Wendy Carlisle from ABC Radio for Death in Kalgoorlie; and Elise Potaka, Tim Anastasi and Joel Stillone from SBS Viceland for “Forced to Marry”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/02/behrouz-boochani-wins-amnesty-international-award-for-writing-from-manus>

5. Behrouz Boochani: Diary of disaster 30/10/2017: the last days inside Manus Island detention centre

Diary of a disaster: I wake up from another nightmare. I am weary from writing about people who have died. We are now one of the most forgotten people on earth

The Guardian
Behrouz Boochani
Monday 30 October 2017 17.39 AEDT

Behrouz Boochani is a journalist and an Iranian refugee held on Manus Island since August 2014. The Guardian invited Boochani to keep a diary of the countdown to the closure of the Australian-run detention camp that is due to close on Tuesday.

Wednesday 25 October

I woke up from a nightmare today. For a long time now I have been experiencing regular nightmares, and it is these nightmares that get me out of bed, nightmares that wake me as I sleep inside one of the warm tents within Oscar camp. Before I have even had the chance to consider my immediate surroundings I have a vision of myself outside the tent. Nightmares are a significant component of our reality here, an important part of the life of a refugee in Manus prison. I am used to sleeping until just before noon. During this period, and under these conditions, the heat of Manus has been somewhat more tolerable. For this reason, the nights have been a bit easier here in the prison.

As soon as I awake I have to grapple with the images from last night’s nightmares, then immediately I approach the dining area to have breakfast. A few local guards are there, but the breakfast trays are empty. Furious, I just stare at the guards. They respond by saying they are sorry and that there is nothing left here to eat. These days, with the impending closure of the camp, there is never enough food to eat for breakfast or any other meal. At noon I go over to join the protest. For more than 80 days we have been protesting every day with the hope that the government will be dissuaded from sending us to Lorengau.

During the protest all the refugees decide that we should chant slogans at the top of our voices in support of Phoebe Crane. Phoebe is the Australian woman who has engaged in a hunger strike over the last 25 days in support of us. We also decide to gather for a meeting at 9pm in Delta camp to determine what strategies of resistance we plan to employ after 31 October. The central question is: what should we do when water, power and food have been cut?

For the whole day I am engaged in interviews with a number of people. Among us there is a Rohingya refugee whose whole family is in danger of their lives back in Myanmar, a refugee from Pakistan who has an infection on his head and who needs to be sent to Australia for medical care, and other refugees whose role it is to write slogans on placards. During this time in almost every part of the camp refugees are consumed by discussions about the situation next week. Some men are playing cards or backgammon. Life inside the camp has become extremely mundane ... just like all the prisons throughout the world. Night falls, and I am waiting in a long line to get some food. After dinner the meeting begins. This morning I woke from a nightmare, and now I have to go to bed with the fear of another nightmare. I expect another tough day tomorrow.

Thursday 26 October

As usual, I wake up around noon. In contrast to previous days it is raining. When the weather is like this one feels that the prison is more tolerable. A large crowd has gathered in the area between Delta and Fox camp. A tree with a large and robust trunk has fallen down onto the prison, damaging the fences. These kinds of unexpected occurrences always attract a lot of attention among the imprisoned refugees.

This isn’t the first time that the overpowering tropical ecosystem of Manus forces its way into Manus prison, reclaiming its space. Reflecting on the incident, I entitle it “The Victory of Nature Up Against Steel”... a smile emerges on my face. I have a

theory based on the idea that had the ecology of Manus not been so pristine, if it had not been so pure, perhaps all of us incarcerated here would have succumbed to the torture by now ... we would have broken under the regime of torture and died. During all these years Australian immigration has been destroying the nature on the island; the desecration of the natural environment has been relentless. Australia has violated the sanctity of nature by disrespecting the habitat and constructing a prison. Today is another instance of nature's struggle against the prison.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/30/diary-of-disaster-the-last-days-inside-manus-island-detention-centre>

6. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 31/10/2017: The refugees are in a state of terror on Manus

Diary of a disaster: As I write no one knows if police and navy want to attack the refugees. Locals have entered the camp and are taking whatever they can

The Guardian
Behrouz Boochani
Tuesday 31 October 2017 18.00 AEDT

Tuesday 31 October

Last night the refugees were up until the early hours of the morning. You see, the department of immigration posted a document on the fences in the prison warning us that we only have until 5pm to exit the camp. If we remain we will be confronted with soldiers from the navy.

This is a serious warning. It is a warning of impending danger that has sent the refugees spiralling into terror. This is what has impelled the refugees to stay up until the morning. At 5am all the local and Australian guards have abandoned the camp. For the whole day there has not been a single person inside or around the parameters of the camp to protect the refugees. The situation has descended into an even worse crisis. At the same time we are receiving news from outside that the soldiers and police have armed themselves. The whole precarious situation has been militarised in a terribly perverse manner. However, no one knows for sure if the police and navy want to attack the refugees, or if they want to set upon the locals who have stolen everything from around the rim of the camp.

Many of the locals have now entered the camp and are taking away whatever they can. The situation is perilous, it is volatile to such an extent that the refugees have been forced to lock the gates from the inside because of the possibility of an attack at any moment. The refugees are in a state of terror, but they have announced that they refuse to quit and leave the camp for Lorengau.

After a few hours Senator Nick McKim and an ABC reporter enter the camp. Their presence here has instilled a sense of safety among the refugees. A number of refugees represent the drama that is unfolding here; they shed tears as they stand face-to-face with the ABC cameras. The other refugees feel that those few are reflecting the anguish felt by everyone else, those few shed tears that channel the sorrows of hundreds of refugees.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/31/the-refugees-are-in-a-state-of-terror-on-manus-behrouz-boochani>

7. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 1/11/2017: A merciless fear provoked by last night's events has gripped...

There is no power and it is oppressively hot. We are stuck here, no way to go forward, no way to go back

The Guardian
Behrouz Boochani
Wednesday 1 November 2017 19.26 AEDT

Wednesday 1 November

Last night the refugees were in a state of absolute exhaustion, starvation and thirst. They drifted into sleep as they wasted away. We have not been able to sleep well during recent months; the possibility of sleeping at night has been completely disrupted, particularly in recent weeks. Nightmares have been an inseparable part of our sleep and our lives. After the generators in Oscar compound have been shut off, many have left their hot tents and moved into other camps. As people are moving to other camps I observe this horrendous scene playing out before me. Their movements resemble people who are left wandering due to war, but it is people seeking refuge in a neighbouring country.

Rooms and tents are crammed with people, and the atmosphere is filled with tumult and a deafening ruckus. It is a tropical ecosystem out here, full of insects and oppressively hot. Without the benefits of having power, insects chew into the skin. The constant, unbearable fear is provoked by the events last night. This relentless fear continues to haunt us, a merciless fear has

gripped the camp. Fear of being attacked, fear of being murdered. We decide to assign some people to watch the camp and inform others in case something suspicious happens or police attacks us.

Nevertheless, if any incident occurred last night, would there have been a place for us to take refuge? Surely not. And this is the reality of Manus today. If we are attacked, we will be nothing but a group of defenceless bodies. It took a long time for everyone to fall asleep, or maybe they were just pretending to sleep. Sleeping with absolute exhaustion, sleeping with starvation, sleeping with thirst. This is the most disastrous situation ever.

At 7am in the morning, the generators suddenly shut off. Subsequently, all refugees wake up at the same time. After a few minutes, dozens wander around the camp again. The heat is unbearable out here. This is hell out here. Hunger makes everyone angry, the atmosphere is full of tension out here, and there is struggle and tumult. In these tragic circumstances, a refugee has cut his wrist and his chest using a razor. It has agitated the situation even more for a while. It is like throwing a match into gunpowder, adding fuel to the fire. Shouts come up and tension rise. It takes a while until the situation becomes stable again. But the fear remains.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/01/a-merciless-fear-provoked-by-the-events-last-night-has-gripped-the-camp>

8. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 2/11/2017: Manus is a landscape of surreal horror

Starvation, thirst and terror have taken over. But we are determined to never settle for anything less than freedom

The Guardian
Behrouz Boochani
Thursday 2 November 2017 16.24 AEDT

Behrouz Boochani is a journalist and an Iranian refugee held on Manus Island since August 2014. The Guardian invited Boochani to keep a diary of the countdown to the closure of the Australian-run detention camp that closed on Tuesday. On Wednesday Boochani won in the print, online and multimedia category at the Amnesty International Australia media awards.

Thursday 2 November

Yesterday was an unbearably torturous day characterised by “the survival of the fittest”. The day ends, nightfall begins. Under the cover of night the bond between the refugees becomes even closer. This sense of brotherhood is stronger than any other time. This is a strange feature peculiar to human beings. Groups of a few dozen are divided throughout the prison, across Delta, Oscar, Mike and Fox camps, throughout the corridors and prison yards. I am with the Kurdish refugees in corridor M. But because of my work, I have to visit all the other camps.

There are bed sheets hanging right throughout the corridors and hallways of the prison. Those who are more worn-out than the rest are lying down on them. And many people are sitting along the fences and hanging their feet up on them, just like they have been doing for the last fifty-one months. They rest their feet on the fences and engage in conversation.

Those who have local tobacco share it with the rest. And a few find pieces of wood to start a fire. They have gathered a few litres of rainwater during the half-hour period when it rained earlier today and have brought it to boil. They mix the water with sugar and offer a portion of it to everyone. These actions reinforce our community spirit and inject badly needed energy into our bodies.

I must admit that this was vital for me; my bony body desperately needed something sweet. There are others who have been able to cut down a few coconuts. It is always the case during times like these that someone takes charge and manages these kinds of tasks.

The corridor where I am staying has now developed into a kind of family environment and a feeling of brotherhood has taken over.

Starvation.

Thirst.

Terror.

Starvation-thirst-terror.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/02/manus-is-a-landscape-of-surreal-horror>

9. Behrouz Boochani Diary of disaster 3/11/2017: The breath of death on Manus Island: starvation and sickness

One of the refugees, who went to East Lorengau a few days ago, has walked back for more than 30km. We are all scared and hungry

The Guardian

Behrouz Boochani

Friday 3 November 2017 16.53 AEDT

Friday 3 November

The refugees wake me up early in the morning. When this happens, it's like suddenly entering a nightmare. The last time I experienced this was two months ago when they woke me up to news of the death of Hamed Shamshiripour. Hamed's dead body was found hanging with a noose around his neck one rainy morning in the East Lorengau camp.

No one has died today. However, the news is that death is on its way to take someone else from us. It's a Rohingya refugee who is known to have been suffering from an illness. For years this middle-aged man has been battling against epilepsy.

I hurry over to Oscar camp. The refugees have laid him out on the floor. The rim of his mouth is covered in foam and it seems his eyes have doubled in size. What could one possibly do in this situation? There is no medicine here. Everyone is perplexed and in a state of panic. One person pours water over his face. Everyone wants to do something, even though we all know too well that our efforts are in vain. He's lying there for an hour before he finally starts to feel better. Everyone is frightened. Manus prison can no longer tolerate the death of another individual. There is a mood of death, climate of death. And for a moment the presence of death has completely disrupted the equilibrium in prison.

Death is always ever so present.

Death.

The breath of death.

The scent of death.

The reign of death over Manus prison. This is the reality of living out here.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/03/the-breath-of-death-on-manus-island-starvation-and-sickness>

ROLLING MANUS ISLAND NEWS REPORTS – FROM NEWEST TO OLDEST

10. PNG says it will remove refugees from Australian detention camp by force if necessary

Sydney Morning Herald

November 3 2017 - 8:26AM

Melissa Cunningham, Fergus Hunter

-with Michael Koziol

Papua New Guinea's defence force is poised to evict hundreds of refugees refusing to leave an Australian detention camp, a senior military official said.

The base's commanding officer, Begsy Karaki, said no "arbitrary action" would be taken against the men who refused to leave the detention centre inside Lombrum naval base, but he warned officers might have no choice but to forcefully evict the protesting refugees if the situation continued to escalate.

Mr Karaki told PNG local press the Post-Courier on Thursday that the more than 600 men who were refusing to leave the now-decommissioned centre on Manus Island were still under the care of the PNG immigration office and Australia and no action would be taken by his officers unless instructed to by their headquarters.

"They are here at the military camp and most of their base in military camp are out of bounds to any civilian and they will not be seen wandering around in the camp...but if anything happens, with instructions from headquarters, we can act," he said.

The refugees and asylum seekers have spent two nights in darkness at the Australian-run refugee processing centre, sustaining themselves on stockpiled food and water since official personnel left on Tuesday.

They have also expressed concerns for their safety and asylum seeker advocates say the facilities to house them are not ready.

As the stand-off enters its third day, the men have been drinking and washing in water collected in rubbish bins at the centre.

"This is Australia's problem now being brought in here, and we are getting blamed for issues we did not create. We cannot get involved, we have no say in this, but because they are placed here at our military camp, we hope there are some solutions quickly, so we carry on with our duties and tasks," Mr Karaki said.

PNG's former prime minister and elder statesman Sir Michael Somare has also blasted the Australian government and called for the men remaining on Manus Island to be sent to Australia.

In a statement, he called Australia's treatment of refugees "ruthless" and "hypocritical".

"To exploit the vulnerabilities of neighbours like PNG and Nauru is disgraceful enough, but to treat human beings with complete apathy is ruthless and insensible," he said.

"Descendants of many Australians who are opposed to boat people also arrived by boat before and after federation in Australia. The hypocrisy is astounding."

Meanwhile, lawyers are hopeful PNG may dramatically intervene in the desperate situation on Manus Island by reopening the abandoned detention centre or striking a resettlement deal with New Zealand.

An injunction application was before PNG's Supreme Court chief justice on Thursday evening that would effectively force PNG to reopen the facility and provide food, water and electricity.

Ben Lomai, acting for Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani, told Fairfax Media a decision on the matter would not be made until Friday morning.

"These people haven't eaten in almost three days, there is no access to proper water or electricity... the conditions are inhumane," Mr Lomai said.

He said, however, he had reason to believe PNG's government might "agree to the order", but there had not yet been official talks.

Earlier on Thursday, actor Russell Crowe lashed out at Australia's handling of the escalating situation at the Manus Island detention centre, labelling it a "nation's shame" and offering to house and support refugees himself.

A long-time resident of Australia, the New Zealand-born Crowe weighed in on Twitter on Wednesday night.

"Manus. A nation's shame. Lives held in limbo. Lives lived in fear and despair. It's f---ing disgraceful," he said.

"I believe I could house and find jobs for six. I'm sure there'd be other Australians who would do the same."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has also reiterated her country's offer to take 150 refugees annually from Australia's detention centres, and said she would raise the issue of Australia's tough treatment of asylum seekers, including the men on Manus, in her first meeting with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the weekend.

Ms Ardern said New Zealand was "lucky" not to be dealing with a situation like Australia's.

"I am looking forward, though, to having a conversation directly with the Prime Minister on Sunday about some of those issues - and New Zealand's role and view on Manus Island in particular," she said.

The Turnbull government has maintained that PNG authorities are responsible for protecting the detainees and has previously declined to take up New Zealand's offer.

Amid the stand-off on Manus, a refugee living in Australia's offshore detention centre on Nauru has been killed, the government has confirmed.

The man – Bangladeshi, according to multiple sources – died from injuries sustained in a motorbike accident. Fairfax Media has been told he was knocked from the motorbike by a car driven by Nauruan locals.

The man is the ninth person to die in Australia's offshore detention network since 2014.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/png-says-it-will-remove-refugees-out-of-australian-detention-camp-by-force-if-necessary-20171102-gzdqhq.html>

11. Bill Shorten urges PM Malcolm Turnbull to consider Jacinda Ardern's offer to help resolve crisis

ABC News Online

By political reporter Henry Belot

Friday November 3, 2017

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has called on the Turnbull Government to seriously consider sending some of the asylum seekers left on Manus Island to New Zealand.

New Zealand's new Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, renewed her predecessor, John Key's, offer to resettle 150 asylum seekers currently in Australia's offshore detention centres.

The Manus Island centre officially closed on Tuesday with water and food services cut, although about 600 men remain inside the facility, saying they do not feel safe in replacement accommodation.

The Papua New Guinea Government said it was Australia's responsibility to deal with refugees who did not want to resettle in PNG.

Mr Shorten said his advocacy for a resettlement deal with New Zealand should not be seen as putting "people smugglers back in business".

"Australia is not and must not be a resettlement option but it is [Prime Minister Malcolm] Turnbull's responsibility to work with other nations on resettlement options," Mr Shorten told the ABC.

Mr Turnbull will meet Ms Ardern on Sunday in Sydney and the issue is expected to be discussed.

"He should have the conversation and see if we can make this proposal work," Mr Shorten said.

"There are strong similarities between this plan and the deal with the United States.

"Of course, there would need to be conditions, but we should give serious consideration to this constructive proposal to help end the desperate situation on Manus."

Government position won't be budged: Dutton

Earlier this week, cabinet minister Alan Tudge said reports asylum seekers were too scared to leave the detention centre and move to new accommodation should be taken "with a grain of salt".

"There's been people from the Manus Island facility who have been travelling to this other destination on a very regular basis, sometimes to do their shopping," he said.

"Sometimes they've already been staying in that new facility and returning at a later stage to the traditional Manus Island facility where they've been more permanently based for the last little while."

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton also reaffirmed the Government would not be considering resettlement in Australia.

"We won't be budging from our position because it is in the national interest to keep the policies in place that we have got," he told Sydney radio station 2GB.

"These people can go back to their countries of origin if they have been found not to be refugees or they can settle in PNG like many people have done before them."

Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong told the ABC the Government needed to continue pursuing third-country options for resettlement.

"It's very distressing to see what is occurring on Manus, and it is very distressing to see the way in which this Government has chosen to operate this facility," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-03/manus-island-shorten-calls-on-turnbull-to-consider-nz-offer/9116438>

12. Shorten says Turnbull should consider New Zealand offer to take refugees

Human Rights Watch urges world leaders to raise the asylum seeker issue with Australia as Manus standoff continues

The Guardian

Helen Davidson and Amy Remeikis

Friday 3 November 2017 15.35 AEDT

Australia should consider a reiterated offer from New Zealand to take 150 refugees from its offshore processing camps, the Labor leader, Bill Shorten, has said, as the Manus Island standoff entered its fourth day.

Shorten said the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, should take the “constructive proposal” seriously, which he said was very similar to the US deal being implemented. Shorten said there would need to be conditions in place.

“We would never countenance anything that would put the people smugglers back in business,” he said. “Australia is not and must not be a resettlement option. But it is Turnbull’s responsibility to work with other nations on resettlement options. He cannot ignore this.

“He is in the room with the New Zealand prime minister this weekend. He should have the conversation and see if we can make this proposal work.”

On Friday, the New Zealand prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, confirmed her Labour-led government would stand by the offer made in 2013 by the then prime minister John Key.

“I expect that the situation on Manus Island will be discussed in my meeting with prime minister Turnbull on Sunday. I intend to reaffirm our offer when we meet,” Ardern said.

“I acknowledge that, while New Zealand has not had to contend with these issues on our shores, it’s hard to ignore the human face of this situation and nor should it be ignored.”

The one-off intake offer was in relation to the situation on Manus and Nauru and the 150 people would be within New Zealand’s refugee quota. The country would also maintain its right to use “robust screening options”, Ardern said.

The president of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, is also visiting Australia this weekend, and Human Rights Watch has urged him – and other world leaders – to raise the refugee issue with Turnbull.

“Germany has a proud record of treating migrants humanely,” HRW’s Australia director, Elaine Pearson, said.

“President Steinmeier should ask Turnbull to bring the men on Manus Island to safety. Both countries are now UN Human Rights Council members, yet in this case Australia is clearly not living up to what one would expect of a council member.”

About 600 refugee and asylum seeker men remain inside the decommissioned detention centre on Manus Island, and refuse to move into the community out of fear for their safety.

Many of them have barely left the centre during their years of detention, despite Papua New Guinea authorities allowing them to travel into nearby Lorengau during the past months.

Three alternative accommodation units have been built for the men to be transferred to, but at least one is not yet ready for habitation, the United Nations says, and the men have security concerns about the other two. HRW recently highlighted frequent and escalating attacks on refugees and asylum seekers.

Behrouz Boochani, a journalist and refugee inside the detention centre, said the men were hungry, did not have enough clean water, and lacked medication.

They had been given extra medication by the health provider IHMS before the closure to see them through the transition phase, but it had not anticipated the lengthy stand-off. The Greens senator Nick McKim, who is in Lorengau and visited the centre this week, said some men were going through withdrawal from psychotropic medication for their mental illnesses.

Boochani said at least one man had self-harmed recently, and had to be treated by other detainees. At least two others had infections and a diabetic man had a medical incident, he said.

Some had obtained a boat and travelled into Lorengau to get food, the Australian reported on Friday, but Boochani said they could not bring back enough for everyone. He said he did not know about reports that some local people living within the naval base had assisted the men by providing access to their water tanks.

Boochani said the navy had warned people not to assist the men.

“Yesterday a Manus missionary wanted to bring food to the refugees but the navy prevented them. It’s really hard to describe the difficulty of the current situation,” he said.

“Nonetheless, what I’m understanding from talking with people is that they are not going to leave the prison camp.”

On Thursday, the ABC reported that one man who had left and gone to Lorengau had walked more than 20km to return to the camp.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/03/shorten-says-turnbull-should-consider-new-zealand-offer-to-take-refugees>

13. Manus navy will remove detainees by force if necessary, base commander says

Begsy Karaki says there is ‘no threat’ or panic as 600 men prepare to spend third night without water, food or power

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Thursday 2 November 2017 14.09 AEDT

Papua New Guinean defence forces will take no “arbitrary action” against the men who refuse to leave the detention centre inside Lombrum naval base, its commanding officer has said.

But the base’s commanding officer, Begsy Karaki, said the group would be forcefully removed if necessary.

The Australian-run detention centre closed on Tuesday evening. Refugees and asylum seekers were ordered to move to alternative accommodation units built in the nearby town of Lorengau but they refused, citing fears for their safety outside the compound.

Karaki told the Post-Courier and confirmed to the Guardian the men were still under the care of the PNG immigration office and Australia, and his officers would not take action against them unless instructed to by headquarters.

He said there was “no threat” or panic. “This is Australia’s problem now being brought in here, and we are getting blamed for issues we did not create,” Karaki said.

“We cannot get involved, we have no say in this, but because they are placed here at our military camp, we hope there are some solutions quickly, so we carry on with our duties and tasks.”

Lawyers acting for the men are seeking to have a legal application heard before the PNG supreme court. The application alleges the men’s human rights – as protected by PNG’s constitution – are being breached.

The Guardian understands there are also attempts to meet with PNG government lawyers to find a resolution to the current standoff.

It is hoped a meeting between the two parties would find a mutually agreeable outcome, which ends the impasse peacefully and restores shelter, food and security to the detainees within the next day or two until a more long-term plan is developed.

The acting chief migration officer, Solomon Kantha, said the men were free to leave the centre but anyone who did would not be allowed to return. Buses for people who volunteered to leave had been on standby since Wednesday morning, he told the Post-Courier.

In an apparent move to address the detainees’ main concerns about safety in the new accommodation, Kantha said he was speaking with contractors about installing fences and security at the new sites, and was exploring curfew options. “Manus is a peaceful place but we have to have these measures in place.”

About 600 men remain in the detention centre after two nights without electricity, food or water. They collected some rainwater and, overnight on Wednesday, some of them dug a well.

“They were digging for hours and finally found water,” reported the Kurdish Iranian journalist and refugee Behrouz Boochani. “I don’t know if this water is clean enough to drink or not, but the refugees are drinking from it.”

Boochani said the men were supporting each other but the health of many was deteriorating, including an epileptic man who experienced a medical incident, one man who self-harmed, and two others who had infections.

“We are asking international organisations like Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders to take action and help us,” he said.

“This is not a hunger strike. It is a situation that the Australian government has created, forcing people into starvation and these harsh conditions by refusing to offer a safe place for resettlement.”

The PNG and Australian governments are also in a standoff, as Australia refers all queries and responsibilities to PNG, but PNG maintains it has fulfilled its processing and resettlement obligations. The remaining refugees and unsuccessful asylum seekers are for Australia to deal with, it says.

Kantha said he had urgently requested a meeting with Australian government officials to discuss “a clear way forward”.

A longstanding offer by New Zealand to take 150 refugees from Australia’s offshore processing centres has resurfaced, after the country’s newly elected prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, revealed she would raise the issue when she meets Malcolm Turnbull on Sunday.

“I think anyone would look at a situation like that and see the human face of what is an issue that New Zealand is in the lucky position of not having to struggle with, [as] Australia has,” Ardern said on Thursday.

“I am looking forward, though, to having a conversation directly with the prime minister on Sunday about some of those issues – and New Zealand’s role and view on Manus Island in particular.”

The refugees and asylum seekers have repeatedly said they are not safe in the Lorengau community. Attacks by locals have been detailed by Human Rights Watch, including violent robberies by groups of men wielding knives and other weapons.

But the detainees also have support among Manusians. Hundreds attended a protest and signed a petition calling on the Australian government to respect human rights and resettle the refugees rather than leave them in PNG.

Boochani said he appreciated the locals’ protest. “Local fear is logical because their small community has not this capacity to accept 600 foreign men and if the government sends the refugees into the communities, it will be dangerous and we will see conflict between locals and refugees.”

Ron Knight, a former MP for Manus province, said local people’s main grievance was with the Australian government, not the refugees and asylum seekers.

“The perceptions is they’re quite disappointed with Australia for creating the mess in the first place,” Knight told the Guardian. “They can’t understand how a country can abandon people like that.”

But Knight added that Manusians were “adamant” they didn’t want the refugees living in their community, citing criminal allegations ranging from minor offences to sexual assault, and sexual relationships with local women resulting in pregnancies.

He said most of the men now holed up in the centre rarely came to town but locals were fearful of what would happen when 600 more men joined the Lorengau community.

“On the other side we have the asylum seekers – I’ve heard horror stories,” Knight said. “Some have been chopped up by idiots, attacked.

“We don’t know the cause, some are spontaneous, some have reasons. They don’t want to come here either, they want to live somewhere safe.”

Knight suggested that an expanded and “beefed up” East Lorengau transit centre, which is fenced in and next door to a medical clinic but now only has capacity for about 300 people, could provide a solution.

He said fears the 600 would be attacked were unnecessary. “The issue is with the authorities, not with the asylum seekers.”

The Australian immigration minister, Peter Dutton, accused refugee advocates of encouraging the men to stand their ground.

“I want to close Manus Island as quickly as possible,” he told Channel Nine. “It doesn’t help when you have got the Greens telling people not to engage and move. It makes a difficult situation even worse.”

Boochani denied Dutton’s claims. “Peter Dutton can’t blame advocates who support innocent people in Manus. Refugees themselves are fighting for their rights.”

Dutton’s office has been contacted for comment.

The United Nations refugee agency said it is Australia’s responsibility to stop the “humanitarian emergency” emerging on Manus.

The UNHCR, which has staff on the ground in Manus, said there was not sufficient accommodation for the men from the Lombrum base to move to, and construction of planned new housing has been hampered by rain.

“If all 600 individuals were to leave immediately, many would not find adequate or sufficient accommodation elsewhere,” a UNHCR spokeswoman said. “There is no security fence at West Lorengau Haus or Hillside Haus in the Ward 1 area of

Lorengau. UNHCR observed on 30 October that construction of West Lorengau Haus is incomplete. Containers are surrounded by mud and do not have electrical or water connections as yet."

The situation on Manus is "increasingly tense and unstable".

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/02/manus-navy-will-remove-detainees-by-force-if-necessary-base-commander-says>

14. Manus Island asylum seekers digging to find water as stand-off continues

ABC News Online

By Pacific affairs correspondent Liam Fox

Thursday 2 November 2017

Asylum seekers and refugees at the Manus Island detention centre have been digging into the ground overnight in an effort to find water.

The stand-off between the 600 men inside the detention centre and immigration authorities is entering its second day.

Water, power and food supplies to the detention centre were cut off after its official closure on Tuesday.

Photos taken by Kurdish-Iranian refugee and journalist Behrouz Boochani show men digging into the ground overnight to find water.

He tweeted, "it's a tropical area and people think they will reach fresh water".

In a final notice posted by immigration authorities on Sunday night, the men were told the PNG Defence Force would start to take control of the site from Wednesday.

It warned the men that anyone choosing to remain would be liable for removal from an active military base.

The asylum seekers, warned that utilities would be cut, had begun to collect rainwater in bins.

However without running water, advocates fear a rapid decline in sanitary conditions of the camp.

The detainees were sharing what food remained, but some of the men Reuters spoke to by phone said supplies were running low.

They had been given enough meals to last only until the camp's official closure on Tuesday.

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge yesterday rejected claims alternative facilities meant to accommodate the men were still being built.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Nai Jit Lam, is on Manus monitoring the effort to move the men from the detention centre.

Earlier this week, Mr Lam inspected two of the accommodation facilities the men are supposed to be moved to and said one, called West Lorengau Haus, is not ready.

"There's still major works in progress. We saw heavy machinery still in place," he said.

Acting Prime Minister Julie Bishop said the men should move to the new centres, which Australia has said it would support with \$250 million worth of food and security for the next 12 months.

Acting Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek said the situation had been "poorly handled".

"I am worried about what looks like a developing powder keg and I won't pretend I'm not worried," Ms Plibersek said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-02/manus-island-asylum-seekers-digging-for-water/9110630>

15. Pleas for New Zealand, Papua New Guinea to intervene in Manus Island crisis

The Age
Thursday 2 November 2017
Michael Koziol & Fergus Hunter

Lawyers are hopeful Papua New Guinea may dramatically intervene in the desperate situation on Manus Island by reopening the abandoned detention centre or striking a resettlement deal with New Zealand.

About 600 refugees and asylum seekers have spent two nights in darkness at the decommissioned Australian-run refugee processing centre, sustaining themselves on stockpiled food and water, since official personnel left on Tuesday.

An injunction application was before PNG's Supreme Court chief justice on Wednesday evening that would effectively force PNG to reopen the facility and provide food, water and electricity.

Ben Lomai, acting for Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani, said he had reason to believe PNG's government might "agree to the order", but there had not yet been official talks.

He also said the election of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was "a window of opportunity for the PNG government to deal directly with New Zealand".

Australian barrister Greg Barns, who is working with Mr Lomai, pointed to acting Prime Minister Julie Bishop's remarks on Wednesday that "PNG is a sovereign government".

"If PNG is a sovereign country, cut a deal with New Zealand," he urged.

The Australian government argues that while the Manus Island men are PNG's responsibility it should not deal with NZ because that would open a backdoor path to Australia.

Ms Bishop's office referred questions to Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, whose office did not respond.

PNG Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas issued a stern statement this week declaring his country had discharged its responsibilities and Australia should find third-country resettlement options for the refugees.

But the lawyers believe PNG may be forced to intervene to prevent a "bloodbath" on Manus Island and defuse growing tensions among Manusians, who do not want the refugees living with them.

Local police chief David Yapu described the atmosphere as "calm" on Wednesday, but refugees retained fears of an imminent confrontation with the PNG navy or locals.

Meanwhile, one man self-harmed with a razor and another experienced illness associated with epilepsy, Mr Boochani said.

Australian Greens leader Richard Di Natale, a medical doctor, expressed grave fears for the many men unable to receive their anti-depressants or psychotropics while they remain at the abandoned facility.

"These are people who will become acutely suicidal, who will become anxious, many of them will experience a range of other side effects," he said.

The lack of working toilets was one of the most immediate problems faced by the 600 men at the compound, according to Senator Di Natale's colleague Nick McKim, who is on Manus Island.

Ms Bishop told the ABC it made "no sense" for the refugees to refuse to leave the decommissioned processing centre, noting the closure had been expected since April.

She said alternative accommodation was available in nearby Lorengau equipped with food, water, power and medical services.

Asked several times if the Australian government could guarantee the refugees' safety in Lorengau, Ms Bishop said PNG was responsible for law, order and security.

On Wednesday Nat Jit Lam, a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said one of the alternative facilities earmarked for the refugees was not yet fit for human habitation.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/pleas-for-new-zealand-papua-new-guinea-to-intervene-in-manus-island-crisis-20171101-gzqw2u.html>

16. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus refugees to defy siege

Wednesday November 1, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Manus refugees are literally digging in as they prepare to survive the government siege of the Manus detention centre.

Video clips attached give a snapshot of life inside the detention centre, day 2 of the siege.

Overnight refugees dug a well in Oscar compound that has given them a precious source of water - good enough to drink, if needs be, and will ensure some toilets can be flushed.

Some people are sleeping outside to escape the oppressive heat and airlessness of the converted shipping containers that used to be their accommodation.

In 2015, hundreds of Manus detainees staged a mass hunger strike when the government first tried to force them to move to East Lorengau. It was just a year since locals had attacked the camp and murdered Reza Barati.

In 2015, the government took away the drinking water - see photo attached - and took scores of others to prison, in their attempt to break the detainee's resistance.

In 2015, the determination of the hunger strike won. Not one refugee has been forcibly transferred to East Lorengau. But many refugees have been bashed, robbed and mutilated with knives and machetes in attacks around the Lorengau settlement.

Almost three years later, and the struggle of the men imprisoned on Manus is the same. Only this time the government has cut off the water, the power and their food.

East Lorengau is still unsafe; as is West Lorengau and Hillside, even if they were habitable.

No provision has been made for proper medical care. Refugees have been told a GP clinic will operate in business hours at East Lorengau, but otherwise refugees and asylum seekers will only have access to the Lorengau hospital which does not even have enough resources to provide medical care for the Manusians. Noone has explained how anyone living in the community will be paid an allowance or how they will be fed.

Most of all, the refugees and asylum seekers are still being deprived of their freedom and a secure future.

The Refugee Action Coalition in Sydney has called a protest for Saturday, 4 November, 1pm, Hyde Park North.

(There will also be protests in Brisbane, 6pm Friday 3rd November at King George Square; and Melbourne: 2pm Saturday 4th November, State Library)

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

17. Manus Island: UN says new accommodation 'not ready' for refugees

More than 600 refugees and asylum seekers are refusing to move from former Australian immigration detention centre

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Wednesday 1 November 2017 20.31 AEDT

More than 600 refugees and asylum seekers are spending another night inside the former immigration detention centre on Manus Island after the United Nations high commissioner for refugees backed up reports that accommodation on the island is "not ready" for detainees being kicked out of the centre.

Electricity and all essential services were switched off this week and all centre staff have also left. Refugees and asylum seekers inside the centre have held daily peaceful protests for more than three months.

The men refuse to move into an accommodation centre in the nearby Lorengau community, saying they fear for their safety. Human Rights Watch recently detailed an upsurge in violent attacks on refugees and asylum seekers by groups of armed locals.

On Tuesday there were multiple reports of looting by locals after staff abandoned the centre.

The Australian immigration minister, Peter Dutton, accused the detainees and advocates of “subterfuge” in their claims of safety concerns, and the acting prime minister, Julie Bishop, said detainees would be provided with shelter, food and medical care at the three Lorengau accommodation units.

But on Wednesday Nat Jit Lam, regional representative for the UNHCR, said he had inspected two of the three sites and the accommodation at West Lorengau was not ready.

“There was still major earthworks in progress,” he told ABC radio. “There was heavy machinery on the ground as well, fences still being constructed.”

“It doesn’t look like it’s ready. I’m not an expert on engineering but, as a UNHCR officer who’s been working with refugees, I would not be bringing any refugees to stay there, not in that state. It’s not ready at this moment.”

The UNHCR claims support reports from Amnesty International and the Australian Greens senator Nick McKim.

McKim, who is on Manus Island, told the Guardian that Dutton was “bullshitting” about the readiness of accommodation and that he had since learned there was also a shortage of about 150 beds in the new units.

“So even if all the guys came out today there would be 150-plus of them who would be left on the side of the road in Lorengau, where there have been brutal attacks,” he said on Wednesday.

Refugees reported seeing suspected Australian officials outside the centre, and said PNG immigration and security officials had spoken to them through the fence.

The ABC reported an increased military presence around the centre, with one soldier saying they were acting as security after Tuesday’s looting.

Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish Iranian journalist and refugee, said there had been one instance of self harm among the group, but that the man was being cared for. Another had health complications, he said.

Detainees were given extra medication ahead of the closure but McKim claimed many had now run out and were going through withdrawal from psychotropic medication.

Boochani said detainees had stood watch during the previous night, in anticipation of action by locals or authorities.

PNG immigration officials have said they will not forcibly remove detainees on Wednesday, but detainees have little food and water, and no working sanitation.

“All refugees woke up again in fear and scared what might happen, there is no water, power and food,” Aziz Adam told the Guardian from inside the centre. “Even the toilets do not work. People are stressful and anxious. Any time we expect the navy might come in.”

The centre sits within a PNG naval base, which officially has control over the site. On Good Friday, drunk soldiers fired their weapons at the centre after an altercation with some refugees. Detainees and staff cowered inside or fled into the nearby jungle.

Accommodation units are not the only point of contention. The PNG and Australian governments are also in a developing stoush over who has responsibility for the refugees and asylum seekers who can’t or won’t settle in PNG.

PNG has said it has fulfilled its obligations to the 2013 offshore processing agreement between the two countries, and Australia had to fund all services for remaining detainees, and find third country resettlement options for them.

Australia has said it is a matter for the sovereign PNG government, however it has also repeatedly refused an offer from New Zealand to take some people.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/01/manus-island-un-says-new-accommodation-not-ready-for-refugees>

18. Greens label Dutton 'a serial human rights abuser' as mental health concerns mount

Canberra Times
November 1 2017
Fergus Hunter

The Greens have escalated their criticisms of the Turnbull government over the tense stand-off at the Manus Island detention centre, issuing a dire warning about the risk of suicide for detainees with no access to mental health medication.

Essential services have been shut down at the now-decommissioned Manus compound, including food, water, sewage and medicines.

Greens leader Richard Di Natale said some 20 per cent of the 600 men still refusing to move from the compound had been on medication for mental health disorders – which had now been abruptly removed.

"The government has stopped ... providing these people with medication," Senator Di Natale, a medical doctor, told ABC radio on Wednesday.

"Twenty per cent of them are on anti-depressants or other psychotropic medication. Now you take away someone's medication, these are people who will become acutely suicidal, who will become anxious, many of them will experience a range of other side effects."

A regional official of the UN's refugee agency and advocates have rejected the government's insistence that alternative accommodation sites in and around the main town of Lorengau were ready to house the men.

The government maintains the detainees should relocate from the centre, but has refused to guarantee or take responsibility for their safety, with acting Prime Minister Julie Bishop saying responsibility lies with Papua New Guinea authorities. She also said the situation was ultimately Labor's fault.

"The PNG government have provided for alternative accommodation. Some have already moved to this alternative accommodation," Ms Bishop told Sky News.

"There are two alternatives, one for refugees and one for those who are not refugees and are not owed protection. Essential services are available at the alternative accommodation: food, water, electricity and medical support."

Asked if the Australian government could ensure the safety of the detainees moving to the new facilities, Ms Bishop said: "Papua New Guinea is a sovereign government of a population of over 8 million people. They are responsible for law and order and for security."

UNHCR deputy regional representative Nat Jit Lam, who visited the alternative sites in recent days, said the East Lorengau facility was not ready.

"I would not be bringing any refugee there, not in that state," he told ABC radio.

Senator Di Natale said both the Coalition and Labor were responsible for the "humanitarian crisis" and said detainees feared for their lives.

"The facilities that the government says they've built aren't completed, and in fact one of them is a couple of dongas in a paddock, so there isn't enough capacity to house all of those detainees," Senator Di Natale said.

Detainees say they are afraid of violent clashes with locals, and have collected rainwater in an attempt to sustain themselves in the centre, which has been vacated by staff. Locals broke into the compound on Tuesday and looted equipment from the centre after staff left the facility.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton dismissed the concerns raised by the Greens, advocates and detainees on Tuesday. He said the detainees' concerns were "subterfuge" and accused Greens senator Nick McKim of "breathtaking duplicity", suggesting he and his party were intentionally inciting trouble at Manus.

In response, Senator McKim launched an extraordinary attack on the minister.

"My response to Peter Dutton is that he is a racist, a proven liar, a fascist and a serial human rights abuser, and I'm prepared to stake my political credibility anytime against the credibility of a monster like Peter Dutton," he said.

PNG's armed forces are due to resume control of the site as soon as Wednesday, but have promised not to use force to remove the refugees.

On Wednesday, Senator McKim was denied entry to the compound, which sits inside a PNG naval base.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/greens-label-peter-dutton-a-serial-human-rights-abuser-as-mental-health-concerns-mount-20171031-gzcb7b.html>

19. Power shut off to final Manus compounds as 600 men refuse to leave

Detainees say they fear for their lives in the Papua New Guinean community as Julie Bishop defends Australia's 'tough' stance

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and Calla Wahlquist
Wednesday 1 November 2017 13.29 AEDT

The Manus Island detention centre has officially closed but more than 600 men are still refusing to leave, saying they fear for their lives in the Papua New Guinean community.

The UN has also supported claims by observers that community accommodation for detainees is not ready, refuting assurances given by the Australian government.

Electricity was shut off to the final compounds on Wednesday morning, more than 12 hours after the scheduled 5pm shutdown, and the generator was removed.

Food, water and other essential services had already been stopped, and all staff left early on Tuesday.

The journalist and refugee Behrouz Boochani said detainees were keeping watch through the night, fearful of attacks by locals or attempts by authorities to forcibly remove them. They had stockpiled water in bins and some food, and obtained solar chargers for their phones.

On Wednesday afternoon, Boochani reported one detainee had self-harmed.

He said security and immigration staff had spoken with detainees and confirmed no services would be provided to them but multiple sources have also reported officials do not intend to use force to remove people today.

On Wednesday Papua New Guinea's largest newspaper, the Post-Courier, declared Australia had "literally abandoned Manus Island", sparking chaos and confusion.

Some services – like the health provider International Health and Medical Services – are expected to stay on the island but it is not known how long for or who is funding them. The PNG government has said all refugees and asylum seekers who won't settle in PNG are Australia's obligation. Australia has not responded with any clarification.

Nat Jit Lam, regional representative for the UNHCR and speaking from Lorengau, said the purpose-built community accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers was not ready.

The UNHCR had inspected two of the three units, including the newly built West Lorengau site.

"There was still major earthworks in progress," he told ABC radio. "There was heavy machinery on the ground as well, fences still being constructed.

"It doesn't look like it's ready. I'm not an expert on engineering but, as a UNHCR officer who's been working with refugees, I would not be bringing any refugees to stay there, not in that state. It's not ready at this moment."

The acting prime minister, Julie Bishop had said there was a "great deal of information" about the closure.

"The essential services are available at the alternative accommodation – food, water, electricity, medical support," she told ABC radio on Wednesday morning. "People on Manus have had months of notice ... It makes no sense for them to stay where they are."

She would not be drawn on the PNG government's declaration that it had fulfilled its obligations and remaining detainees were Australia's responsibility.

"This is a tough policy and we are sending a very strong message that we will not tolerate people smuggling trying to get people into Australia illegally."

The Greens senator Nick McKim, who is on Manus Island, said the 600 former detainees who remain at the decommissioned immigration detention centre feared for their lives.

Detainees were told they faced "removal from an active PNG military base" if they refused to leave the detention centre but have repeatedly said they fear for their safety in the PNG community.

A report by Human Rights Watch detailed increasing violent attacks on refugees and asylum seekers, three which required medical transfers to Port Moresby or Australia.

On Tuesday there were multiple separate allegations of Manus residents looting the centre. There was also a protest outside the gates demanding that Australia take the refugees and not leave them to live in Manus.

McKim told the Guardian that Dutton was “bullshitting” about the readiness of accommodation and that he had since learned there was a shortage of about 150 beds in the new units.

“So even if all the guys came out today there would be 150-plus of them who would be left on the side of the road in Lorengau, where there have been brutal attacks,” he said on Wednesday.

McKim had been attempting to re-enter the detention centre but he was told to leave by immigration officials.

“They gave us five minutes’ warning so I could have a bit of a chat to some of the guys through the fence,” he said. “Not a lot has changed since yesterday.”

He repeated claims many detainees were suffering withdrawals from the loss of psychotropic medication, which had been cut off when Australian staff left the centre, and were at risk of becoming “acutely suicidal”.

On Tuesday night McKim told ABC Lateline Dutton was a liar, a racist and a “monster”, after Dutton accused him of misleading detainees for his own political purpose.

“My response to Peter Dutton is that he is a racist, a proven liar, a fascist, and a proven human rights abuser,” McKim said. “It’s a badge of honour to be personally attacked by Peter Dutton and I’m just taking it as confirmation that I’m on the right track.”

“I’m actually the one here on the ground. I’ve seen the photos taken yesterday of that facility and it is not ready and I’m prepared to stake my political credibility any time against the credibility of a monster like Peter Dutton.”

McKim said he had not toured the new accommodation facilities himself because that would be trespassing.

The Greens leader, Richard Di Natalie, defended his senator’s comments on Monday morning.

“Mr Dutton has behaved in a way that’s absolutely racist, it’s abhorrent,” Di Natale told Radio National. “He has washed his hands of any responsibility to these people.”

The Australian Council for International Development conference passed a motion on Wednesday calling on the Turnbull government to bring the men to Australia and “end their suffering”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/01/power-shut-off-to-final-manus-compounds-as-600-men-refuse-to-leave>

20. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus 'Alliance Against Human Rights Abuse' presents petition to Governor

Tuesday October 31, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

More than 300 Manusians have signed a petition calling for all asylum seekers and refugees to be returned to Australia.

The petition, organised by the Manus Alliance Against Human Rights Abuse, is addressed to PNG Prime Minister and the PNG Chief Justice

The petition was presented to the to governor at the Manus Provincial Government offices this afternoon. Despite some threatening behaviour from the governor towards the petitioners, he personally accepted the petition.

Meanwhile refugees continue to try to secure the perimeter fence against possible attack, just hours before the 5.00pm deadline for closure. (Photo attached)

For more information, contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

21. Manus Island: locals are 'looting the camp', detainees claim

Canberra Times

October 31 2017

Mario Christodoulou, Michael Koziol & Fergus Hunter

Locals have begun looting equipment from the Manus Island refugee processing centre, while Papua New Guinea authorities look on, detainees claim.

Several men told Fairfax Media locals have breached the centre's main gate – which was secured with rope – and are stealing equipment from guard houses and other areas, ahead of the site's planned closure on Tuesday afternoon.

Rohingyan refugee Imran Mohammed said about eight locals had taken fans, chairs, tables, rubbish bins and other items from the site after it was abandoned by security guards and other staff on Tuesday morning.

"They are taking whatever they can from the centre," he said. PNG police and military vehicles were occasionally patrolling the site but were "not doing anything", he said.

Mr Mohammed said most of the refugees remained in their compounds, while some walked around the site to "make sure that no one is coming inside".

Power and water is due to be cut off at 5pm, with authorities insisting the 600 men remaining at the centre move to alternative accommodation in the nearby town of Lorengau.

But the men are adamant they will not move, citing fears for their own safety in the Manusian community amid escalating tensions with locals and several violent encounters.

"We are really concerned about our future and about our lives out there," Mr Mohammed said. "No one is willing to leave, but we don't have any choice if they use force."

Greens senator Nick McKim, who is on Manus Island, said the closure of the centre and departure of all staff had left the refugees "at the mercy of the PNG navy with no food or drinking water".

He told Fairfax Media about 100 locals had rallied in the nearby town of Lorengau on Tuesday morning, asking for the refugees to be sent to Australia and not brought into their community.

Senator McKim said he had been given approval to visit the centre, and was on his way there on Tuesday afternoon.

One detainee, who spoke on condition of anonymity, compared the scene to the aftermath of a warzone.

"I can see a lot of locals coming around the camp and taking whatever they can," he said. "It gives me an idea, when you are in a war zone and the war is over and the people come and take whatever they can – it is like a movie."

Another detainee said the men were threatened after approaching the locals.

"When we approached them they started swearing [at] us and using abusive words. We care about our safety, so we just said 'just take whatever you want'."

Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers had barricaded themselves inside the compound's wire fences overnight on Monday, refusing to leave the centre amid fears they would be attacked if they ventured outside the gates.

Overnight, refugees repaired and secured damaged wire on the compound's perimeter fences to protect themselves from possible attacks from outside, as tensions mounted between the detainees, authorities and locals.

Refugee advocates have expressed fears the "powderkeg" situation may erupt into violence, while detainees inside the camp said they are expecting army forces to arrive by late afternoon, but do not want a confrontation.

"We are peaceful, we are determined to show them how peaceful we are - we are happy to talk to them about our situation, that we don't feel safe to go outside," said one detainee on condition of anonymity.

He claims he has been told by representatives from the local community that their lives will be at risk if they leave the camp.

"The locals are sending their sons, they are sending a couple of guys to deliver a message. They are saying 'if you don't want to die, stay where you are'," he said.

"They say, 'we don't want you to come to our community, you are an Australian problem, you are not our problem, this is hurting us, we don't want you anywhere in our place'."

Fairfax has been unable to verify these claims.

PNG lawyer Ben Lomai, who in a previous Supreme Court challenge represented the men detained on Manus, was due to seek an urgent order from the court that food, water and electricity should be provided to those in the centre beyond Tuesday.

"Those necessities of food, water and electricity must be maintained because that is their constitutional right," he said.

Mr Lomai said he would also seek orders guaranteeing the men's safety if and when they were moved from the compound.

Australia and PNG have pointed the finger at each other, both that ultimate claiming responsibility for the men belonged to the other.

In a statement, a spokesperson from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said the centre's closure and the "management" of the men at the centre were matters for PNG.

"Alternative accommodation options for refugees and failed asylum seekers are ready," the spokesperson said.

"Some refugees and failed asylum seekers have already moved and they are comfortably accessing services and supports there.

"The PNG-operated alternative sites provide PNG-determined refugees and failed asylum seekers with appropriate accommodation and services, and with conditions similar to those at the RPC."

On Monday, PNG Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas said the men were Australia's responsibility.

"It is PNG's position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred under the arrangement until the last person leaves or is independently resettled in PNG," he said.

Mr Thomas said his government had discharged its responsibilities under the two countries' asylum seeker processing arrangement and Australia now had to find a solution for the men who had not been granted refugee status and refugees who refused to stay in PNG.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-locals-are-looting-the-camp-detainees-claim-20171031-gzbn4n.html>

22. 'Calm before the storm': Refugees brace for disaster after refusing to leave Manus Island facility

Canberra Times

October 31 2017

Michael Koziol

with Mario Christodoulou and Fergus Hunter

Refugees on Manus Island were braced for potential calamity on Tuesday evening as they refused to leave the now-decommissioned detention centre and feared violent clashes with locals and the military.

Five years after the centre reopened under Labor and took in its first asylum seekers - and six months after its closure was announced following a Papua New Guinea Supreme Court ruling - the ugly and potentially violent standoff marks another dark episode in the history of Australia's offshore processing regime.

All Australian and PNG staff abandoned the site on Tuesday morning, heading for the airport, while power and water were cut later in the afternoon.

About 600 men - mostly refugees, but also some failed asylum seekers - have refused to move to alternative accommodation in nearby Lorengau, citing fears for their safety and vowing to resist as long as possible.

As the situation deteriorated, an angry Immigration Minister Peter Dutton blasted the refugees and their advocates, declaring their claims "nothing more than subterfuge" and reiterating they would never come to Australia.

The men plan to sustain themselves on rainwater they have collected in jerrycans, but fear a confrontation with local Manusians - up to 50 of whom broke into the site on Tuesday and looted fans, chairs and other goods.

Refugees have patched up a broken gate with wire, but it remains insecure. There is a heavy police presence on the island, including the PNG military and the infamous "mobile squad", which has been described as a paramilitary force.

"The situation is a humanitarian emergency, there is no other way to describe it," said Greens senator Nick McKim, who was on Manus Island on Tuesday.

He witnessed about 100 locals in Lorengau rally against the relocation of refugees into their community, arguing instead they should be taken to Australia.

Senator McKim also said Mr Dutton's claim of providing sufficient alternative accommodation was untrue, because one of the facilities was still "two weeks away" from being ready.

"It is still a construction site," he said. "It consists of two demountables in a paddock full of mud. It is in no way fit for human habitation."

While some refugees and asylum seekers have moved into the alternative accommodation, the remaining 600 intend to hold out as long as they can.

PNG's armed forces are due to resume control of the site as soon as Wednesday, but have promised not to use force to remove the refugees.

However, police chief Gari Baki has warned nobody's safety can be guaranteed, while refugees recall with anguish this year's Good Friday riot in which drunk PNG soldiers fired bullets into the detention centre.

Early Tuesday evening, Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani described the atmosphere at the detention centre as "calm", but worried it was the "calm before [the] storm".

"The refugees are waiting and they are really scared and really worried," he told Fairfax Media.

Another man, Rohingya refugee Imran Mohammed, conceded the group "won't have any choice" but to comply if authorities used force against them.

"We have nothing, we are unarmed," he said. "Everyone is saying we prefer to die here than dying in the town. We are really concerned about our future and about our lives out there."

In a lengthy statement on Tuesday, Mr Dutton said the alternative accommodation provided to refugees and asylum seekers was ready, safe and contained food, power and medical services.

He singled out Senator McKim for "breathtaking duplicity", accusing him of deliberately inciting trouble and grandstanding.

Mr Dutton said refugees had "clear pathways ahead of them" to resettle in PNG, the United States or Nauru. But he warned they had "sought to subvert Australia's laws" and "none will ever resettle here".

"They have long claimed the Manus RPC was a 'hellhole' - but the moment it was to be closed they demanded it be kept open," Mr Dutton said.

Labor's immigration spokesman, Shayne Neumann, said it was incumbent on the minister to "de-escalate" the situation on Manus Island. Transferring people from one facility to another was "not a long-term solution", he said.

Meanwhile, lawyers acting for the refugees lodged a last-minute challenge to the centre's closure, and were waiting to appear before a PNG judge on Tuesday evening.

Documents filed in court allege the men's rights would be breached by placing them into danger in Lorengau.

"The current situation is now totally out of control and fears of a possible 'bloodbath' are mounting by the day," lawyer Ben Lomai argued.

However, with staff having already departed the island, a reversal of the closure appeared impossible.

On Monday, PNG Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas said his government had discharged its responsibilities under the asylum seeker processing arrangement first agreed with Labor PM Kevin Rudd, and that the men's fate was Australia's responsibility.

"It is PNG's position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred under the arrangement until the last person leaves or is independently resettled in PNG," he said.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/calm-before-the-storm-refugees-brace-for-disaster-after-refusing-to-leave-manus-island-facility-20171031-gzboe2.html>

23. Peter Dutton says detainees trying to force asylum policy change

Immigration minister accuses advocates and Greens of aiding 600 refugees and asylum seekers who refuse to leave Manus Island centre

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Tuesday 31 October 2017 17.52 AEDT

The Australian immigration minister has accused detainees – “aided and abetted” by advocates and the Greens – of attempting to force the government to change its policy through subterfuge.

Peter Dutton released his statement on Tuesday as more than 600 men, a mix of refugees and asylum seekers, refuse to leave the Manus Island detention centre, citing fears for their safety in the community.

Advocates, detainees and human rights organisations, as well as Greens, Labor, and independent politicians, have called for the closure not to proceed in the current manner.

Dutton said the coalition government had a “clear and consistent policy” of refusing to allow people who sought asylum by boat to ever settle in Australia.

“Six hundred men at the Manus Regional Processing Centre (RPC) in Papua New Guinea who attempted to enter Australia illegally via people smuggler’s boats – now aided and abetted by so called ‘advocates’ and the Greens – are trying to force a change to that policy,” he said. “They will not.”

Dutton echoed his department in disputing human rights group accounts that the alternative accommodation was not ready. He said it was safe and secure, and health and other services “will be maintained”.

He dismissed complaints by detainees and advocates about the current situation as “nothing more than subterfuge” and said there were “reasonable alternative pathways” for all detainees.

Those whose claims for asylum were rejected were in PNG illegally and should return home, he said. Refugees could settle in PNG under the 2013 agreement, apply for US resettlement, or move to Nauru.

Dutton also accused the Greens Senator, Nick McKim, who was at the centre on Tuesday and expressed “grave fears” for the men, of giving detainees false information and using them “for cheap political stunts to build his public profile”.

Speaking in Perth, the acting prime minister Julie Bishop said the government was in “constant communication” with PNG authorities, and refugees and asylum seekers would be “guaranteed all appropriate services” at the new accommodation units.

“Today the regional processing centre on Manus Island will be closed and the PNG government has made alternative accommodation arrangements,” she said.

“I understand the PNG government has made arrangements for all essential services to be available at the alternative accommodation – food, water, electricity and medical services.”

Dutton’s lengthy statement did not answer questions about Australia’s financial and practical involvement on Manus beyond Tuesday. It made no reference to the PNG immigration minister, Petrus Thomas, and his declaration on Sunday that unsuccessful asylum claimants and refugees who refused to settle in PNG were the responsibility of Australia.

Thomas said PNG had “no obligation” to deal with them and Australia had to pursue third country options. On Tuesday he reportedly said the Australian government was yet to provide any clarity.

“It is PNG’s position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred,” he said.

The Labor immigration spokesman, Shayne Neumann, said: “Peter Dutton’s failure to answer basic questions about arrangements in PNG after the closure of the regional processing centre has fuelled refugees’ uncertainty. Transferring refugees from one centre to another is not a long term solution. These people urgently need viable third-country resettlement options.”

Labor senator Lisa Singh said the situation was a “humanitarian crisis the government has created on its own” and they should have accepted an offer from New Zealand to resettle some refugees from Australia’s offshore processing centres.

“Australia has a duty of care to protect these vulnerable men. There may be more deaths if the Australian government does not resolve the dangerous situation it is creating today by closing its detention centre unilaterally.

"I cannot understand how New Zealand does not fit with a regional resettlement framework. They are our neighbours and are willing to help settle these refugees," she told the Guardian. "Now that Australia has been elected to the UN Human Rights Council, we need to start practicing what we preach."

Detainees on Manus Island have been told they face "removal from an active PNG military base" if they refuse to leave the detention centre after 5pm, and locals told Amnesty International that police squads have armed themselves "like they are going to war".

Multiple accounts from detainees, locals, and observers say the situation on the ground has been exacerbated by a lack of consultation and communication.

Manus residents have protested against the construction of accommodation units for refugees on private land in communities, without consultation. They have also expressed fear at large numbers of refugees joining the small community, and questioned what support will be given.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/31/peter-dutton-says-detainees-trying-to-force-asylum-policy-change>

24. Manus Island detention centre to permanently close today, 600 men refusing to leave

ABC News Online

By Pacific affairs correspondent Liam Fox, staff

Tuesday October 31, 2017

Australia's detention facility at Manus Island in Papua New Guinea will permanently close this afternoon and the 600 men who have been refusing to leave have been told they must go.

In a final notice to the men inside the detention centre, posted overnight, PNG Immigration authorities said the facility would close at 5:00pm today.

The notice said the site would be returned to the PNG Defence Force and anyone choosing to remain would be liable for removal from an active military base.

The power and water will be cut off at 5:00pm, the food service will cease and all PNG immigration staff will depart.

The closure was announced after a PNG court ruled the detention facility was unconstitutional.

This morning the ABC saw several busloads of Australian officials and workers heading to the island's airport with a police convoy.

A senior PNG immigration official has confirmed all Australians working for the Australian Border Force and the contractors Broadspectrum and Wilson Security had left the detention centre.

The men inside the centre are being urged to move to the alternative accommodation that has been provided at three sites in the main town of Lorengau.

One of the refugees inside, Behrouz Boochani, tweeted that the notice was causing fear but said he and others were determined to stay, citing concerns about their future.

Amnesty International Pacific researcher Kate Shuetze told the ABC the men were worried about how they would buy necessities such as food and medicine.

"Essentially there's no real plan here for them to be able to rebuild their lives, so that's really quite alarming," she said.

"We haven't heard anything from the Papua New Guinean government as to whether these men would be allowed to work in the community and whether they're freely able to move around the country.

"In fact, we're hearing the opposite and all the indications around these new centres and the security around these new centres indicate that they're moving them from one prison to another with no logical rationale behind it."

Mr Boochani said he was seeking an injunction to keep the detention centre open because it was simply not safe for people to live outside.

The Manus detainee lodged the affidavit — which was witnessed by Australian Greens senator Nick McKim — at PNG's Supreme Court.

The PNG Government wants the 600 men to move to accommodation in the town of Lorengau.

But Mr Boochani said he and the other men feared for their safety if they had to leave.

"The police already, they beat some of the refugees and the local people. They attack the refugees and rob them. This place is not a safe place," he said.

Kon Karapanagiotidis, the founder and chief executive of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, has claimed the closure will leave hundreds of refugees in "immediate serious danger".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-31/manus-island-detention-centre-to-close-at-5pm-today/9102768>

25. Manus Island refugees secure fences, barricade themselves inside processing centre as closure looms

Canberra Times
October 31 2017 - 8:20AM
Melissa Cunningham, Fergus Hunter
- With Michael Koziol, AAP

Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers are barricading themselves inside the Manus Island processing centre and refusing to leave amid fears they'll be attacked if they venture outside the compound's wire fences.

Refugees are repairing and securing damaged barbed wire on the compound's perimeter fences to protect them from possible attacks as confrontation between the men, locals and Papua New Guinea authorities looms.

Tensions have been rising on the island before it is shut down, and refugee advocates have expressed fears the "powderkeg" may erupt into violence involving locals, detainees and police.

Lawyer Ben Lomai, who in a previous Supreme Court challenge has represented the men detained on Manus, said he would seek an urgent order from the court that food, water, and electricity should be provided to those in the centre beyond Tuesday.

"Those necessities of food, water and electricity must be maintained because that is their constitutional right," he said.

Mr Lomai, who plans to file the court application early Tuesday morning, said he would also seek orders guaranteeing the men's safety if and when they were moved from the centre.

Some 600 men have been refusing to leave the centre at the Lombrum Navy Base, despite its planned closure on Tuesday, saying they won't be safe at three other facilities in and around the island's main town of Lorengau earmarked for the asylum seekers' relocation.

They have vowed to resist any attempts to move them amid reports locals are threatening to arm themselves to stop detainees moving into their community.

Alternative accommodation has been offered but one facility, West Lorengau Haus, is not ready and another, Hillside Haus, consists mostly of "transferable accommodation containers".

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said fear in the centre was rising.

"On the one hand is the fear that, as so often has been the case, Border Force and the PNG police will use force against them," Mr Rintoul said.

"On the other, there is the fear that they will be vulnerable to the violence and threats that has seen so many of them robbed, bashed, and attacked with knives and machetes. They have been warned, if you move to Hillside, you will be killed."

Dining facilities at Lombrum have closed, with the asylum seekers relying on basic food parcels containing muesli bars, muffins, cornflakes and pre-cooked meals that they have been told will last two days.

"Outside they will also be deprived of medical and other support with no hope of a secure future," Mr Rintoul said.

"No one has explained where over 600 people are going to find enough food in Lorengau."

He said one refugee told the Refugee Action Coalition: "It doesn't matter if the Australians walk away from the detention centre, we are not going to leave."

Fresh human rights concerns have been raised by the United Nations in recent days, and the PNG government has warned Canberra that it would not force refugees to resettle in the country if they did not want to remain. It said Australia was responsible for dealing with the men.

"It is PNG's position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred under the arrangement until the last last person leaves or is independently resettled in PNG," Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas said in a statement.

Mr Thomas said his government had discharged its responsibilities under the two countries' asylum seeker processing arrangement and Australia now had to find a solution for the men who had not been granted refugee status and refugees who refused to stay in PNG.

He urged the Australian government to maintain all necessary medical and mental health services on Manus.

Amnesty International, which has had a team on the island over recent days, said it was concerned about the restrictions to food, power, water, and medical and sanitation services imposed on the men at the centre, and urged the Australian and PNG governments to prevent violence from erupting as the centre was forcibly closed.

In April, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton flagged that the centre would be closed by October 31, but last week warned that ongoing resistance would "make it hard for us to achieve" the deadline.

Fairfax Media has contacted Mr Dutton's office for a response.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-asylum-seekers-secure-fences-barricade-themselves-inside-processing-centre-as-closure-looms-20171030-gzb954.html>

26. Manus Island: locals are 'looting the camp', detainees claim

Canberra Times

October 31 2017 - 2:07PM

Mario Christodoulou, Michael Koziol and Fergus Hunter

Locals have begun looting equipment from the Manus Island refugee processing centre, while Papua New Guinea authorities look on, detainees claim.

Several men told Fairfax Media locals have breached the centre's main gate – which was secured with rope – and are stealing equipment from guard houses and other areas, ahead of the site's planned closure on Tuesday afternoon.

Rohingyan refugee Imran Mohammed said about eight locals had taken fans, chairs, tables, rubbish bins and other items from the site after it was abandoned by security guards and other staff on Tuesday morning.

"They are taking whatever they can from the centre," he said. PNG police and military vehicles were occasionally patrolling the site but were "not doing anything", he said.

Mr Mohammed said most of the refugees remained in their compounds, while some walked around the site to "make sure that no one is coming inside".

Power and water is due to be cut off at 5pm, with authorities insisting the 600 men remaining at the centre move to alternative accommodation in the nearby town of Lorengau.

But the men are adamant they will not move, citing fears for their own safety in the Manusian community amid escalating tensions with locals and several violent encounters.

"We are really concerned about our future and about our lives out there," Mr Mohammed said. "No one is willing to leave, but we don't have any choice if they use force."

Greens senator Nick McKim, who is on Manus Island, said the closure of the centre and departure of all staff had left the refugees "at the mercy of the PNG navy with no food or drinking water".

He told Fairfax Media about 100 locals had rallied in the nearby town of Lorengau on Tuesday morning, asking for the refugees to be sent to Australia and not brought into their community.

Senator McKim said he had been given approval to visit the centre, and was on his way there on Tuesday afternoon.

One detainee, who spoke on condition of anonymity, compared the scene to the aftermath of a warzone.

"I can see a lot of locals coming around the camp and taking whatever they can," he said. "It gives me an idea, when you are in a war zone and the war is over and the people come and take whatever they can – it is like a movie."

Another detainee said the men were threatened after approaching the locals.

"When we approached them they started swearing [at] us and using abusive words. We care about our safety, so we just said 'just take whatever you want'."

Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers had barricaded themselves inside the compound's wire fences overnight on Monday, refusing to leave the centre amid fears they would be attacked if they ventured outside the gates.

Overnight, refugees repaired and secured damaged wire on the compound's perimeter fences to protect themselves from possible attacks from outside, as tensions mounted between the detainees, authorities and locals.

Refugee advocates have expressed fears the "powderkeg" situation may erupt into violence, while detainees inside the camp said they are expecting army forces to arrive by late afternoon, but do not want a confrontation.

"We are peaceful, we are determined to show them how peaceful we are - we are happy to talk to them about our situation, that we don't feel safe to go outside," said one detainee on condition of anonymity.

He claims he has been told by representatives from the local community that their lives will be at risk if they leave the camp.

"The locals are sending their sons, they are sending a couple of guys to deliver a message. They are saying 'if you don't want to die, stay where you are'," he said.

"They say, 'we don't want you to come to our community, you are an Australian problem, you are not our problem, this is hurting us, we don't want you anywhere in our place'."

Fairfax has been unable to verify these claims.

PNG lawyer Ben Lomai, who in a previous Supreme Court challenge represented the men detained on Manus, was due to seek an urgent order from the court that food, water and electricity should be provided to those in the centre beyond Tuesday.

"Those necessities of food, water and electricity must be maintained because that is their constitutional right," he said.

Mr Lomai said he would also seek orders guaranteeing the men's safety if and when they were moved from the compound.

Australia and PNG have pointed the finger at each other, both that ultimate claiming responsibility for the men belonged to the other.

In a statement, a spokesperson from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said the centre's closure and the "management" of the men at the centre were matters for PNG.

"Alternative accommodation options for refugees and failed asylum seekers are ready," the spokesperson said.

"Some refugees and failed asylum seekers have already moved and they are comfortably accessing services and supports there.

"The PNG-operated alternative sites provide PNG-determined refugees and failed asylum seekers with appropriate accommodation and services, and with conditions similar to those at the RPC."

On Monday, PNG Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas said the men were Australia's responsibility.

"It is PNG's position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred under the arrangement until the last person leaves or is independently resettled in PNG," he said.

Mr Thomas said his government had discharged its responsibilities under the two countries' asylum seeker processing arrangement and Australia now had to find a solution for the men who had not been granted refugee status and refugees who refused to stay in PNG.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-locals-are-looting-the-camp-detainees-claim-20171031-gzbn4n.html>

27. Manus Island detainees fear for safety after police squads armed 'like it's a war'

Detainees allege Papua New Guinean men began looting the Australian-run immigration centre once staff departed

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Tuesday 31 October 2017 14.36 AEDT

Detainees on Manus Island have been told they face “removal from an active PNG military base” if they refuse to leave the detention centre after 5pm, and locals report police squads have armed themselves “like they are going to war”.

Detainees have also alleged local men started looting the centre once staff departed.

The Australian-run immigration detention centre was scheduled to close on Tuesday but the situation threatens to devolve as about 600 refugees and asylum seekers refuse to leave the centre and local Manusian people protest about the cohort’s resettlement in their community.

For several months refugees and asylum seekers have been told they must move into alternative accommodation in nearby communities, as the centre was shut down around them. In recent days food packs were distributed with a warning there would be no more provided.

Late on Monday night a notice was put up inside the centre telling detainees the centre would be closed at 5pm Tuesday.

“All power and water will cease,” it said. “There will be no food supplied and no dinner service this evening. All ICSEA personnel will depart.

“From tomorrow, arrangements will be underway for the return of the site to the PNG [defence force]. Anyone choosing to remain here will be liable for removal from an active PNG military base.”

By midday on Tuesday, Australian Border Force, Broadspectrum and Wilson Security staff members had reportedly left the island.

The PNG security provider, Palladian, is believed to have at least 40 security officers fewer than it expected, after two groups of foreign-hired employees were prevented from entering the country by the immigration department, which said Palladian had to hire locals.

Several detainees separately alleged locals carrying machetes had arrived at the centre and taken away fans, furniture and other items. The Guardian has seen footage and photos purported to show this but has not been able to confirm it.

Aziz Adam told the Guardian local Manusians had arrived on foot and with cars “to steal things”.

Abdul Mohammad told AAP: “Some of the locals have come inside and are stealing boxes, fire alarms, the fans. Some of them are taking the air conditioners.”

In a translated message one refugee said they had attempted to shut the centre gates with wire in fear of attacks. “At 5pm they will cut off all power and food so I feel they are provoking us to make riot or something, but nothing will happen,” he said. “I’m scared for my safety.”

Behrouz Bouchani, a Kurdish Iranian journalist inside the centre, said detainees had been awake most of the night and were afraid to leave. He told the Guardian the situation was “critical”.

“It’s time I have to say SOS.”

Amnesty International investigators are in the area, monitoring the situation.

The Asia-Pacific researcher Kate Schuetze said fear, confusion and tension were high among both the detainees and local people.

“A local community group we spoke to [on Monday] said there were three mobile squads and PNGDF squads, and their comment was PNG forces are arming themselves like it’s a war,” Schuetze told the Guardian. “It begs the question: who are they expecting a fight from? Refugees? Locals?”

The Australian Greens senator Nick McKim was in Lorengau on Tuesday and told the Guardian he had seen large numbers of police and defence personnel on the street but could not make an assessment about how equipped they were, noting he had mostly seen vehicle convoys driving through town.

McKim said he had “grave fears” for the safety of detainees and was heading to the detention centre, which he had permission to visit.

“The last staff have now been withdrawn from the centre – there’s nobody else in the centre except detainees,” he said. “They are at the mercy of the PNG navy, who stormed the centre earlier this year.”

McKim said he was speaking with detainees who had “barricaded” themselves inside the base, where there was no food or drinking water, and “major hygiene issues” with essential services cut off and most toilets blocked.

"This is an humanitarian emergency driven by Pete Dutton and Malcolm Turnbull and acquiesced to by the Australian Labor party," he said.

McKim said he was at a rally where about 100 locals were presenting a petition calling for Australia to take the refugees and asylum seekers. The Manus Alliance Against Human Rights Abuses has previously spoken about a lack of consultation with the Manus community sparking fear of detainees.

Human Rights Watch last week detailed numerous attacks on refugees and asylum seekers by groups of locals who were often armed and drunk, with at least three victims requiring medical transfer to Port Moresby or Australia.

Locals have also protested against the building of refugee accommodation units on private land in communities, saying it was done without consultation.

Both Schuetze and McKim said the alternative accommodation units were not yet ready for residents. Footage taken by Amnesty International purported to show the Hillside Haus centre unfinished and full of shipping containers.

Lawyers were expected to launch legal action over the closure in the PNG supreme court, alleging the detainees' human rights were being breached.

There is also a developing stoush between the Australian and PNG governments over who is responsible for refugees and asylum seekers who won't settle in PNG.

The IHMS clinic inside the centre has also closed. Staff have left and all medication and equipment has been removed, however it is not clear whether the new clinic – to be housed at the East Lorengau transit centre – is operational.

Last week the Guardian reported IHMS had been contracted to stay on beyond Tuesday and continue to provide medical care to detainees. The length of the Manus Island services has not been defined but a statement from IHMS said the Port Moresby health liaison services – for detainees transferred from Manus – would continue until 28 February.

Questions to IHMS were referred to the Australian immigration department, which did not answer questions but said alternative accommodation was ready, with appropriate services and conditions similar to those at the centre.

The manner of the centre's closure has sparked renewed protests in Australia and among advocates.

The Labor immigration spokesman, Shayne Neumann, said: "Peter Dutton's failure to answer basic questions about arrangements in PNG after the closure of the regional processing centre has fuelled refugees' uncertainty.

"Transferring refugees from one centre to another is not a long term solution. These people urgently need viable third-country resettlement options."

The independent MP Andrew Wilkie supported the calls for detainees to be brought to Australia for processing and resettlement if their refugees claims were accepted.

"Make no mistakes – today's botched closure of the Manus Island detention centre is not good news for the nearly 750 men imprisoned there," Wilkie said. "If the Australian government is going to lock people up in these camps they at least have a duty of care to ensure that they are treated humanely and have access to basic medical facilities."

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/31/manus-island-detainees-fear-for-safety-after-police-squads-armed-like-its-a-war>

28. MEDIA RELEASE: Time is running out on Manus Island

Tuesday October 31, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

The government needs to act urgently to prevent a looming disaster on Manus Island.

Security guards have deserted their posts at Manus detention centre, leaving the centre undefended. There is no drinking water. (Photos attached of empty drinking water crates and deserted guard posts were taken this morning, 31 October)

Meanwhile there is a constitutional enforcement hearing in the PNG Supreme Court this morning which will determine that the PNG and Australian government has breached the human rights of asylum seekers taken to Manus Island. The determination will open the way for compensation for the human rights breaches and unlawful detention and seeking further orders to remedy to the on-going human rights breaches.

Documents have also been lodged for an urgent Supreme Court hearing seeking urgent injunctions to stop the closure of the centre and forcibly relocation the refugees and asylum seekers to unsecure areas around the Lorengau settlement on Manus. The action will also seek orders to re-instate all services, pending a hearing for orders for the PNG government to facilitate resettlement in a safe third country.

"We need urgent action from the Australian government today. There are real fears that the government will authorise force to be used against the asylum seekers and refugees in the centre, even as they deprive them of food and water," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

PROTEST

The Refugee Action Coalition is holding a protest, "Don't Force Manus Closure; Bring Them Here", at Sydney Commonwealth government offices: Tuesday, 31 October, 12.30pm, cnr Bent and Bligh Sts, Sydney. Speakers include: Doctors for Refugees, Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

29. Manus Island detainees launch legal action over Australian centre's closure

Asylum seekers say removal of water and electricity breaches their constitutionally protected human rights

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Tuesday 31 October 2017 04.00 AEDT

Detainees on Manus Island have launched legal action over the closure of Australia's immigration detention centre, claiming their constitutionally protected human rights are being breached by the removal of basic services including water and electricity.

The immigration centre is scheduled to close on Tuesday but authorities face a potential standoff with detainees who refuse to leave as well as locals reportedly blocking the construction of new refugee accommodation. Papua New Guinea's government has also sent a warning to its Australian counterpart that it will take no responsibility for "non-refugees" and people who refuse to settle in PNG, saying they are the obligation of the Australian government.

Ben Lomai, a PNG lawyer representing detainees, was expected to lodge a legal application on Tuesday morning.

The PNG constitution contains enforceable protections for human rights, which the lawyers say have been breached in the instance of detainees on Manus Island.

"[The application] is going to seek to ensure that those asylum seekers who remain on the island don't have those constitutional rights breached," said Greg Barns, an Australian lawyer assisting with the case. "That would mean ensuring they have basic amenities and necessities of life – water, food, electricity, etc. Orders also being sought to ensure they are not forcibly sent to the new transit centre and that we want to ensure the PNG government facilitates them going to Australia or to a safe third country."

Over several months refugees and asylum seekers have been told to leave the centre as is it closed compound by compound, with essential services shut down around them.

Detainees said there had been no drinking water since Sunday, except for large bins detainees had filled with water.

From Tuesday, PNG authorities have said, all water, electricity and food services will end, and refugees and asylum seekers must move into purpose-built accommodation in the nearby town of Lorengau.

But more than 600 men have refused to leave the centre, citing fears for their safety in the community.

Guardian Australia has spoken to a number of detainees who reported widespread fear about what will happen on Tuesday. Foreign private security staff have reportedly left but the police presence around the centre has increased.

Detainees have held peaceful protests every day for weeks.

The Kurdish Iranian journalist Behrouz Boochani said he and his fellow refugees and asylum seekers had no intention of violence.

"We want people to know that the refugees are not going to do any violence and our resistance is completely peaceful," he said. "We are victims under this policy and we have had very bad experiences that locals, navy soldiers, police and guards attacked us and did violence, so we are not going to do any action."

There were reports some of the men now in Port Moresby for medical care would also protest but Guardian Australia has been told that would no longer go ahead.

One detainee said there was a fear of police retaliation. "I do not want any of us to get any trouble in here because I'm worried about myself and the other guys' safety in here," he said. "Most of the guys are scared of the police."

Last week PNG police said extra officers would be sent to Manus to assist the local force and the two units of the paramilitary mobile squad already there.

One refugee said some local people had made direct threats against detainees. There have been a significant number of attacks on refugees and asylum seekers by locals. Human Rights Watch visited Manus last month and detailed attacks by armed groups of drunk men.

"There are only a handful of security guards here and they are not able to stop the locals," Aziz Adam said. "We decided to put people around the fences every night. No one in authority tells us anything, as they mentioned before that they will cut the power and water.

"The locals told us they will kill us all if we moved out of this place. They are upset because of their jobs."

There has been rising discontent in the Manus community over fewer benefits than promised in return for hosting the centre, the loss of jobs after it closes and a number of violent episodes involving refugees or centre staff members. But some residents have also launched activism in support of the refugees.

Refugees and asylum seekers are supposed to move to newly built or expanded accommodation units in Lorengau but at least two sites have sparked protests among local people. One is not yet ready for residents. Another, according to footage filmed by Amnesty International, is mostly shipping containers.

"The closure of the current centre is not a solution if people are simply being moved from one abusive location to another," Amnesty International's director of global issues, Audrey Gaughran, said. "Reports that the new facilities are unfinished and leave refugees at risk of violence are extremely concerning. Authorities must ensure that the safety and wellbeing of refugees is given priority."

After the PNG supreme court ruled the detention centre illegal and unconstitutional, the PNG and Australian governments announced it would close on 31 October. The two countries were soon at loggerheads over who held responsibility over then more than 900 detainees.

That stoush has again erupted with the PNG immigration minister declaring his government had fulfilled its obligations to the offshore processing agreement. Petrus Thomas said any refugees who refused to settle in PNG, as well as those men whose claims had been rejected or who had refused to be assessed, were the responsibility of Australia.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/31/manus-island-detainees-launch-legal-action-over-australian-centres-closure>

30. MEDIA RELEASE: Govt must act to stop Manus closure: No forced locations, bring them here!

Monday October 30, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Hundreds of Manusians have signed a petition opposing the forced relocation of the men in the Manus detention centre and calling for the Australian government to take all the asylum seekers and refugees back to Australia. (A photo of the local meeting, 27 October, in Lorengau's ward 5 is attached).

The petition will be presented tomorrow Tuesday, 31 October, at the end of a march to Manus Provisional Government Office in Lorengau.

WATER TANKS DRAINED

Meanwhile the Australian government has stepped up the pressure on the refugees in the detention centre, as they ordered that water be drained from three water tanks at the Foxtrot compound. (Photo of cut pipes attached).

Food is now only being provided in food packs for today and tomorrow (30, 31 October), and a notice in the detention centre says that all service personnel will be withdrawn from the detention on the 31 October.

As tensions over the closure rises, some local Manusians have pledged to provide food and water to the detention centre after the closure date. At one meeting, locals declared that they would block the road to prevent buses taking asylum seekers to the new Hillside Haus location.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

The rising fear inside the detention centre is taking its toll on the detainees. While some locals have offered support other, have come to the detention fences threatening the refugees inside. With some fences removed and other sections damaged in a recent storm, there are fears that locals could access the centre as they did in February 2014, when Reza Barati was killed.

The fear has also exacerbated the mental health crisis on the island, and the concern that there will be no mental health care available on the island after the withdrawal of medical services from the detention centre.

Another detainee suffered a complete mental breakdown and was taken into secure care by IHMS on Sunday 28 October. But the government says IHMS is being withdrawn, along with all other services on 31 October.

There is no provision for ensuring on-going medications for the over 600 people, let alone care for acute cases.

LEGAL ACTION

Documents are being filed in the PNG Supreme Court today, Monday 30 October, in an attempt to get an injunction to stop the closure of the detention centre and any forced relocation, along with orders for the full restoration of accommodation, food, water, medical, sanitation and other services to the people being held by the Australian government, to ensure the basics of life as well as the protection of their human rights.

"It is clear from statements made by the PNG Immigration Minister that the humanitarian disaster on Manus is being driven by the Australian government. It is Australia who has effective control of the detention centre.

"Detention on Manus has been a humanitarian disaster for the last four years. But there are surely few precedents for the government to have such deliberate, callous and calculated disregard for the safety of people supposedly in their care.

"The government must act immediately stop the closure centre and the forced relocation of asylum seekers and refugees on Manus. The government must act to bring them here."

PROTEST

The Refugee Action Coalition is holding a protest, "Don't Force Manus Refugees to Danger, Bring Them Here," at Sydney Commonwealth government offices, Tuesday, 31 October, 12.30pm, cnr Bent and Bligh Sts, Sydney.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

31. MEDIA RELEASE: As the closure deadline looms, Manus refugees secure the fences

Refugee Action Coalition
Monday October 30, 2017
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

As the deadline for the closure looms, Manus refugees are this evening securing the recently damaged perimeter fence against possible attacks, Monday 30 October (photo attached) .

Meals are no longer available in the centre. Refugees have only been given meagre food packs their three meals today. Some refugees have been left hungry.

The last food packs are scheduled to be issued inside the detention centre tomorrow morning, Tuesday 31 October.

"Fears are rising inside the detention centre," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"On the one hand is the fear that, as so often has been the case, Border Force and the PNG police will use force against them. On the other there is the fear that they will be vulnerable to the violence and threats that has seen so many of them robbed, bashed, and attacked with knives and machetes. They have been warned, if you move to Hillside, you will be killed.

"Outside they will also be deprived of medical and other support with no hope of a secure future. No one has explained where over 600 people are going to find enough food in Lorengau."

But the refugees are very resolved not to move. One refugee told the Refugee Action Coalition, "It doesn't matter if the Australians walk away from the detention centre, we are not going to leave."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

32. 'Powderkeg': Papua New Guinea issues warning to Turnbull government on Manus detainees

Canberra Times
October 30 2017 - 3:30PM
Fergus Hunter
- with Michael Koziol, AAP

Papua New Guinea has demanded the Turnbull government urgently resolve what will happen to hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island, with the processing centre scheduled to close on Tuesday.

Tensions have been rising on the island ahead of the imminent shutdown, and refugee advocates have expressed fears the "powderkeg" may erupt into violence involving locals, detainees and police.

There have been reports locals are threatening to arm themselves to stop detainees moving into their community.

Amnesty International, which has had a team on the island over recent days, said it was concerned about the restrictions to food, power, water, and medical and sanitation services imposed on the men at the centre, and urged the Australian and PNG governments to prevent violence from erupting as the centre was forcibly closed.

The PNG government warned Canberra that it will not force refugees to resettle in the country if they do not want to remain, and said Australia was responsible for dealing with them.

"It is PNG's position that as long as there is one individual from this arrangement that remains in PNG, Australia will continue to provide financial and other support to PNG to manage the persons transferred under the arrangement until the last person leaves or is independently resettled in PNG," Immigration Minister Petrus Thomas said in a statement.

Some 600 men have been refusing to leave the centre at the Lombrum Navy Base, despite its planned closure on Tuesday, amid fears they won't be safe at three other facilities they are meant to relocate to, in and around the island's main town of Lorengau.

Mr Thomas said his government had discharged its responsibilities under the two countries' asylum seeker processing arrangement and Australia now had to find a solution for the men who have not been granted refugee status and refugees who refuse to stay in PNG.

"PNG has no obligation under the current arrangement to deal with these two cohorts and they remain the responsibility of Australia to pursue third country options and liaise with respective governments of the non-refugees for their voluntary or involuntary return," he said.

The Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said Mr Thomas' statement had made it clear "the humanitarian disaster on Manus is being driven by the Australian government".

Amnesty International said PNG security officials and private security contractors "must abide by international obligations and refrain from excessive use of force".

"The Australian and Papua New Guinean governments must take all necessary steps to prevent violence against refugees from the community and ensure their safety," Amnesty researcher Kate Scheutze said.

PNG has deployed its notorious "paramilitary" police squad to assist with the shutdown.

Manus Island governor Charlie Benjamin has warned that many locals feared they would be in danger from the refugees and asylum seekers, and were threatening to arm themselves with knives and other weapons to stop any of the 600 men moving in to Lorengau.

The safety of refugees, government workers and agency staff "is not to be taken for granted given the tension that is now being expressed by the locals on Manus Island," national police chief Gari Baki said last week.

In April, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton flagged the centre would be closed by October 31 but last week warned that ongoing resistance would "make it hard for us to achieve" the deadline.

Australian government officials have confirmed that water, food, power and sanitation will be cut off at "some point" on Tuesday.

Dining facilities at Lombrum have closed, with the asylum seekers now relying on basic food parcels containing muesli bars, muffins, cornflakes and pre-cooked meals they've been told will last two days.

Following fresh human rights concerns raised by the United Nations in recent days, Mr Thomas urged the Australian government to maintain all necessary medical and mental health services on Manus.

Alternative accommodation has been offered but one facility, West Lorengau Haus, is not ready and another, Hillside Haus, consists mostly of "transferable accommodation containers".

Fairfax Media has contacted Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's office for a response.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-tensions-papua-new-guinea-issues-warning-to-turnbull-government-on-detainees-20171029-gzapl6.html>

33. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauruan driver arrested day after death of Bangladeshi asylum seeker

Friday November 3, 2017
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

The Nauruan driver of the vehicle involved in the death of a Bangladeshi asylum seeker on Nauru has been arrested. The exact charge is not known.

The Bangladeshi refugee who was riding a motor bike when he was killed on the Fly Camp Rd (called after the nearby Fly Camp for single men) on Nauru, yesterday (Thursday 2 November).

There were serious suspicions about the nature of the accident from the beginning because of the hasty way the scene was cleared of all evidence.

The vehicle driven by the Nauruan has not been seen since the accident so there could be no assessment of the accident based on the damage to the vehicle.

It seemed to be another example of Nauruans being treated very differently to refugees had there been a Nauruan killed in similar circumstances.

The news of the arrest has surprised the refugee population of the island. Reports from the island indicate that allegedly the motor-bike has been hit from behind.

The man's death is being deeply felt on the island, not only because refugee lives seem so cheap, but also because he is one of the many separated families on Nauru.

He has been separated from his sibling who was taken from Nauru to Australia since 2014.

"There is a cloud of suspicion surrounding this man's death. There is little confidence that any asylum seeker or refugee gets justice from the Nauruan legal system, particularly when there is no transparency in the investigation," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"He is also a victim of offshore detention. His death adds to the toll that offshore detention has taken on the lives of asylum seekers. He should never have been on Nauru. One more reason to close the camps."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713