

THE WILFUL KILLING OF REZA BERATI

on February 17, 2014

inside the Manus Island detention centre

media reports and published opinion

1a. Media Reports 16 – 24 February

FROM INCIDENT TO NATIONWIDE VIGILS

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Manus Island: Local doctor reports 'mass breakout' of asylum seekers from detention centre

ABC News Online

By PNG correspondent Liam Cochrane

First posted Sun 16 Feb 2014, 11:55pm AEDT

Updated Mon 17 Feb 2014, 8:31am AEDT

Refugee advocates and a doctor on Manus Island say asylum seekers have escaped from the Papua New Guinea detention centre.

Health workers at the Manus Island detention centre told a local doctor there has been a "mass breakout".

They told the doctor to prepare for casualties, but Dr Otto Numan says no injured asylum seekers or guards have been brought to the hospital.

The Australian-based Refugee Action Coalition put out a statement last night saying protests at the centre had escalated earlier that day.

The group says a fence was knocked down in the early evening and a riot squad deployed.

It is not clear what caused the unrest or how many asylum seekers escaped.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed there was a "disturbance" at the centre last night.

"I'm advised that staff are reported safe and accounted for and that the centre is reported to be calm," he said in a statement.

Mr Morrison confirmed that a number of detainees were arrested and that a number had received medical attention.

He also said there was some minor property damage to the centre.

He said more information about the incident will be released once it is confirmed by his department.

Mr Morrison rejected any suggestion that detainees had been informed they would not be resettled in Papua New Guinea.

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles has called for the Government to release details of what happened as soon as possible.

"The last time there was an incident at Manus Island, the first response by Scott Morrison was that this was essentially a matter for Papua New Guinea, that's obviously not right," he said.

"This is a facility which is integral to Australia's asylum seeker policies, a facility where there are many Australians working. It's very important that the Australian public can be made fully aware as soon as possible."

There are currently about 1,300 detainees on Manus Island.

PNG's foreign minister Rimbink Pato says officials have started processing refugee applications.

But the country does not have a visa category for refugees and there has been little public information about how, and where, they might be resettled.

Mr Pato told PNG's parliament last week that he would seek the help of the Australian Government and the United Nations in deciding whether to resettle refugees within the country.

He said the option of resettling refugees in a third country would also be explored.

"So what the cabinet has decided recently is to appoint a group of eminent Papua New Guineans who will be assisted by relevant expertise from the UN, from the Australian Government, and other responsible stakeholders, to come up with relevant policy framework determining the question whether those asylum seekers will or will not be settled in PNG," he said.

The Manus Island detention centre was first set up by the Howard government in 2001.

It was closed by the Labor government in 2008 but reopened by them in November 2012.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-16/mass-breakout-reported-from-manus-island-detention-centre/5263324

Asylum seekers riot on Manus Island

Brisbane Times

February 17, 2014

Goya Dmytryshchak

with Matthew Knott and AAP

Asylum seekers at Manus Island's detention centre have reportedly set fire to a compound, torn down fences and destroyed tents after being told they would not be resettled in Papua New Guinea.

It was also reported that some detainees had escaped.

A spokeswoman from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection confirmed on Sunday night that she was aware of "a disturbance" on the island.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison issued a statement on Monday morning also confirming a "disturbance", but said staff were safe and the centre was now "calm". The statement did not mention escaped detainees

"It is reported that Papua New Guinea police have arrested a number of transferees in relation to the incident," the statement said.

He said there were some injuries to detainees and some "minor property damage to the centre".

Mr Morrison said that reports that asylum seekers were told they would not be resettled in PNG were "false".

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said on Monday that the "only way to avoid this kind of think is to stop the boats".

He also commented on the information about resettlement telling ABC radio that his understanding was that "no such information" was given to people.

"And the other thing I've got to say is: if you don't want to be in immigration detention, don't come illegally to Australia," he said.

"It is impossible not to feel sorry for people who want a better life and are living in a horrible country and I guess its good they think Australia is a beacon. We are a beacon of decency and generosity but we cannot allow people to take advantage of our generosity in this way," he said.

A local PNG MP said seven asylum seekers had been arrested after a fight at the Manus Island centre.

Ron Knight said the seven were arrested following the fight that broke out on Sunday night.

He said he had been informed by PNG immigration that reports of a breakout were false.

"There was a fight late yesterday afternoon amongst themselves. They have been arrested and will face court this week," he said.

Adelaide man Murtaza Ghulam said that his brother, a Pakistani asylum seeker who was in the first group sent to the island in 2013, had phoned him amid the chaos.

"Everyone is fighting and there is a lot of people injured. He told me a lot of people are injured and hurt," he said.

"He just called me for five or six seconds at 10 o'clock."

He said that asylum seekers were clashing with police and several had escaped.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said reports indicated that the riot squad was called in before a perimeter fence was breached.

"Protests have been building all day but escalated after a meeting was held to answer asylum seekers' questions about resettlement.

"Shockingly, the asylum seekers were told that they will not be resettled in PNG and if they wanted to go somewhere else, they will need to arrange that themselves."

There are about 1300 asylum seekers on the island.

www.brisbanetimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seekers-riot-on-manus-island-20140216-32ucz.html

Manus Island detainees arrested amid conflicting reports of unrest

Refugee group says riot squad was mobilised over protests but local MP dismissed disturbance as a simple fight

Helen Davidson

theguardian.com

Sunday 16 February 2014

Seven asylum seekers held in the Manus Island detention centre have been arrested over a fight, a Papua New Guinea MP has said, dismissing reports of a mass breakout at the centre.

Refugee advocates reported on Sunday night that protests by detainees had escalated and a number of people had broken out of the facility.

However a local MP, Ron Knight, a long-time supporter of the centre and PNG's deal with Australia to operate it, told AAP he had been informed by PNG immigration that the asylum seekers were arrested after a fight, and reports of a breakout are "BS".

"There was a fight late yesterday afternoon amongst themselves. They have been arrested and will face court this week," said Knight.

On Sunday the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC) said they'd received reports the riot squad had been mobilised in response to protests.

"There have been daily protests on Manus Island involving hundreds of asylum seekers since 25 January as frustrations have increased over delays in processing and uncertainty about their future," said the statement.

A local doctor was also told about an incident and was warned to expect people with injuries at the local hospital, the ABC reported, however Dr Otto Numan said no detainees or staff had been brought in.

The office of the minister for immigration, Scott Morrison, confirmed on Monday morning "a disturbance" had taken place.

Morrison said staff at the centre were accounted for and safe, and that there were reports PNG police had arrested a number of detainees.

"Service providers have also reported a number of transferees have received medical attention and that there has been some minor property damage at the centre," he added.

Morrison also dismissed claims the asylum seekers had been told they would not be settled in PNG, saying he'd been advised such claims were "false".

The RAC said late on Sunday the protest escalated after detainees were told they would not be settled in PNG. However the group issued a correction a short time later, saying detainees had been informed by Immigration Department officials they would not be leaving PNG, and "that if they wanted to go somewhere else other than PNG, they would have to arrange this with other countries themselves".

PNG will seek help from Australia in deciding whether to resettle refugees in the country, the foreign minister, Rimbink Pato, told parliament last week. Pato said officials had begun processing asylum seekers. However the country does not have a class of visa to cover refugees.

There are about 1300 asylum seekers on Manus Island.

Last month the PNG supreme court ruled the constitutionality of the agreement between PNG and Australia to process asylum seekers on Manus Island is open to challenge by the country's opposition leader.

The five-judge panel also said asylum seekers should be made aware they were legally allowed to appeal against their detention, querying whether any knew this because none had approached the courts despite the process being made deliberately easy. Guardian Australia understands the delay in processing refugee claims it is at least partly due to a lack of legal aid services, no longer provided by Australia.

The court also criticised two PNG authorities which it said should be taking a greater interest in human rights issues at the processing centre.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/17/manus-island-detainees-arrested-conflicting-reports-unrest

MEDIA RELEASE: Break-out on Manus Island as asylum seekers told 'No Resettlement in PNG'

Sunday February 16, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Report from Manus Island indicate a major protest and breakout has taken place on Manus Island late this afternoon. The most recent reports indicate that the riot squad has been mobilised and that the perimeter fence has been breached.

Protests have been building all day, but escalated after a meeting (around 2pm Manus time) was held to answer asylum seeker's questions about resettlement.

Shockingly, the asylum seekers were told that they "will not be resettled in PNG" and if they wanted to go somewhere else, they will need to arrange that themselves. There had been protests throughout the day, but around 4pm Manus Island time, events escalated and the G4S riot squad went into Oscar compound.

A couple of hours, fences were knocked down and the whole detention centre was locked down as the protests spread to all the compounds. There were reports of a fire being set in one compound and tents have been destroyed.

It seems the perimeter fence of one compound, perhaps Oscar, has now been breached and a major protest is underway.

There are reports of asylum seekers being injured by G4S guards. Some asylum seekers have been taken to the police station.

There have been daily protests on Manus Island involving hundreds of asylum seekers since 25 January as frustrations have increased over delays in processing and uncertainty about their future.

Today's announcement that there would be no resettlement in PNG confirms earlier reports that resettlement was never a part of the PNG deal and the PNG government has never had plans to resettle refugees.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Correction re Manus Island

At the meeting with Immigration department officials around 2pm Manus Island time, the asylum seekers were told that they would not be leaving PNG - that if they wanted to go somewhere else other than PNG, they would have to arrange this with other countries themselves.

However the situation regarding PNG remains unclear. The Foreign Minister told Parliament this week that there was no refugee visa class and that no decision had been made regarding resettlement in PNG. Citizenship for refugees is essentially impossible because of the restrictive rules regarding citizenship.

Morrison confirms Manus arrests and breakout

Manus Island: Eight arrested after breakout at Manus Island immigration detention centre

ABC News Online

By political correspondent Emma Griffiths, Liam Cochrane, staff

First posted Sun 16 Feb 2014, 11:55pm AEDT

Updated Mon 17 Feb 2014, 1:44pm AEDT

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says 35 asylum seekers escaped from the Manus Island detention centre last night but were quickly recaptured. Mr Morrison says the breakout happened about 6:15pm (local time) and was the result of "much-heightened" tensions at the facility.

He says a fence and power pole were damaged during the escape.

"Within about an hour and a quarter, control was restored to the centre," he said.

"All things were quiet last night."

Eight asylum seekers have been arrested and 19 have been treated at the centre's medical clinic, but Mr Morrison says none of the patients are "exhibiting life-threatening conditions".

Mr Morrison says he does not know how the asylum seekers were injured. "It is a situation on Manus, where people don't want to be there," he told Fairfax Radio. "You need to manage those tensions and those tensions were much-heightened last night. "But that situation has been brought under control and we know where everybody is, I'm advised, and every one of our own people is safe."

Manus Island MP Ronnie Knight earlier told the ABC that seven people had been arrested in connection with what his local staff told him was a brawl at the facility.

"It was not a breakout or a riot or anything as such," he said earlier.

"Apparently yesterday afternoon there was an altercation amongst the asylum seekers themselves and it was very, very violent."

Advocate: Protest over resettlement

Local doctor Otto Numan said health workers had told him there was a "mass breakout", but he added that no injured asylum seekers or guards had been brought to hospital.

The Australian-based Refugee Action Coalition put out a statement last night saying protests at the centre had escalated earlier that day.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul says he has spoken to some people inside the Manus Island detention centre.

He says he was told the protest happened after they were told their prospects of resettlement in another country were bleak.

"The things escalated from there. There were some fires set," he said.

"I don't know the extent of the damage. We were told some tents had been burnt.

"Some people had jumped over internal fences and then later, towards six o'clock, the outer perimeter of the fence was breached and people did leave the compound."

PNG resettle deal still stands

Mr Morrison has rejected suggestions that the trouble was triggered by further uncertainty about where asylum seekers would be resettled if they were found to be refugees.

He says the deal, struck by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, for Papua New Guinea to take them in permanently still stands.

"That is the commitment that [PNG Prime Minister] Peter O'Neill gave to Kevin Rudd, that is the agreement they say they will honour," he said.

"But the difficulties of having that put in place, I've mentioned before. There wasn't a lot of detail negotiated by the previous government - we've been salvaging all of that. But I can assure you they're not coming to Australia and the commitments we have from PNG is they'll be resettled there."

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said this morning that he still expects the asylum seekers can be permanently resettled. "Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has reassured me repeatedly that the same deal that was on offer to the former government remains on offer," he told ABC's RN Breakfast.

"My understanding is that there has been no such information given to people that they'll never be resettled in PNG."

Processing begun, says PNG

PNG's foreign minister Rimbink Pato says officials have started processing refugee applications.

But the country does not have a visa category for refugees and there has been little public information about how, and where, they might be resettled. Mr Pato told PNG's parliament last week that he would seek the help of the Australian Government and the United Nations in deciding whether to resettle refugees within the country.

He said the option of resettling refugees in a third country would also be explored.

"So what the cabinet has decided recently is to appoint a group of eminent Papua New Guineans who will be assisted by relevant expertise from the UN, from the Australian Government, and other responsible stakeholders, to come up with relevant policy framework determining the question whether those asylum seekers will or will not be settled in PNG," he said.

The Manus Island detention centre was first set up by the Howard government in 2001.

It was closed by the Labor government in 2008 but reopened by them in November 2012.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-16/eight-arrested-manus-island-detention-centre-breakout-morrison/5263324

Manus Island: Seven arrested in brawl at immigration detention centre, local MP says

ABC News Online

By PNG correspondent Liam Cochrane, staff

First posted Sun 16 Feb 2014, 11:55pm AEDT

Updated Mon 17 Feb 2014, 11:08am AEDT

A Manus Island MP says seven people have been arrested in connection with what has been called a "disturbance" at the immigration detention centre.

There have been reports of a mass breakout at the facility, but MP Ronnie Knight, speaking from Port Moresby, says his local staff have told him there was not a breakout but a brawl.

"It was not a breakout or a riot or anything as such," he said.

"It was an issue between asylum seekers themselves and it turned into a brawl."

The Australian Government has confirmed that there was a "disturbance" at the detention centre last night.

Mr Knight says seven people have been arrested in connection with the incident and could face court as early as today.

"Apparently yesterday afternoon there was an altercation amongst the asylum seekers themselves and it was very, very violent," he said.

"I believe that the police arrested seven of them and locked them up and that's about as far as it goes.

"There was no damage reported and no breakout."

Refugee advocates and a doctor on Manus Island had said asylum seekers escaped from the facility.

Local doctor Otto Numan said health workers had told him there was a "mass breakout", but he added that no injured asylum seekers or guards had been brought to hospital.

The Australian-based Refugee Action Coalition put out a statement last night saying protests at the centre had escalated earlier that day.

The group says a fence was knocked down in the early evening and a riot squad deployed.

Morrison confirms arrests

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed there was a "disturbance" at the centre last night.

"I'm advised that staff are reported safe and accounted for and that the centre is reported to be calm," he said in a statement.

Mr Morrison confirmed that a number of detainees were arrested and that a number had received medical attention.

He also said there was some minor property damage to the centre.

He said more information about the incident will be released once it is confirmed by his department.

Mr Morrison rejected any suggestion that detainees had been informed they would not be resettled in Papua New Guinea.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said this morning that he still expects the asylum seekers can be permanently resettled.

"Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has reassured me repeatedly that the same deal that was on offer to the former government remains on offer," he said.

"My understanding is that there has been no such information given to people that they'll never be resettled in PNG."

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles has called for the Government to release details of what happened as soon as possible.

"The last time there was an incident at Manus Island, the first response by Scott Morrison was that this was essentially a matter for Papua New Guinea - that's obviously not right," he said.

"This is a facility which is integral to Australia's asylum seeker policies, a facility where there are many Australians working. It's very important that the Australian public can be made fully aware as soon as possible."

There are currently about 1,300 detainees on Manus Island.

PNG's foreign minister Rimbink Pato says officials have started processing refugee applications.

But the country does not have a visa category for refugees and there has been little public information about how, and where, they might be resettled.

Mr Pato told PNG's parliament last week that he would seek the help of the Australian Government and the United Nations in deciding whether to resettle refugees within the country.

He said the option of resettling refugees in a third country would also be explored.

"So what the cabinet has decided recently is to appoint a group of eminent Papua New Guineans who will be assisted by relevant expertise from the UN, from the Australian Government, and other responsible stakeholders, to come up with relevant policy framework determining the question whether those asylum seekers will or will not be settled in PNG," he said.

The Manus Island detention centre was first set up by the Howard government in 2001.

It was closed by the Labor government in 2008 but reopened by them in November 2012.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-16/seven-arrested-in-manus-island-detention-centre-brawl-local-mp/5263324

Manus breakout followed on from resettlement briefing

Manus Island: Violent breakout at detention centre occurred after asylum seekers learnt of PNG fate

ABC News Online

By chief political correspondent Emma Griffiths

First posted Mon 17 Feb 2014, 3:46pm AEDT

Updated Mon 17 Feb 2014, 4:34pm AEDT

Tensions at the Manus Island detention centre erupted into a violent breakout last night, after asylum seekers were told their only option for resettlement was to live in Papua New Guinea.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has held a press conference in Canberra to release details about the incident.

Thirty-five asylum seekers escaped from the centre through a fence about 6:15pm (local time) but the Minister says they were quickly recaptured.

Mr Morrison says all "non-essential staff" were evacuated, several internal fences were knocked down, safety-glass panels were smashed, bunk beds were "broken apart" and the pieces used as weapons and thrown.

Eight asylum seekers have been arrested and 19 have been treated at the centre's medical clinic, but Mr Morrison says none of the patients are "exhibiting life-threatening conditions". Five remain in medical care.

Mr Morrison says the "disturbance" was the result of "much-heightened" tensions at the facility but that "control" had been restored by 7:30pm.

He said a meeting convened by the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority (ICSA) with asylum seekers about two hours earlier had broken down when asylum seekers "became agitated and commenced chanting" and the local officials left.

"The transferees were advised by the PNG ICSA that those found to be refugees will be offered settlement in PNG," he said.

Mr Morrison said the officials "confirmed with the transferees that a third country option will not be offered and that neither the PNG nor Australian governments will be acting on behalf of the transferees in seeking alternative settlement countries to PNG".

Advocate: tents burnt

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul says he was told by asylum seekers inside the centre that the trouble started after they were told their prospects of resettlement in another country were bleak.

"The things escalated from there. There were some fires set," he said.

"I don't know the extent of the damage. We were told some tents had been burnt.

"Some people had jumped over internal fences and then later, towards six o'clock, the outer perimeter of the fence was breached and people did leave the compound."

However, Mr Morrison says he has been told no fires were lit.

The Minister says the resettlement deal for Papua New Guinea to take in asylum seekers found to be refugees, struck by former prime minister Kevin Rudd, still stands.

"The arrangement that the previous prime minister had done with the Papua New Guinean government is the same arrangement that we have, with that prime minister and the government of Papua New Guinea," he said.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said this morning he still expects the asylum seekers can be permanently resettled.

"Prime minister Peter O'Neill has reassured me repeatedly that the same deal that was on offer to the former government remains on offer," he told ABC's RN Breakfast.

Mr Morrison says a full review of last night's escape is under way.

Processing started: PNG minister

PNG's foreign minister Rimbink Pato says officials have started processing refugee applications.

But the country does not have a visa category for refugees and there has been little public information about how, and where, they might be resettled.

Mr Pato told PNG's parliament last week that he would seek the help of the Australian Government and the United Nations in deciding whether to resettle refugees within the country.

He said the option of resettling refugees in a third country would also be explored.

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The Manus Island detention centre was first set up by the Howard government in 2001.

It was closed by the Labor government in 2008 but reopened by them in November 2012.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-17/manus-breakout-after-detainees-told-theyd-live-in-png/5265078

Beds smashed as asylum seekers on Manus Island battle with guards

Brisbane Times

February 17, 2014

Sarah Whyte

with Goya Dmytryshchak, Matthew Knott and AAP

Asylum seekers in Manus Island used pieces of bunk beds as weapons in battles with guards, destroyed fences and pulled down light poles as tensions escalated to new heights in the detention centre.

New details have emerged from Manus Island where 35 asylum seekers escaped from the detention centre amid violent clashes with security forces.

Following a meeting on Sunday evening, asylum seekers tried to shatter windows, tents were thrown over the fence and several bunk beds were smashed to create weapons, before the 35 detainees fled the compound.

The violence broke out after asylum seekers were told by immigration officials that if they were not found to be refugees neither Australia nor the PNG would help them find countries to resettle in, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said in a press conference. Mr Morrison denied earlier reports that the asylum seekers were told they would definitely not be resettled in PNG.

"It is our intention they will never be resettled in Australia," he said in a press conference in Canberra.

When asked whether anyone was yet to be found a refugee on Manus Island, Mr Morrison replied, "No yet, no."

Mr Morrison said every escapee had been "accounted for" and 19 asylum seekers had to be treated at the on-site clinic for "non life threatening" injuries, while five asylum seekers remained in the clinic on Monday. Eight had since been arrested.

Three independent refugee advocates claim there was at least one asylum seeker who sustained broken arms and legs in the clash.

Refugee advocate Ian Rintoul said at least one refugee suffered broken bones.

But Mr Morrison said he was yet to be briefed on the full extent of the injuries.

"I don't have a full report yet on the medical condition of those who were treated, and when I do, then I would be able to answer that question, but I won't speculate on that and I don't suggest others do either," he said.

Mr Abbott told ABC Radio on Monday that the "only way to avoid this kind of thing is to stop the boats".

He added that everything that had been agreed to in the former Labor government's deal with PNG applied to the Coalition government, including resettlement in the country.

"And the other thing I've got to say is: if you don't want to be in immigration detention, don't come illegally to Australia," he said.

"It is impossible not to feel sorry for people who want a better life and are living in a horrible country and I guess it's good they think Australia is a beacon. We are a beacon of decency and generosity but we cannot allow people to take advantage of our generosity in this way."

Adelaide man Murtaza Ghulam said on Sunday that his brother, a Pakistani asylum seeker who was in the first group sent to the island in 2013, had phoned him amid the chaos.

"Everyone is fighting and there is a lot of people injured. He told me a lot of people are injured and hurt," he said.

"He just called me for five or six seconds at 10 o'clock."

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said on Sunday that reports indicated that the riot squad was called in before a perimeter fence was breached.

"Protests have been building all day but escalated after a meeting was held to answer asylum seekers' questions about resettlement.

There are about 1300 asylum seekers on the island.

Labor immigration spokesman Richard Marles said the government needed to ensure this kind of incident never happened again.

"This is now the second serious incident which has occurred at the Manus Island detention facility since the Abbott government came to power," Mr Marles told reporters in Melbourne.

www.brisbanetimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/beds-smashed-as-asylum-seekers-on-manus-island-battle-with-guards-20140217-32vof.html

MEDIA RELEASE: Asylum seekers fear local vigilante reprisals

Monday February 17, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

In the aftermath of the detention protest last night, Manus Island locals have armed themselves with machetes, knives and guns. Asylum seekers have urged the media to come to the detention centre to ensure their safety.

One recent call from inside says that sections of the perimeter fence has already been torn down by locals. The detainees are growing increasingly anxious that they will be the victims of vigilante action.

There are reports that local PNG G4S guards have pulled out of at least one compound and asylum seekers have been told that if there is any attack by the locals, G4S will withdraw totally.

The asylum seekers are fearful that there will be a repeat of the situation last October when they were left defenceless when G4S pulled out the detention centre in the face of clashes between PNG army and PNG police.

"The number of broken hands, and baton injuries indicate a use of force last night out of all proportion. One asylum seekers has 70 stitches in his head. We want to see a full inquiry into the excessive use of force against the protesters," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The imposition of the detention centre on Manus Island has created local tensions from the very start. The lack of transparency about resettlement has added to the tensions.

"If those tensions are now turned on the asylum seekers themselves the responsibility will lie with the Australian government. The deal to establish a detention centre on Manus Island was always toxic.

"The detention centre has shattered the peace on Manus Island. Peace will not be restored until the detention centre is closed. In the meantime Scott Morrison is responsible for the safety of the asylum seekers he has dumped on Manus Island."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Manus Island asylum seekers seriously injured in unrest as fences breached

Immigration minister Scott Morrison says non-essential staff were evacuated from island as disturbances worsen

*Helen Davidson and agencies
theguardian.com
Monday 17 February 2014*

A number of asylum seekers on Manus Island have been left with serious injuries, and some may have escaped from detention after protests again escalated on Monday night, the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has confirmed.

Asylum seekers breached internal and external perimeter fences during the second incident in as many nights, but few further details were available. Morrison described the incident as “more serious” than Monday’s disturbance.

Immigration officials are awaiting confirmation on how many people – if any – absconded from the Papua New Guinea detention centre. Face-to-photo identification would occur on Tuesday morning.

“Non-essential staff were evacuated as a precautionary measure last night prior to any escalation of these events, when low-level demonstrations resumed,” Morrison said. “The extent and nature of the subsequent events and perimeter breaches is still being verified.”

“However, I am advised that all staff have been accounted for, our service providers are in control of the centre and there has been no damage to critical infrastructure or accommodation at the centre, which will enable the centre to resume normal operations.”

He had not been advised of any injuries to staff.

Transferees not involved in the breakout were taken to a nearby oval, while G4S addressed the situation in the centre.

Morrison said PNG police did not enter the centre on Monday and their activities related only to dealing with transferees who breached the external perimeter.

“I am advised that G4S were able to protect critical infrastructure and take control of the facility within the centre without the use of batons,” he said.

Authorities have set up a command centre near the facility to deal with the breach, and Morrison will fly to Canberra from Darwin with the Operation Sovereign Borders commander, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, to be briefed on the situation.

In Canberra, the deputy opposition leader, Tanya Plibersek, said Australians needed to hear details of the incident.

“We’ve got Australians working on Manus Island, and of course we’re concerned about any asylum seekers or locals who might have been injured or in any way in danger,” she told ABC Radio.

The incident follows a similar one on Sunday after protests by asylum seekers, “agitated” by a meeting with immigration officials about their futures in PNG, began protesting and damaged parts of the facility.

Asylum-seeker advocates said the protest was the culmination of daily protests against long delays and little information about the processing of their refugee claims.

Morrison confirmed 35 people had escaped but they were caught and returned to the centre. The incident left 19 asylum seekers injured and eight on criminal charges after fences inside and outside the centre were breached.

“The department understands that during the meeting on February 16 the transferees were advised by the PNG ICSA [Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority] that those found to be refugees would be offered settlement in PNG,” Morrison said on Monday.

He also confirmed a third-country option would not be offered to asylum seekers and they would not be offered any assistance by either PNG or Australia in seeking settlement in a third country.

However, Morrison conceded it was still undecided whether people would live on Manus Island or somewhere else, once given refugee status. “All of those issues are still being worked through with the PNG government,” he said.

Processing of claims is believed to have started, but no claims have been finalised yet.

“The issue of resettlement is a further challenge, that’s why we’ve been moving so quickly to establish that accommodation on Manus that provides a place for people to be accommodated post-assessment if they are found to be refugees,” Morrison said.

The accommodation was not restricted to temporary or short-term housing, he said, adding that people being resettled there was a possibility, “but those details haven’t been confirmed”.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/18/manus-island-asylum-seekers-seriously-injured-in-unrest-as-fences-breached

Manus Island unrest: one dead, 77 injured and person shot in buttock

Australian immigration minister confirms 77 people were treated for injuries and one person died of a head injury

*Helen Davidson, Oliver Laughland and agencies
theguardian.com
Monday 17 February 2014*

One person has been killed and 77 injured, one by a gunshot, in unrest at Australia's asylum seeker detention centre on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, immigration minister Scott Morrison has confirmed.

The deceased person died of a head injury on the way to Lorengau hospital in PNG. The gunshot victim, who was wounded in the buttock, and another person who suffered a critical head injury, were being taken to Australia.

At a press conference in Darwin the minister said 77 people had been treated for injuries. Thirteen suffered serious injuries, including the gunshot wound and the critical basal skull fracture that resulted in the evacuations to Australia. Twenty two people suffered minor injuries.

One air ambulance was on its way to the island and another was being arranged to leave on Tuesday afternoon to assist in the medical treatment of the remaining injured.

There have been escalating protests at the centre for several days, with asylum seekers breaching fences, both internal and external, on Sunday and Monday nights, according to Morrison.

Some refugee representatives and people within the facility have claimed that detainees did not start the disturbances but have been under attack by PNG police and locals from outside the centre.

Morrison described Monday's incident as "more serious" than one on Sunday, which saw 35 detainees escape the centre before being recaptured.

"The news of a death is a great tragedy and our sympathies are extended to the transferee's – that person's – family and friends who would have been in the facility as well," he said.

"This is a tragedy, but this was a very dangerous situation where people decided to protest in a very violent way and to take themselves outside the centre and to place themselves at great risk."

Morrison said protesting asylum seekers broke through fences just after 11pm on Monday, however "at 3am this morning order was completely restored to the centres", although it still was not certain that all detainees had been returned.

"At all times the G4S staff who were involved were involved in maintaining order within the centre itself."

A statement from G4S released shortly after Morrison's press conference said the breach of the perimeter fence followed two days of demonstrations by detainees.

“A number of transferees were injured after they breached the perimeter fence and the matter became a law enforcement issue for PNG authorities,” it said.

There was a report of gunfire about 1am local time, Morrison said.

Refugee advocates and people inside the facility contradict Morrison’s statements that asylum seekers caused the disturbance and broke out of the centre, claiming PNG police and locals entered the compounds with weapons and attacked detainees.

“As far as we know no detainees breached the perimeter unless it was in the context of fleeing the detention centre,” Ian Rintoul, spokesman for the Refugee Action Coalition, told Guardian Australia.

He said the fences were breached by locals and PNG police who carried out “systematic and brutal” attacks on asylum seekers.

“[The PNG police] have been inside the compound routinely over the last few weeks dealing with protests,” claimed Rintoul.

According to people on the island, the groups came through the outer perimeter fence “and systematically attacked, compound by compound”, he said.

“People fled out of the compound.”

Sources inside the detention facility have given Guardian Australia a similar account of the first disturbance on Sunday night.

One source said Manus Island police and locals entered the compound and attacked asylum seekers with machetes and bats. “About 15 persons were wounded – cut in neck, cut in shoulder, cut in thigh, back damage, head cut, and [they] had been taken to IHMS,” said the source.

The source also alleged that when attackers could not get inside one compound they began throwing rocks instead.

Another said no detainees attacked Australian staff and that among the injuries at least two people were stabbed.

“Local people attacked us and started throwing stones at us,” he told Guardian Australia.

“We are not safe here at all,” he said.

Morrison said according to his information there were no PNG police inside the centre, and said the gunshot occurred outside the perimeter. Investigations into the shooting would be under the jurisdiction of the PNG authorities, he said.

“If you behave in an unruly and disorderly way then you subject yourself to the response of law enforcement,” he said.

“This has been a rolling series of protests orchestrated by people within the centre,” he said.

“This has been of no surprise to us.” He added the government had been taking steps in recent weeks to step up security at the centre.

In Canberra, the deputy opposition leader, Tanya Plibersek, said Australians needed to hear details of the incident.

“We’ve got Australians working on Manus Island, and of course we’re concerned about any asylum seekers or locals who might have been injured or in any way in danger,” she told ABC radio.

The incident follows a similar one on Sunday after protests by asylum seekers, “agitated” by a meeting with immigration officials about their futures in PNG, began protesting and damaged parts of the facility.

Asylum seeker advocates said the protest was the culmination of daily protests against long delays and little information about the processing of their refugee claims.

Morrison confirmed 35 people had escaped but said they were caught and returned to the centre. The incident left 19 asylum seekers injured and eight on criminal charges after fences inside and outside the centre were breached.

“The department understands that during the meeting on February 16 the transferees were advised by the PNG ICSA [Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority] that those found to be refugees would be offered settlement in PNG,” Morrison said on Monday.

He also confirmed a third-country option would not be offered to asylum seekers and they would not be offered any assistance by either PNG or Australia in seeking settlement in a third country.

However, Morrison conceded it was still undecided whether people would live on Manus Island or somewhere else, once given refugee status. “All of those issues are still being worked through with the PNG government,” he said.

Processing of claims is believed to have started, but no claims have been finalised yet.

“The issue of resettlement is a further challenge, that’s why we’ve been moving so quickly to establish that accommodation on Manus that provides a place for people to be accommodated post-assessment if they are found to be refugees,” Morrison said.

The accommodation was not restricted to temporary or short-term housing, he said, adding that people being resettled there was a possibility, “but those details haven’t been confirmed”.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/18/manus-island-unrest-one-dead-dozens-injured-and-man-shot-in-buttock

MEDIA RELEASE: Police and locals run amok on Manus Island: scores injured, fears for lives of asylum seekers

Tuesday February 18, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Scores of asylum seekers have been injured, some seriously as gangs of armed PNG police and locals go from compound to compound attacking any asylum seekers they can find.

Asylum seekers were left defenceless when all staff and G4S guards were evacuated from the detention centre. Tension with groups of locals had been building throughout the day. G4S had already withdrawn from Mike compound late Monday afternoon.

The attacks started late Monday night after the power was cut to the detention centre. PNG police and locals then had the run of the detention centre.

Locals are armed with machetes, pipes, sticks and stones – have bashed and cut asylum seekers. One asylum seeker has been thrown from the second floor of a building; others have suffered machete cuts. There is one report that a man has been left with his eye hanging from its socket after a bashing.

Asylum seekers fled from their compounds into the dark in a desperate attempt to flee from their attackers. A call from Mustafa in Mike compound around 11pm said that there were only five or six people left in his compound and they were now fleeing to try and find safety. People had fled all the other compounds. Mustafa said that he was covered in his own blood from cuts to the head, hand and arms. He estimated at least 50 people in Mike compound alone had been injured.

One of the last of the staff to be taken out of the detention centre around midnight Monday night said it will be a miracle if no-one is killed.

Gunshots can be heard in the background of calls coming from the detention centre.

"The blood spilled inside the Manus detention centre is on the Immigration Minister's hands. Manus Island has always been a disaster waiting to happen," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"Scott Morrison deliberately played down the seriousness of the situation and the danger that asylum seekers faced. It seems clear now that the injured asylum seekers were deliberately treated inside the detention centre to hide the scale and seriousness of the injuries suffered on Sunday night.

"It must be clear now that asylum seekers cannot live safely on Manus Island. They should never have been taken there. Asylum seekers must be brought to Australia."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Voices from Manus: 'We are in danger. Somebody please help us'

Asylum seekers claim they were attacked inside the compound, contradicting government accounts of two bloody days

Oliver Laughland

theguardian.com

Tuesday 18 February 2014

At 10.29pm local time on Monday, an asylum seeker inside Manus Island detention centre sent this message to Guardian Australia: "We are in danger. They attacked us again. Somebody please help us. They cut off the electricity and attacked us."

By the end of the night one asylum seeker was dead, another shot, another in a critical condition, and dozens injured after the most severe disturbance at the controversial centre since it reopened in October 2012. The asylum seeker who sent this message has been uncontactable since.

A hazy but grim picture of events on Sunday and Monday night on Manus is starting to emerge, with both asylum seekers and contractors working on Manus offering first-hand accounts of the reported rioting.

However, some of the details are directly contradicted by official accounts from the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, and service provider G4S.

A contractor who contacted Guardian Australia described scenes on Monday evening at the Hotel Bibby, the accommodation block where Manus detention centre staff live.

The contractor says that late on Monday evening, injured asylum seekers were being brought to a makeshift hospital outside the accommodation block, driven in on a ute by G4S personnel.

"They were just makeshift beds. Transferees were carried in on sheets. Blood everywhere, crying," the contractor told Guardian Australia. "There were 30 or 40 clients down there. We had gunshot wounds, some with head injuries."

Guardian Australia has verified that every source quoted here was on Manus.

The contractor took notes on some of the accounts given by asylum seekers. They claim that one Iranian asylum seeker told them: "I did nothing, I wasn't involved in the protests, I was in my room, being good, trying to sleep. They came in my room ... they dragged me out of my bed and beat me. They had huge rocks in their hands and they hit my head and my body with them."

There have been different reports about who was responsible for the alleged attacks: guards, the PNG police or local residents.

A Sudanese asylum seeker reportedly told them: "We tried to hide under the containers, but they dragged us out and beat us. We couldn't get away."

Other asylum seekers who have spoken to refugee advocates have described similar scenes – of people entering the detention centre and attacking detainees.

Morrison says there are conflicting reports about whether PNG forces and locals entered the compound and states that the trouble was started on both nights by protesting asylum seekers.

The key point of difference between the official and asylum seekers' accounts on both Sunday and Monday night's disturbances appears to be about what happened in three compounds, Mike, Oscar and Foxtrot, inside the Manus centre.

According to an asylum seeker who contacted Guardian Australia on Monday evening, violence that occurred on Sunday started after the fencing between Mike compound and Foxtrot compound was broken down by asylum seekers, protesting about the status of their refugee claims and resettlement status.

The asylum seeker says that at around 8pm locally-hired G4S guards and Manus residents entered the compound through Oscar complex and "started beating the asylum seekers with swords and bats".

Another asylum seeker who also said he witnessed the disturbance on Sunday night, told Guardian Australia: "The local people attacked us and started throwing stones." On Monday afternoon he continued: "We are not safe here at all."

This description is inconsistent with the official account, which states that around 35 asylum seekers escaped from Manus at 6.15pm with video footage of the Sunday disturbance also showing asylum seekers in what appears to be Mike compound throwing missiles at guards.

On Monday, service personnel were moved from the detention centre earlier in the day as "things were tense from the previous night", the contractor told Guardian Australia.

From the Bibby Hotel, however, they could hear chants of "Fuck PNG" from asylum seekers inside. They say that a radio in the hotel sent a message that the fence in Mike compound had been breached at around 5.30pm and detainees were moving between Foxtrot and Mike compound. They also say that locals had gathered around the perimeter at around this time.

Again, how the fence was breached, and who breached it remains unclear. Morrison says there are conflicting reports about who entered the compound on Monday night and confirmed that shots were fired twice in the evening.

On two occasions it is known that the PNG mobile squad, a special police unit funded by the Australian government, has attempted entry to the Manus camp. In May 2013 PNG police demanded payment from immigration officials at the camp, and in October 2013 a violent clash between PNG police and PNG army occurred outside the camp, with shots reportedly being fired.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/18/voices-from-manus-we-are-in-danger-somebody-please-help-us

Manus Island: Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirms 'more serious incident' at detention centre

ABC News Online

First posted Tue 18 Feb 2014, 6:33am AEDT

Updated Tue 18 Feb 2014, 9:36am AEDT

There has been another serious disturbance at the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea overnight, with some asylum seekers injured and some missing.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed there were demonstrations for a second night at the facility, with asylum seekers breaching perimeter fences. "There has been a further and more serious incident," he said in a statement.

Mr Morrison said there were "a number of persons with serious injuries" treated at the scene. "Confirmation of the location of all transferees is yet to occur and face to photo checks will be undertaken later in the morning," he said.

He says the Government is liaising with local health services and any injured people requiring further treatment will be transferred off-site.

Mr Morrison said non-essential centre staff and asylum seekers who were not involved in the demonstrations were evacuated to a nearby oval for their safety.

Local Papua New Guinea police did not enter the centre, but have been dealing with the asylum seekers who breached the external fences, according to the statement.

"I am advised that G4S were able to protect critical infrastructure and take control of the facility within the centre without the use of batons," the statement said.

Mr Morrison says the Immigration Department is still working to determine the exactly what happened, but all staff have been accounted for, "which will allow the centre to resume normal operations". He says there was no damage to critical infrastructure or accommodation at the centre.

The Minister is in Darwin, where he planned to inspect patrol boats, but says he is returning to Canberra as soon as possible to be briefed.

The latest incident follows on from one on Sunday night, when 35 asylum seekers escaped from the detention centre but were quickly recaptured.

Mr Morrison says that breakout was the result of "much-heightened" tensions at the facility. He says a fence and power pole were damaged during that escape.

Advocate: 'savage attacks'

The Refugee Action Coalition's Ian Rintoul says Mr Morrison's statement is misleading.

He says the latest incident began with locals breaking into the centre.

"The perimeter fences were breached by locals, the centre had already been evacuated and PNG police and locals carried out systematic attacks, savage attacks on the asylum seekers last night," he told ABC News Breakfast.

"If there are asylum seekers outside the perimeter fence it's because they've fled for their lives late last night from those attacks."

He says up to 50 people have been injured inside the compound.

"Bashings, cuts from machetes, with sticks, gunshots were heard overnight," he said.

"I don't know of anyone being shot but people - one person we were told - was actually thrown off the first floor of one of the buildings."

The ABC has been unable to verify Mr Rintoul's claims.

But a man who said he was a detainee at the centre phoned the ABC last night saying shots were fired and most of the detainees had fled.

He refused to give his name and the ABC cannot verify these reports.

Mr Rintoul says tensions around the detention centre have been growing.

"There are lots of sources of that tension, the very existence of the detention centre has caused problems in terms of local traders who actually gets advantages or spoils of the detention centre," he said.

"There have been problems in the city with G4S guards and other PNG guards, there have been issues between... PNG police and the military over pay and who's got responsibility for particular jobs inside the place.

"So the thing is dysfunctional. It's quite clear now that they just can't guarantee the welfare of the asylum seekers."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-18/morrison-confirms-another-serious-incident-at-manus-island/5265960

Fresh breakout at Manus Island after more violent riots

The Age

February 18, 2014

Matthew Knott

with Sarah Whyte and AAP

Asylum seekers have escaped the Manus Island detention centre for the second night in a row following violent clashes overnight.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said in a statement on Tuesday morning that the incident was more serious than the violent altercations that occurred the previous night when asylum seekers destroyed fences, tore down light poles and smashed bunk beds after clashes with security guards.

Staff were evacuated from the detention centre on Monday night and the asylum seekers who escaped may still be missing.

Thirty-five asylum seekers escaped and 19 were treated for injuries on Sunday night.

It is unclear how many asylum seekers escaped during the incident on Monday night. Mr Morrison confirmed that asylum seekers had again been injured.

"I am advised that there has been a further and more serious incident at the Manus Island processing centre overnight involving transferees breaching internal and external perimeter fences at the centre," Mr Morrison said in a statement.

"I am advised non-essential staff were evacuated as a precautionary measure last night prior to any escalation of these events, when low level demonstrations resumed.

"The extent and nature of the subsequent events and perimeter breaches is still being verified. However, I am advised that all staff have been accounted for, our service providers are in control of the centre and there has been no damage to critical infrastructure or accommodation at the centre, which will enable the centre to resume normal operations."

Lorengau hospital chief executive Dr Otto Numan said two asylum seekers were being cared for at the hospital.

One had an injury to his buttocks, while another sustained an injury to the right side of his face. "I have not examined them myself, so I can't say how serious," he said.

Refugee advocate Ian Rintoul, citing reports from inside the camp, claims asylum seekers were attacked by police and locals.

On Monday evening, asylum seekers said they were fearful of a violent attack by the local PNG police, which have been dubbed as the "death squad", and angry locals who they said would be wielding machetes, knives and guns.

The president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Professor Gillian Triggs, told the ABC that the Australian government owed an obligation to those who were seeking asylum under international law.

"Australia owes an obligation of protection of those who seek asylum with us," Dr Triggs said.

Local PNG MP Ron Knight said responsibility lay solely with detention security provider G4S.

"This shows that shoddy camp management and lack of responsible authority prevalent at Lombrum (naval base, where the facility is located)," he said.

Mr Knight said his staff were turned away from the centre when they tried to find out what was going on.

"Yes, all guards that turned back my staff are expatriate G4s staff," he said.

Mr Morrison, who is visiting Darwin, said he would return to Canberra as soon as possible for briefings from the head of Operation Sovereign Borders Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell. He will hold a media conference from Darwin at 10am on the latest incident.

In Canberra, Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek said on Tuesday that Australians needed to hear details of the incident.

"We've got Australians working on Manus Island, and of course we're concerned about any asylum seekers or locals who might have been injured or in any way in danger," she told ABC radio.

The Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young told Fairfax Media on Tuesday that if the reports were true then Manus Island must be closed.

"Responsibility for this policy failure falls directly at the feet of the Abbott Government and the Immigration Minister," she said.

"The government was warned about the toxic environment on Manus Island repeatedly by organisations like Amnesty International and the UN but those warnings were ignored and dismissed."

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/fresh-breakout-at-manus-island-after-more-violent-riots-20140218-32wt1.html

One person dead, others seriously injured during violent Manus Island clashes

The Age

February 18, 2014

Sarah Whyte

Serious questions have been raised about Australia's responsibility to asylum seekers held in offshore detention centres after violent clashes on Manus Island that left one asylum seeker dead, another shot and scores of others severely injured.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed 77 asylum seekers had been injured on the second night of violence in a vicious clash between locals and the PNG police on Monday.

Two asylum seekers have been flown to Australia for treatment, one for a fractured skull and another for a gun-shot wound.

Refugee advocates say locals and the PNG police attacked the centre with machetes, knives and other weapons and have again condemned Australia's treatment of asylum seekers in offshore detention centres – saying Manus Island is dangerous and lawless.

They say Australia has put the lives of people seeking asylum, who have already fled torture, war and gross human rights violations, at extreme risk.

On Monday night, one asylum seeker from Lebanon who is in the Manus Island compound wrote in a Facebook message that the violence had started again.

"Tonight polices [sic] and g4s attack us again. Many peoples in the yard. Injure please we need one to help us. May be till morning they will kill us. We are human or animls [sic]."

The security firm G4S, which manages the detention centre, said claims of "internal attacks" within the centre were unfounded.

In a statement, the firm said it had removed all "non-essential" staff from the compound with asylum seekers who were not participating in the protest. The statement said that the asylum seekers were injured once they left the detention centre.

Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, said it was obvious that Manus Island was an "inherently dangerous place that the minister cannot secure", saying there should be no question that these asylum seekers should be bought back to Australia.

The Refugee Rights Action Network's Victoria Martin said: "Last night's attack was a massacre."

"It was a pre-meditated attack on unarmed and defenseless asylum seekers some of which have escaped war and are now being put back into, what is essentially a war zone. Manus Island is lawless. These are dangerous people," she said.

Mr Morrison, however, denied reports that the PNG police entered the compound, saying that asylum seekers who left the centre were putting themselves in danger and "subjecting themselves to the response of the local law".

"If people choose to remove themselves from that centre then they're obviously putting themselves at much greater risk and in an environment where there is violent behaviour," he told reporters at a media conference in Darwin.

"Those who are breaching the perimeter fence and going out of the centre, then this is a disorderly environment in which there is always great risk.

"When there are people who are charged under Papua New Guinea law to maintain law and order in that situation, now if you behave an unruly way and in a disorderly way, then you subject yourself to the response of law enforcement."

Mr Morrison said the news of the death was a "great tragedy" and "our sympathies are extended to the transferees - that person's family and friends who would have been in the facility as well".

President of the Human Rights Commission, Professor Gillian Triggs, said Australia was not upholding its international responsibility to asylum seekers.

"Clearly there needs to be an inquiry into this," Professor Triggs told Fairfax Media.

"The primary obligation that Australia has is to offer protection for asylum seekers and we cannot abdicate that responsibility by sending people to a third country, in this case Papua New Guinea, but it is clear that responsibility is not being met."

Professor Triggs said the Australian government had exposed asylum seekers to these conditions and it was inevitable asylum seekers would suffer mental illness, stress and, in some cases, violence.

On Monday evening, asylum seekers said they were fearful of a violent attack by the local PNG police, which have been dubbed as the "death squad", and angry locals who they said would be wielding machetes, knives and guns.

At the same time, a spokesman from Mr Morrison told Fairfax Radio that any information about a second attack on Monday was "completely untrue" and we should be "more sceptical of stories coming from activists".

On Sunday night, asylum seekers in Manus Island used pieces of bunk beds as weapons in battles with guards, destroyed fences and pulled down light poles.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/one-person-dead-others-seriously-injured-during-violent-manus-island-clashes-20140218-32x3k.html

Manus Island: Asylum seeker made frantic call to brother as violence unfolded

ABC News Online

Posted Tue 18 Feb 2014, 3:24pm AEDT

A man has described the frantic phone call he received from his asylum seeker brother, who was left "covered with blood" after violence erupted at the Manus Island detention centre overnight.

A second riot at the centre in Papua New Guinea last night left one asylum seeker dead, another in a critical condition and 13 others with serious injuries.

Ghulam Murtaza, who fled Pakistan and is in Australia on a bridging visa, has told the ABC his brother Ghulam Mustafa rang him about 11:40 last night.

He says his brother told him police and locals were trying to force the asylum seekers from the detention centre.

"He was crying and he was shouting. He said, 'the local people of Manus Island and police are fighting with us'," he said.

"[He said], 'the local peoples on Manus Island are throwing stones on us. They have guns ... and they have sticks and they are going to kill us'."

Mr Murtaza said his brother urged him to get a message to the media to "help us ... or we will all die".

"My brother said, 'I am also injured. I am covered with my blood. Someone hurt me by stones and sticks. I don't know when I will talk to you again'," he said.

Mr Murtaza says his brother told him the violence erupted after asylum seekers were told they would be in PNG for at least 10 years.

He says he was told authorities cut power to the detention centre and that asylum seekers from three compounds had escaped.

By the time his brother called him, just five or six people were left in his compound.

Urged not to come by boat

Mr Murtaza arrived in Australia in July last year.

His brother arrived shortly afterwards and was among the first group to be sent to Manus Island on July 20.

"When I reached Christmas Island I said to my brother, please do not come here by boat. If you want to come here, come here by plane," he said.

"But he never listened to me and today he is in Manus Island.

"In our country we are not secure. In Papua New Guinea we are not secure."

Mr Murtaza has not had contact with his brother since. He does not know how to get back into contact with him.

He says his brother has always contacted him from a private number within the centre.

Morrison promises inquiry

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said it was his "great regret" to report the extent of the injuries sustained by asylum seekers in the riot.

He has promised a full inquiry into the "very tense and very stressful" incident.

"The deceased person involved a head injury and that person passed away on transfer to the hospital," he said.

Mr Morrison said the person was injured outside the centre.

The asylum seeker who is listed as critically injured received a skull fracture and one seriously injured asylum seeker was shot in the buttock.

Both are being transferred to Australia for treatment.

The latest incident follows unrest on Sunday night when 35 asylum seekers escaped from the detention centre but were recaptured.

The ABC has obtained video footage of that incident, shot from the perimeter of the compound.

It shows detainees shouting and throwing stones at guards and houses nearby.

The detainees are also seen rushing towards the main gate.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-18/asylum-seeker-called-brother-as-manus-riot-unfolded/5267524

Manus Island: PNG police fired shots twice during asylum seeker protest, Scott Morrison says

ABC News Online

By political correspondent Emma Griffiths

First posted Tue 18 Feb 2014, 5:36pm AEDT

Updated Tue 18 Feb 2014, 7:03pm AEDT

Papua New Guinea police opened fire at least twice during a violent riot at the Manus Island detention facility last night, according to advice given to the Immigration Minister.

Scott Morrison held a second press conference this afternoon to release more details about the unrest, following briefings from his department in Canberra and a meeting of Cabinet's National Security Committee.

One asylum seeker was killed and another has been flown to Australia for treatment of a suspected skull fracture. Another asylum seeker was shot in the buttocks and has been treated in Port Moresby, along with three others whose injuries warranted treatment in the PNG capital. Mr Morrison said 12 men are being treated for serious injuries in the centre's clinic.

In all 77 people were injured, mostly suffering head injuries, in a violent clash that involved hundreds of asylum seekers, PNG police and G4S security contractors from the centre.

Mr Morrison said the process of advising the family of the dead man is "currently being undertaken" and would not release any details of the asylum seeker's identity, nationality or age. "Once I'm advised that I can release those details then I'd be happy to release those details," he said.

Mr Morrison said the protests flared at 9:45pm (local time) when asylum seekers pushed down internal fences at the centre. "The incident escalated quickly with several hundred transferees involved," he said.

"A number of transferees moved from the facility to the adjoining road where they also pushed down fences."

He said the PNG police "were reported to have fired shots" at 11:20pm.

"At around midnight local time at the height of the disturbance, G4S staff withdrew to the internal perimeter, and the PNG police intervened with those transferees who had breached the external perimeter," he said.

"At 1:00am the PNG police were once again reported to have fired shots."

No suggestion' PNG police fired at asylum seekers

But Mr Morrison said it could not be assumed that PNG police had injured any asylum seekers.

"There's no suggestion they fired at asylum seekers. I said shots were reported to be fired," he said.

"There's no suggestion those shots were the ones that involved the individual being shot in the buttocks either.

"You need to be careful not to connect dots here that I haven't connected.

"They could have been fired in the air as a warning, they could have been fired in any number of circumstances."

Mr Morrison said the protests first began with about 50 to 70 asylum seekers demanding the release of eight people detained by PNG police the previous night.

The eight asylum seekers were arrested following what the Minister described as a "disturbance" on Sunday night.

The ABC has obtained video footage of that incident, shot from the perimeter of the compound.

It shows detainees shouting and throwing stones at guards and houses nearby.

The detainees are also seen rushing towards the main gate.

Mr Morrison said the protests were a clear attempt by asylum seekers to "completely disrupt operations" at the centre.

"On this occasion, despite what is a terrible tragedy, the centre stands, the centre operates and the centre was operating first thing this morning," he said.

The Minister said 100 security staff have been put on standby and a decision about whether they will go to Manus Island will be made in the next few days.

"This is in addition to the 130 additional security staff that were deployed to Manus on February 1-3," he said.

Just last week, the security firm, G4S, advertised for jobs on Manus Island for Safety and Security Officers, describing it as an "exciting" position.

The Minister has sent his department's deputy-secretary to Papua New Guinea for meetings tomorrow and ordered his department head Martin Bowles to lead a full review of the incident.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott also phoned his PNG counterpart today.

"Prime Minister O'Neill confirmed PNG's ongoing commitment to offshore processing on Manus Island and resettlement in PNG," Mr Morrison said

Refugee advocate's claims 'not correct'

Earlier today, Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the latest incident began with locals breaking into the centre.

"The perimeter fences were breached by locals, the centre had already been evacuated, and PNG police and locals carried out systematic attacks, savage attacks on the asylum seekers last night," he told ABC News Breakfast.

The ABC has been unable to verify Mr Rintoul's claims but Mr Morrison said they were "not correct" on the information he had been given.

The Opposition has called for a "full inquiry" arguing that the facility is "utterly critical" to Australia's asylum seeker strategy.

The Greens and Independent MP Andrew Wilkie want the centre closed and offshore processing brought to an end.

But Mr Morrison says the Government's determination to stick to its policies is "absolute".

"The Government's resolve when it comes to our policies is very clear and that resolve won't break," he said.

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

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

Call to advocates during unrest

Meanwhile, refugee advocates have revealed last night's outbreak of violence prompted distressed asylum seekers to call them for help.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre recorded some of the calls it received.

They cannot verify the identity of the callers, but say the details are consistent with other information they have received.

One caller said asylum seekers feared both security staff and local residents.

"They are still killing. I do not know until now if they killed many of us or they injured one of us. But everyone is bleeding," the caller said.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-18/png-police-fired-shots-twice-during-manus-protest-morrison/5267820

Scott Morrison announces independent inquiry into Manus Island violence

Minister says there were reports that Papua New Guinea police fired shots twice during Monday's disturbances

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Tuesday 18 February 2014

An independent review will investigate disturbances in Australia's detention centre on Manus Island in which a man died and dozens were injured, the immigration minister said.

Scott Morrison said that the secretary of his department, Martin Bowles, would "initiate a full review into this incident in the same way the former government commissioned previous reviews into incidents". He said there were reports that Papua New Guinea police had fired shots twice during the disturbances on Monday night.

Speaking at a press conference in Canberra on Tuesday afternoon, he did not rule out that people other than police might have entered the compound during the unrest. Morrison said there was no indication the police fired at asylum seekers or that an injured asylum seeker who was shot in the buttocks sustained the injury from police officers.

"There's no suggestion they fired at asylum seekers," he said. "Shots were reported to be fired.

"There's no suggestion that those shots were the ones involved with the person that was shot in the buttocks."

Earlier, speaking in Darwin, the minister reported 77 people had been treated for injuries.

Thirteen suffered serious injuries, including the gunshot victim and another person who suffered a critical basal skull fracture. Twenty two people suffered minor injuries.

Morrison rejected claims that the fence at the Manus Island compound was pushed in from the outside: "That's not consistent with the reports that I've received."

Earlier on Tuesday, the opposition immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, called for an inquiry into events at the Manus Island detention facility.

"It would appear that Manus Island is melting down under minister Morrison's watch and we need to understand why that is happening," he said.

"There needs to be a full inquiry ... We cannot afford for the Manus Island facility to fall over.

"It more than anything else is the reason why we are seeing a reduction in the flow of boats from Indonesia."

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/18/scott-morrison-announces-independent-inquiry-into-manus-island-violence

Inquiry launched into PNG violence

The Age

February 19, 2014

Sarah Whyte

with David Wroe, Natalie O'Brien, Bianca Hall and AAP

A government inquiry is to be held into violent clashes on Manus Island that left one Iranian asylum seeker dead and scores of others severely injured.

Monday was the second day of violence in Papua New Guinea as tensions escalated between asylum seekers, the security forces, the local police and PNG residents, in what refugee advocates have described as a "premeditated massacre" on the island.

On Tuesday night, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison conceded it was unclear whether the attacks happened inside or outside the detention centre. "I can't give you an absolute position on that as there are some conflicting reports at the moment and once those are resolved and the reasons for those conflicts then I'd be in a position to report on it," he said at a news conference in Canberra.

Mr Morrison said an independent review would investigate the violence. The secretary of his department, Martin Bowles, would "initiate a full review into this incident in the same way the former government commissioned previous reviews into incidents".

Tension had been simmering for weeks in the centre, as asylum seekers became more anxious about their future and when they would be processed. In a meeting on Sunday night they were told that if they were not found to be a refugee, neither the Australian nor PNG governments would help them resettle in PNG.

That night 35 people escaped the centre, wielding bed posts as weapons in protest at the news and 19 people were injured. On Monday afternoon, the tension had become so great asylum seekers were contacting refugee advocates saying they were fearful of a violent attack by PNG police and angry locals.

By early Tuesday morning one asylum seeker had been killed, one had been shot and more than 77 people lay bloodied, cut and severely injured. Four asylum seekers have since been transferred to Port Moresby, while one has been transferred to Australia.

The president of the Human Rights Commission, Professor Gillian Triggs, said Australia was not upholding its international responsibility to asylum seekers, and also called for an inquiry.

"The primary obligation that Australia has is to offer protection for asylum seekers and we cannot abdicate that responsibility by sending people to a third country, in this case Papua New Guinea."

On Tuesday morning Mr Morrison warned asylum seekers of dangerous conditions outside the centre. "Those who are breaching the perimeter fence and going out of the centre, then this is a disorderly environment in which there is always great risk," he told reporters in Darwin.

But there is some doubt where the Iranian asylum seeker died.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said in a statement that the Iranian man died from "serious injuries sustained during the fight at the centre".

Iran's official news agency, IRNA, has reported that the government has called in the Australian ambassador to protest against the death of the asylum seeker.

Tuesday's report said the ministry's consular director, Hosein Mirfakhar, expressed Iran's "protest and discontent" to Paul Foley about the asylum seeker and Iran was seeking changes in the treatment of asylum seekers.

Mr O'Neill said the incident was "most regrettable" and vowed to investigate. Anyone found to be breaking PNG law would be prosecuted, he said.

His spokesman later said the Iranian man had been "in or around the centre" when he was killed. He could not say whether the man was inside the perimeter.

The security firm G4S, which manages the detention centre, denied claims of attacks inside the centre. In a statement, G4S said it had removed all "non-essential" staff from the compound, along with asylum seekers who were not participating in the protest. The statement said the asylum seekers were injured once they left the detention centre.

The opposition spokesman for immigration, Richard Marles, calling for an inquiry into the incident. "It's becoming apparent that Manus Island is melting down on Minister Morrison's watch," he said on ABC 24.

The Refugee Rights Action Network's Victoria Martin said: "Last night's attack was a massacre. It was a pre-meditated attack on unarmed and defenceless asylum seekers, some of which have escaped war and are now being put back into, what is essentially a war zone. Manus Island is lawless."

The Greens have demanded that the Manus Island centre be closed.

Greens leader Senator Christine Milne accused the government of "bragging" about poor conditions at the facility. "Ministerial responsibility has to mean something and Scott Morrison has to stop hiding," Senator Milne said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/inquiry-launched-into-png-violence-20140218-32y1b.html

Manus Island riots: Two investigations underway as Government sticks by its policies

ABC Radio CAF - AM

By Simon Cullen and Naomi Woodley

Posted Wed 19 Feb 2014, 8:58am AEDT

Australia and Papua New Guinea will both conduct investigations into recent violence at the Manus Island detention centre that left one asylum seeker dead and others seriously wounded.

Dozens of asylum seekers have been treated for head injuries after violent clashes on Monday night and a number will require further treatment at Port Moresby.

One asylum seeker has also been flown to Australia for medical care.

The man who died on Monday night was an Iranian national, but no details have been released about the asylum seeker who was shot or the others who were seriously injured.

Papua New Guinea authorities will carry out an investigation and there will also be a review by Australia's Immigration Department, but the Federal Government says it will not change its hardline stance on asylum seekers.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has sent senior government officials to Manus Island to gather evidence for a review by Immigration Department Secretary Martin Bowles.

Mr Morrison says 130 extra guards were sent to the island earlier this month and the Government is prepared to send more if necessary.

About 100 additional security staff have been placed on standby for deployment on Manus Island.

Mr Morrison says PNG police fired shots during the incident, but the circumstances remain unclear.

"At this stage, I can just tell you there were two occasions where our authorities have reported back to us that shots were heard and reported to be fired by PNG police but that in no way suggests in any way, that those shots were fired at any individuals," he said.

Mr Morrison says he has no evidence that asylum seekers in the centre were armed and security staff employed by the contractor G4S do not carry guns.

Opposition calls for inquiry into 'melt-down'

Opposition spokesman Richard Marles has described the Manus Island centre as being in "meltdown" and wants a full inquiry to make sure the centre keeps operating.

"We cannot afford for the Manus Island detention facility to fall over," he said.

"It is the cornerstone of Australia's strategy in terms of reducing the flow of boats from Indonesia.

"It more than anything else is the reason why we are seeing a reduction in the flow of boats from Indonesia."

PNG's prime minister Peter O'Neill says a thorough investigation by police, defence and immigration officials is underway and any instances of criminality will be dealt with under PNG law.

No asylum seekers sent to PNG have yet had their refugee claims determined, but Mr O'Neill has reaffirmed his government's commitment to the resettlement program.

Mr Morrison agrees there will not be any changes.

"We will review any further transfers in the short term, but anyone who is on Christmas Island knows that they'll either be transferred to Nauru or Manus, because that's what's been occurring," he said.

Refugee advocates say protests were inevitable

But Refugee Council of Australia head Paul Power says the protests were inevitable.

"You know, both major parties are at fault. This is a continuation of the policies implemented by the Labor Party in government when they had full knowledge of what would occur and it continues to be implemented in a more harsh way by the Liberal-National Coalition," he said.

Mr Power says the council would like offshore processing to be scrapped, but says the Government should at the least follow the advice of the previous government's expert panel, and set up some form of independent oversight.

"Everyone who is there is either being detained at the behest of the Australian Government or being paid by the Australian Government as a contractor of some sort," he said.

"So there is no independent oversight of what's going on.

"The expert panel on asylum seekers when they recommended that this centre be established, not only did they recommend that the centre be an open processing centre for asylum claims - which it isn't - but they also recommended that there be forms of independent oversight and that hasn't happened at all."

The UNHCR has also expressed its concern.

No-one was available for interview but the agency referred AM to a report it issued in November, criticising conditions at the centre and also calling for an oversight body to be established.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs is renewing her bid to visit Manus Island to inspect the detention centre.

She says she is concerned the investigations to be conducted will not be objective enough.

"I have received a letter from the [Immigration] Minister denying me access but I will ask again and I do so with great respect," she said.

"This is government policy, I have to respect that in a democratic system, but at the same time I think that the Australian Human Rights Commission should be permitted to go to these facilities."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-19/manus-island-riots-two-investigations-underway/5268566>

Inquiry into Manus Island violence should be independent, says Human Rights Commission

The Age

February 19, 2014

Matthew Knott

Human Rights Commission President Gillian Triggs has urged the Abbott government to appoint a respected former judge or public servant to investigate the conditions in Australia's offshore detention centres.

Her comments come as Iran's foreign ministry reportedly called in Australia's ambassador to protest the death the Iranian asylum seeker.

According to a report from the country's official news agency, IRNA, the ministry's consular director, Hosein Mirfakhar, expressed Iran's "protest and discontent" to Australia's ambassador to Iran Paul Foley.

The Australian and Papua New Guinea governments have announced inquiries after violent clashes between security forces and asylum seekers on Manus Island left one Iranian asylum seeker dead and 77 injured.

On Tuesday night, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison conceded it was unclear whether the attacks happened inside or outside the detention centre. "I can't give you an absolute position on that as there are some conflicting reports at the moment and once those are resolved and the reasons for those conflicts then I'd be in a position to report on it," he said at a news conference in Canberra.

Mr Morrison said an independent review would investigate the violence. The secretary of his department, Martin Bowles, would "initiate a full review into this incident in the same way the former government commissioned previous reviews into incidents".

But Professor Triggs said she did not believe these inquiries would be sufficiently objective.

"I think we've reached a stage now with the violence – both of course a year ago in Nauru and now again on Manus – that it really does call for a more objective inquiry into what is happening at these detention centres and what the conditions are that lead to the levels of very high anxiety and in some cases violence," she told ABC radio on Wednesday morning.

Professor Triggs said it would be appropriate for a retired judge or civil servant to handle the inquiry. She also called on the government to appoint an independent panel to monitor conditions inside Australia's detention network.

"I think that a regular monitoring body of respected professionals in the area would carry considerable credibility and would keep us all better informed," she said.

Professor Triggs said she believed the "tipping point" for the latest violence was a lack of clarity about when asylum seekers would be processed.

Opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek said it was a "bit rich" for the Iranian government to criticise Australia's treatment of asylum seekers.

But Ms Plibersek said: "I think the reports [of violence on Manus Island] are very disturbing indeed and I think it's important that there be a full investigation and that it is made public."

Mr Morrison said that Tuesday evening passed without incident at the Manus Island centre and that conditions remained calm.

An asylum seeker involved in the incident on Tuesday night has been flown to Brisbane to receive treatment for a fractured skull.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/inquiry-into-manus-island-violence-should-be-independent-says-human-rights-commission-20140219-32zna.html

Human rights advocate slams Manus inquiries

The death of an Iranian asylum seeker has prompted the immigration minister to announce two inquiries into violence at the Manus Island Detention Centre. But human rights and refugee advocates have slammed the probes for not being sufficiently independent, writes Matt O'Neil.

Radio National - Breakfast

Matt O'Neil

Wednesday 19 February 2014

The President of the Australian Human Rights Commission has questioned the objectivity of the inquiry into violence at the Manus Island Detention Centre.

Gillian Triggs told RN Breakfast the two inquiries announced by Immigration Minister Scott Morrison are not satisfactory.

Mr Morrison this morning announced the launch of the probes, which are to be undertaken by the head of the Immigration Department and PNG authorities.

'The difficulty with inquiries by the varied parties that are being challenged, or whose practices are being investigated, is always less than optimal,' said Ms Triggs.

'I think we've reached a stage now with the violence, both of course in Nauru a year ago, and now again on Manus, [that] it really does call for some form of more objective inquiry into just what is happening at these detention centres and what the conditions are that lead to the levels of very high anxiety, and in some cases, violence.'

Ms Triggs said an inquiry headed by a 'retired civil servant' would be preferable for assessing the conditions for asylum seekers in detention on Manus Island.

'Somebody who has objectivity, and who would be able to look at the development of the facts,' she said.

Ms Triggs also warned that conditions in the detention centre had brought tensions between detainees and security officials to a tipping point

'When they are advised that their claims to asylum seeker status are not being assessed ... and when they are told that they really don't see any resolution within years and possibly no settlement ... that becomes highly inflammatory.'

'Any sense of time limit or order or even a basic rule of law are now being lost to these detainees, and I think they simply live in despair.'

Ms Triggs called for the creation of a formal, permanent and independent oversight body to be set up to inspect conditions in immigration detention centres.

'I think that a regular monitoring body of respected professionals in the area would carry considerable credibility and would keep us all better informed,' she said.

But Ms Triggs also claims that offshore processing will always place asylum seekers in a dangerous situation, irrespective of oversight.

'The core problem is that offshore processing is a highly dangerous business, and it really takes us away from what we all know is the obligation of Australia to offer protection to people.'

'In countries which have very significant development problems of their own and breakdowns in the rule of law ... it becomes impossible for Australia to meet even its most basic obligation to protect these people and ensure their safety.'

'From the point of view of international legal standards and international law, there's very little doubt that Australia remains responsible.'

www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/manus-island-violence-gillian-triggs/5268720

Desperate call for help as Manus rioters go on rampage with bedposts

Festering fury over refugee status led to a camp escape

The Age

February 19, 2014

Sarah Whyte

Tensions on Manus Island had been building for days. On Sunday night, asylum seekers at the detention centre were told that if they were not found to be a refugee, neither the Australian nor Papua New Guinea governments would help them resettle in Papua New Guinea. So far, not one of the 1340 asylum seekers has had their refugee application processed.

Within hours, 35 people had escaped the centre, allegedly wielding bedposts as weapons in protest against the news. By the time the unrest was quelled, 19 asylum seekers were injured.

By Monday afternoon, asylum seekers claimed they were in fear of attack. Refugee advocate Ian Rintoul, based in Australia, says he was told by would-be refugees that they were being threatened by locals and Papua New Guinean authorities.

At 9pm, some detainees had locked themselves into a telephone room to plead for help from Amnesty, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Australian government and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, saying that they feared for their lives.

"They are injuring us ... please, if you are the office for asylum seekers, please contact someone, or the media or anyone," an asylum seeker pleaded on the phone, in a voicemail heard by Fairfax Media left with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. "We are not here by choice. The government brought us here by force. We are not even fighting them, we are running away from them."

The male asylum seeker, who did not identify himself, said: "The PNG guys, they attacked us before they switched off the electricity and then they attacked us with stones ... they are armed.

"They broke down everything and they injured many, many of the transferees in this compound."

At about the same time, a spokesman from Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's office told a journalist at Fairfax Radio, who had heard of a second incident and contacted his office, that any information about a second attack on Monday was "completely untrue" and that they should be "more sceptical of stories coming from activists".

At 9.09pm, a man claiming to be a Lebanese asylum seeker detained in Manus, wrote in a Facebook message that the violence had started again.

"Tonight, polices and g4s attack us again," they wrote. "Many peoples in the yard. Injure please we need one to help us. May be till morning they will kill us. We are human or animals."

Then, at 11.40pm, asylum seeker Ghulam Mustasa from Pakistan rang his brother claiming the locals had come inside the compound as it had become dark.

"My brother was inside," he said. "He said 'I am covered in blood' and a stone hit his head.

"He said 'they will kill us'. He was in the compound saying 'I am going to run away to save my life'."

By early Tuesday morning, two more shots had been fired by Papua New Guinean police, one asylum seeker had been killed, one had been shot and more than 77 people lay bloodied, cut and shot.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/desperate-call-for-help-as-manus-rioters-go-on-rampage-with-bedposts-20140218-32yl7.html

MEDIA RELEASE: Murdered Manus Island asylum seeker was Faili Kurd

Wednesday February 19, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

The asylum seeker killed on Monday night in the Manus Island detention centre was a 24 year-old Faili Kurd. He was one of the first people sent to Manus Island by the Rudd Labor government in August 2013.

The man was also a resident of the Mike Compound in the detention centre that has been at the centre of the detainees' accounts of the events on Monday night.

"This is not a 'tragic incident' as Minister Morrison has described it. It is a murder probably perpetrated by PNG police that Australia has contracted to provide security on the perimeter of the detention centre," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"It is also likely that the man was killed in the grounds of the Manus base, hardly a place where asylum seekers 'place themselves at great risk' as Minister Morrison has described, unless it is the contracted PNG police that are the danger.

"We are appealing to the government to ensure that there is a full coronial enquiry into the man's death and that proper arrangements are made with the man's family."

Slit throat

"Minister Morrison has also been very selective with the information about the serious injuries inflicted on the asylum seekers by PNG police and local employees of the G4S," added Ian Rintoul.

"It is passing strange that Minister Morrison neglected to mention that among the injured evacuated from Manus Island was an Iranian man was flown to Port Moresby private hospital after having his throat slit at the detention centre on Monday night.

"Without a full and transparent inquiry into the events of Monday night, no-one can have confidence in the account being presented by the government.

"It is quite clear that the Australian government cannot guarantee the safety of people in detention on Manus Island. There must be an immediate moratorium on any transfers of asylum to Manus Island and arrangements made to bring the asylum seekers to Australia."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Iran Summoned Australia's Ambassador after the Asylum Seeker Death On Manus Island

Business Insider

Ben Collins

Feb 19 2014

Iranian state television has reported the country's foreign minister summoned Australia's ambassador in Tehran, Paul Foley, after an asylum seeker was killed on Manus Island.

One asylum seeker is dead, and two seriously injured after a series of protests spilled into widespread violence at the Australian-run immigration detention centre earlier this week.

Foley, according to the report, was summoned to explain what happened. Hosein Mirfakhar, Iran foreign ministry consular director, reportedly also asked Australia to reconsider its asylum seeker policies.

Unsurprisingly, it has been pointed out that this is "a bit rich".

"Of course any reports of a death or injury on Manus Island concern me greatly," said Labor's foreign affairs spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek, according to a News Corp Australia report.

"But I do also think it's a bit rich for anyone from the Iranian government to be criticising the treatment of asylum-seekers from a regime that may well be making positive steps in recent times, but has a record for not respecting the human rights of its own citizens, particularly anyone who is critical of the government there."

www.businessinsider.com.au/iran-reportedly-summoned-australias-ambassador-after-an-asylum-seeker-was-killed-2014-2

Plibersek hits back at Iran on Manus death

AAP / SBS World News

19 Feb 2014 - 6:47am

The federal opposition is critical over reports that Iran has summoned the Australian envoy to complain about the death of an Iranian asylum seeker in PNG.

Iran's protest about the treatment of asylum seekers is a "bit rich" given the country's human rights record, federal Labor says.

Australian ambassador Paul Foley met with Iranian officials this week after the death of the 24-year-old Iranian asylum seeker on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island following a riot on Monday.

The ministry's consular director, Seyyed Hossein Mirfakhar, reportedly expressed Iran's "protest and discontent" about the "practice of violence and mistreatment" which led to the death.

He sought changes to the treatment of asylum seekers and asked for the details of an investigation into the death, the Iranian news agency IRNA said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said only that "Ambassador Foley met officials from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the death of an Iranian national".

Opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek was critical of Iran's reported stance.

She says news of the Iranian national's death is "gravely" concerning.

"But I do also think it's a bit rich for anyone from the Iranian government to be criticising the treatment of asylum seekers from a regime that ... may be making positive steps in recent times, but has a record for not respecting the human rights of its own citizens, particularly anyone who is critical of the government there," she told ABC radio.

Iranian nationals have been among the thousands of people who seek asylum in Australia in recent years.

Many have attempted to reach the country by boat, mostly from Indonesia.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/02/19/plibersek-hits-back-iran-manus-death>

Manus Island violence: Witness says guards attacked asylum seekers with sticks and iron bars

ABC News Online

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Cochrane, staff

First posted Wed 19 Feb 2014, 8:32pm AEDT

Updated Wed 19 Feb 2014, 8:59pm AEDT

A witness to the violence at the Manus Island detention centre on Monday night says guards attacked asylum seekers with sticks and iron bars.

His is just one of a number of witness accounts emerging following this week's deadly violence.

Thirteen people were seriously injured and almost 80 others needed medical assistance after two consecutive nights of unrest at the centre on Sunday and Monday.

PNG authorities and Australia's Immigration Department are conducting investigations.

The commander of Operation Sovereign Borders, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, has been dispatched to Manus Island as well as 51 additional security staff.

In a statement, G4S says it takes the allegations seriously and does not tolerate violent or abusive behaviour from staff.

A man who saw the violence on Monday night, but does not want to be identified, says Papua New Guinean guards employed by the G4S security company running the centre became angry when asylum seekers shouted insults about their country and family members.

The witness says he watched PNG guards beat detainees with sticks, iron bars and rubber hoses as well as fists, boots and shields.

"When they pulled them outside they started beating them with the sticks... some of them with sticks and some of them with all these hose, rubber hose and pipes," he said.

The witness says some asylum seekers tried to escape the violence by going into rooms, but were taken out and assaulted.

"Once they got inside the room they were trying to hide themselves... they don't want to get hurt. That's why they're trying to lock them up," he said.

"But the G4S went in, opened the room and pulled them out and belt(ed) all of them."

Interpreter describes horrific injuries

Iranian-Australian freelance interpreter Azita Bokan was contracted to work on Manus Island for the Department of Immigration last week.

She was on Manus Island during the violent clashes on both nights.

Ms Bokan claims she was dismissed on Sunday after trying to intervene in a scuffle between detainees and G4S staff.

On Monday night she stood on the roof of the staff housing facility several hundred metres away from the compound and watched the unrest.

She has described seeing detainees with horrific injuries after a deadly clash involving large rocks and machetes.

"I haven't had sleep in three nights. I'm so all over the place, myself. I've seen too much and I keep having flashbacks," she told the ABC.

"The injuries were horrendous. It was blood everywhere. Throats were cut. It was heads crushed by the rocks."

Ms Bokan claims she saw uniformed G4S guards jump over the fence towards detainees, but could not see who was wielding the rocks and knives because it was too dark and she was too far away.

"Everyone was running everywhere saying, 'help us', shouting, yelling, lots of yelling was happening, and the people say, 'they're killing us, they're killing us'," she said.

Ms Bokan says the violence she saw is like nothing she has ever witnessed.

"What is in Australia, it does not apply there. I was in Darwin, I was in other detention centres. Nothing compares to what you see in Manus Island," she said.

Ms Bokan says she saw detainees trying to defend themselves by holding up plastic chairs.

"I never would've thought under Australia's name we do anything like that. I still keep Australia highly up. I do not believe Australians are about this. We do not accept this in our names."

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says he has had no verification of anything of the nature described by Ms Bokan.

"Those investigations and the collection of that information is under way, and I would caution against such speculation until these matters can be properly confirmed," he told the ABC.

"I imagine there will be all sorts of interviews undertaken from people who were there and the various other authorities and that goes well beyond the perimeter fence.

"It goes to establishing the facts of what occurred that night. I think this is going to be a very difficult process."

Guards say they were outnumbered by asylum seekers

Two G4S guards at the centre have also spoken out for the first time about the two nights of violence.

The men, who do not want to be identified, say the worst of the violence on Monday night occurred after a riot squad was outnumbered by asylum seekers and guards rushed in to help.

They denied reports that machetes or bush knives were used in the violence.

They admitted to punching detainees and aggressively tackling asylum seekers trying to escape but say the force was reasonable given the situation.

One of the Papuan New Guinean guards, employed by G4S, says around 20 members of the company's Incident Response Team dressed in riot gear tried to contain the protests.

The guard says the riot team failed to stop the asylum seekers shouting insults and throwing stones and were outnumbered by several hundred detainees.

"They were swearing at us... swearing 'f*** PNG' and something like that and they don't like us, so they start throwing stones and start pushing gates.

"The serious violence happened when we went in to contain the situation. The clients outnumbered them and they can't contain the situation.

"So what we do is we all G4S local nationals and expats we just rushed in to save our counterparts. So that's where the trouble begin and the fight started."

The guard says Papua New Guinean and Australian staff working for G4S then entered the compound and serious fighting erupted.

"They are using their hands only, their hands to hit them... the clients," he said.

The second guard says force was used to contain the situation.

"There were too many of them in the compound because each compound contains about 400 clients in Oscar compound. About 50 per cent of the clients they were fighting, throwing things at us. So some of us were hit and we retaliated," he said.

"I have to save my friends from the clients because they were not playing."

G4S vows to cooperate

G4S said in a statement it is concerned by allegations that PNG nationals working for the company may have been involved in violence against transferees on Manus Island.

"Our duty of care to the transferees has always been and remains our highest priority," the statement said.

"Our personnel on duty during the disturbances acted with courage, strength and determination to protect those in our care.

"Importantly G4S guards at the Manus Island Centre are not armed and do not carry weapons of any sort.

"We support the investigation of the incident that was announced by Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, and we will fully cooperate with that investigation."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-19/guards-attacked-asylum-seekers-with-sticks-and-iron-witness-says/5270640

Asylum seeker death no deterrent to 'firm' border protection policy, says Tony Abbott

Sydney Morning Herald

February 20, 2014

By Jonathan Swan

with Michael Gordon, Sarah Whyte

Tony Abbott says he will not be deterred or succumb to "moral blackmail" when it comes to running a "firm" detention centre on Manus Island.

The Prime Minister responded on Thursday to questions about the safety of asylum seekers sent by Australian authorities to detention on Papua New Guinea, in light of the recent violence that left one asylum seeker dead and scores of others severely injured.

His comments came as pictures emerged of injured asylum seekers being transferred from Manus Island to Port Moresby for treatment.

Mr Abbott was asked whether, given this week's mayhem, there was a risk that more asylum seekers could die on Manus Island.

"We have a Deputy Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection up there at the moment to ensure that there is a proper analysis of how it all happened," Mr Abbott replied.

The Prime Minister added: "The Australian government will not be deterred or intimidated by anyone when it comes to doing what we need to do to protect our borders.

"We will not succumb to pressure, to moral blackmail. We will ensure that these camps are run fairly. They will be firm if necessary.

"Because the fairest thing you can do for anyone is to stop the boats and to finally stamp out the evil trade of people smuggling."

While Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has confirmed only the barest details of the violence on Manus Island, Fairfax Media has reported more detailed allegations made by an interpreter employed by the Australian Immigration Department.

Azita Bokan alleged that Papua New Guinea locals employed by security guards at the Manus Island detention centre attacked asylum seekers with machetes, knives and rocks. The asylum seekers used plastic chairs as shields to defend themselves, Ms Bokan claimed.

Mr Morrison has increased the number of security guards at the detention centre by more than a third in response to the violence, but the minister said he had no "verification or any clarification" of Ms Bokan's allegations.

Investigating the violence was going to be a "very difficult process", Mr Morrison said.

"It was a very unruly incident," he said.

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seeker-death-no-deterrent-to-firm-border-protection-policy-says-tony-abbott-20140220-332k9.html

Manus Island rioting could have been witnessed by asylum-seeker children

At least two asylum seekers held in detention had declared themselves unaccompanied minors, say contractors

Oliver Laughland
theguardian.com
Thursday 20 February 2014

Children could have been present inside the Manus Island detention centre during the two nights of rioting that saw one asylum seeker killed, another shot and dozens injured.

At least two asylum seekers held on Manus Island had declared themselves unaccompanied minors, according to two contractors who spoke to Guardian Australia independently. Both asylum seekers were present on Manus Island one day before the rioting occurred, but were being held among the adult population.

One of the asylum seekers was a Somali who claimed to be 15 years old, the other was an Iraqi who is understood to have abandoned his claim after he was unable to source his birth certificate, and had planned to voluntarily return.

One contractor, who left Manus Island a day before the riot, said as many as five detainees who remained in the detention centre had claimed unaccompanied minor status.

Both the Somali and Iraqi asylum seekers were being held in Delta compound, a part of the centre understood not to be primarily affected by the rioting. It is understood that staff had been instructed to speak to the Somali boy every day to check his welfare.

In November a Guardian Australia investigation revealed two unaccompanied minors had been held on Manus Island for months after a processing error had led to their transfer. The two boys were isolated in a small room and not allowed out. The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, initially denied the boys were on the island but was forced to issue a retraction and ordered their immediate return.

One of those boys, who turned 18 just three months ago, was subsequently returned to Manus Island and detained in Mike compound, where the heaviest rioting occurred.

Morrison has repeatedly stated Manus Island is not an appropriate facility for children.

Under the Coalition government's new 48-hour turnaround target, asylum seekers who arrive on Christmas Island are usually transferred to offshore detention within two days. This target has been criticised by medical experts, with a letter signed by 15 doctors on Christmas Island saying some asylum seekers would be seen by a doctor for about five minutes.

The discovery of the two children on Manus Island in November led experts who constructed the age verification process of asylum seekers, which used psycho-social cognitive tests to determine contested ages, to deduce these tests had slipped.

A document seen by Guardian Australia from Manus Island highlights that any asylum seeker who claims they are an unaccompanied minor must produce documentary evidence of a birth certificate to prove their age, indicating that age verification tests are not conducted on Manus.

The Department for Immigration and Border Protection has been contacted for a response.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/21/manus-island-rioting-could-have-been-witnessed-by-asylum-seeker-children

G4S Security firm guarding Manus body

Sydney Morning Herald

February 20, 2014

Rory Callinan

with Sarah Whyte

The body of an asylum seeker suspected of being killed during a riot on Manus Island is being guarded and monitored by the same security company whose officers are suspects in the man's death.

G4S Security was responsible for securing and guarding the detention centre on Manus Island when a riot broke out, leading to one asylum seeker dying, one being shot and more than 70 injured on Monday.

On Thursday when Fairfax attempted to view the body of the victim at the basic hospital and morgue on Manus Island, three G4S security guards refused access and said they had been told to guard the body.

The four guards who were stationed around the rundown air-conditioned freezer shed which is used as a morgue said nobody could see the body without the permission of their superiors. They demanded Fairfax not leave the site until their manager turned up.

When Fairfax contacted the local police to ask who was conducting the investigation, they referred all queries to their commander, who they said had gone home.

The G4S guards stationed at the morgue are indicative of the power the security company has begun to wield on the tiny island.

It is understood PNG nationals who saw the dead body have said the victim appeared to have suffered significant head injuries.

A G4S spokesman said on Thursday night that G4S did not comment on operational or contractual matters.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said: "G4S is providing security in relation to the body of the deceased man until such time as the wishes of the next of kin in relation to the body are known and arrangements can be made.

"Any attempt by anyone to seek to view the body without the permission of the next of kin would be entirely inappropriate and disrespectful.

People seeking to gain unauthorised access to the body would therefore be prevented from doing so.

"Formal investigations into the death of the man have been promised by the Prime Minister of PNG and we have every confidence they will be undertaken. My department secretary is currently finalising arrangements for the conduct of the independent review that I announced earlier this week."

Fairfax later visited the hospital where a G4S bus carrying about eight asylum seekers with distinct injuries arrived for treatment.

When Fairfax photographer Nick Moir tried to photograph the bus the G4S guards grabbed him and confiscated his camera, which was later returned. Local police arrived but refused to intervene and deferred to a PNG G4S manager. He then insisted on deleting all photographs on Moir's camera.

Meanwhile, an expat worker at the Manus detention centre, who asked not be named, said relationships between local women and asylum seekers had contributed to tension on the island.

Local staff were also understood to be frustrated at the huge pay discrepancies between their salaries and what expat workers were paid.

The expat was on a salary of \$120,000 a year, while local staff were earning 15kina a day, the equivalent of about \$7.

In the detention centre the PNG Army and PNG's special branch police force were also stationed in the centre.

"The police and the army don't get on. They fight on a regular basis, one wanting to be tougher than the other. There was a lot of acrimony."

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/g4s-security-firm-guarding-manus-body-20140220-334dh.html

Manus Island violence: interpreter claims detainees attacked by locals, 'There was blood everywhere'

Sydney Morning Herald

February 20, 2014

Michael Gordon & Sarah Whyte

Papua New Guinea locals employed by security guards at the Manus Island detention centre attacked asylum seekers with machetes, knives and rocks, an interpreter employed by the Australian Immigration Department has claimed.

Azita Bokan alleges asylum seekers used plastic chairs as shields when they were attacked by locals who entered the centre on Monday night.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has increased the number of security guards at the centre by more than a third, following days of violence that left one asylum seeker dead and scores of others severely injured.

Ms Bokan says she saw people who had suffered "massive head injuries" when locals entered the centre after detainees had pushed down a fence within the centre.

"Definitely, 100 per cent, I stand by the statement that the local people, including some employed by [security contractor] G4S, they were the ones who caused this drama," Ms Bokan said after flying out of Manus Island on Wednesday.

Ms Bokan says she did not witness the violence, but was in the area where the injured were taken, and was told injuries were caused by machetes, knives, rocks and table legs. "There was blood everywhere. The number injured was horrific: people with massive head injuries, at least one with a slashed throat," she said.

"The detainees, they grabbed these plastic chairs and were holding it in front of them to use it as a shield, not as a weapon."

Mr Morrison said he had no "verification or any clarification" of the allegations. "This is going to be a very difficult process ... it was a very unruly incident," he said.

G4S issued a statement on Thursday morning saying it was concerned about allegations that its local staff may have been involved in the violence.

"Our duty of care to the transferees has always been and remains our highest priority. Our personnel on duty during the disturbances acted with courage, strength and determination to protect those in our care," the statement said.

The company also said its guards at Manus Island were not armed. It said it supported the investigation into the incident and would fully co-operate.

Ms Bokan said she had been employed by the department for 12 months and had been on Manus for a week. She claims unrest on Sunday was sparked when the detainees were pressured to voluntarily return to their homelands and told there was no prospect of resettlement in Australia, a third country or on Manus.

In explosive claims, Ms Bokan also says the asylum seekers had not complained about serious mental and other health concerns for months because they were told their claims would not be processed and that no other country would give them protection.

She said many asylum seekers suffered headaches, ear infections and such serious dental decay they had teeth pulled out by a local.

Ms Bokan said she intervened when guards attacked an asylum seeker the morning after Sunday night's unrest and implored authorities to "let us talk and calm the situation down". "I said, 'Just give them some hope', but there was no hope to be given. We knew it was a bad night."

She said she was "disciplined" by the Department when she intervened on behalf of an asylum seeker.

Documents show she was then suspended by the Department on Tuesday.

Ms Bokan said she was not allowed to speak to the media under the terms of her contract but could not remain silent.

"I am seeking a lawyer to protect me because I know they will come after me with all that they have."

On Wednesday afternoon Mr Morrison announced he would be sending the commander of Operation Sovereign Borders, General Angus Campbell, and a team of security guards to Manus.

"After what has been a very difficult 48 hours, the centre is now operational," Mr Morrison said.

General Campbell will arrive in Manus on Thursday to assess the "stability" of the centre, Mr Morrison said.

Independent MP Clive Palmer has called for Mr Morrison's resignation, saying Mr Morrison had "blood on his hands".

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has admitted that police fired gunshots but insisted they had not fired at asylum-seekers but rather for crowd-control purposes.

He rejected reports villagers had become involved in the violence.

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-violence-interpreter-claims-detainees-attacked-by-locals-there-was-blood-everywhere-20140219-3315g.html

Iranian asylum seeker killed on Manus Island named Reza Barati

The Age

February 21, 2014 - 2:49PM

Judith Ireland

The Iranian man who died during violent clashes on Manus Island earlier this week was a 23-year-old named Reza Barati, who arrived on Christmas Island last July.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday that Australian diplomats in Iran had contacted his family, who had agreed for his details to be released.

Mr Barati, who arrived in Australia without family members, was transferred to Manus Island last August.

His family has asked that his body be repatriated to Iran.

Mr Morrison said that Mr Barati's body is currently being moved to Port Moresby with a police escort to "maintain the integrity of evidence".

An autopsy will be conducted in Port Moresby with assistance from Australia.

After police investigations are complete, Australia will "assist" with the repatriation of Mr Barati.

Mr Morrison said Australian diplomats had conveyed "the deep sympathies of the Australian government to the family of the deceased".

Mr Morrison also named former head of the Attorney-General's department, Robert Cornall, to lead the government's inquiry into the violence on Manus Island earlier this week.

The terms of reference will be finalised next week and published on the department's website.

The Immigration Minister said the review would "look closely" at the actions security services contracted at the detention centre.

He also told reporters in Canberra on Friday that there were "many answers that still have to come" about the clashes that left Mr Barati dead and dozens injured.

"We intend to be patient and ask that you also be patient."

Mr Morrison updated the number of asylum seekers injured during Monday's incident, revising the number from 77 to 62.

He also told reporters that no boats had arrived in the past week.

"There has not now been a successful people smuggling venture to Australia for 64 days," he said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/iranian-asylum-seeker-killed-on-manus-island-named-reza-barati-20140221-336kn.html

Manus violence: dead asylum seeker named as Iranian Reza Berati, 23

Victim was 'gentle giant' who was regarded as a 'joker', according to contractors working at detention centre

Oliver Laughland

theguardian.com

Friday 21 February 2014 03.05 EST

The asylum seeker killed on Manus Island during rioting has been named as 23 year-old Iranian Reza Berati.

At a briefing on Friday, immigration minister Scott Morrison said that Berati had arrived in Australia on 24 July 2013 – just five days after the hardline PNG solution was announced – and was sent to Manus Island.

“The family expressed their wish to have the body returned home for burial arrangements,” Morrison said.

A group of contractors who all met Berati on Manus island sent Guardian Australia an exclusive statement describing him as a “gentle giant”.

The group said that Berati was “known to be a joker” and that many of the contractors were helping him to learn English.

“We read him children’s books such as fairy tales and Reza always waited and looked forward to meeting with us and reading with him. He studied a lot,” the group said.

“He used to always pick up bugs and moths off the ground and put them back in the garden, worried that someone would step on them. (The guys used to feed the moths to cane toad frogs around the compound for fun... There wasn’t much else to do...) He used to try and stop them.”

They continued: “Reza also always helped staff hand out medical slips and appointment slips to those in the same compound as him. He wanted to keep busy to avoid boredom and keep his mind active.”

The group described Berati as “very tall and very muscly” and said they were worried that he may have been singled out during the riot because of his size.

None of the contractors were present in the detention centre at the time of the riots but say they had met with Berati “nearly every day” during their stints on Manus.

“Reza worked out in the gym a lot and taught his friends how to stay fit and healthy. He helped his friends learn how to use the gym equipment. Many of the guys did not want to participate in recreational activities due to stress, depression and other mental health issues.”

Guardian Australia understands that Berati was detained in Mike compound where the majority of the rioting broke out. He was transferred from Oscar compound due to the length of his stay on Manus, and for good behaviour.

“Reza had a close relationship with many of the other transferees, where one was, the other was not far away,” the group said.

Berati’s body is now being moved with a Papua New Guinea police escort to Port Moresby where an autopsy will be conducted. Morrison said Australia was “assisting” with the autopsy.

It is unclear whether the PNG coroner will also conduct an inquiry into the death of Berati. Coronial inquests have to be approved by the PNG national executive council, but it has not yet issued any approval relating to Berati’s death.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/21/manus-dead-asylum-seeker-iranian-reza-berati>

Body of asylum seeker Reza Berati to be returned to Iran

ABC News Online

By political reporter Latika Bourke

First posted Fri 21 Feb 2014, 3:30pm AEDT

Updated Fri 21 Feb 2014, 4:35pm AEDT

The body of 23-year-old asylum seeker Reza Berati will be flown home to Iran for burial, as an independent investigation into his death during riots on Manus Island begins.

The Greens and asylum seeker advocates say Mr Berati was "murdered" on the island, but the Government says it will wait for the findings from its official review before commenting on individual reports about what took place.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has warned the report, to be conducted by former Attorney-General's Department secretary Robert Cornall, will take "some time" to gather the facts about the "very serious incident" in which 67 asylum seekers were injured.

The review is likely to take months, but the Minister says it could take longer.

"I have indicated over the next few months I would like to see this matter at least get to some point of knowledge on this," Mr Morrison told reporters in Canberra.

"If that is not possible, it will take longer and [Robert Cornall] will be given support to do that."

Mr Berati arrived at Christmas Island with no family members on July 24 and was transferred to PNG one month later under the resettlement policy introduced by former prime minister Kevin Rudd.

One asylum seeker was flown to Australia for treatment for head injuries as a result of this week's riots. Four others, including one shot in the left buttock, are being treated in Port Moresby, while another asylum seeker is awaiting transfer to the capital.

Mr Morrison says he takes responsibility for things that happen on his watch.

"I do take responsibility for things that happen within my portfolio under my management, of course I do," he said.

"Since we came into office, I have been taking steps every day to try and upgrade and get the offshore processing facilities in a far better shape."

Asylum seekers 'on the back foot'

The Minister said the Government's offshore processing policy was being tested and he expected further tests.

"There will naturally, and by definition, be a tension in these centres because people don't want to be there in the first place," he said.

The Government's review will "complement" the investigations being carried out by the PNG authorities.

Mr Morrison said his stop-the-boats policy had seen another week go by with no asylum seeker vessels reaching Australia.

He said he believed he had people smugglers "on the back foot".

"Operation Sovereign Borders is stopping the boats, but the boats are not yet stopped," he said.

"We don't take a day off ever when it comes to stopping the boats."

The military commander in charge of Operation Sovereign Borders, Angus Campbell, is on his way back from Manus Island and will brief the Government upon his return.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-21/body-of-asylum-seeker-to-be-returned-to-iran/5275766>

Manus Island police chief slams Tony Abbott

Sydney Morning Herald

February 21, 2014

David Wroe, Sarah Whyte and Philip Wen

with Kim Arlington

Manus Island's police chief has blasted the Abbott government's running of the immigration detention camp on the island, suggesting the recent fatal violence could have been avoided.

Police commander Alex N'Drasal said the protests were sparked by the failure to act on a list of grievances raised by the asylum seekers. He said the Australian government should improve the way the detention centre is run.

Meanwhile, the Australian government has suffered the ignominy of having its asylum-seeker policy publicly criticised by another foreign government - this time China, a country with its own chequered human rights record.

In a sign of lingering bilateral tension between Australia and its largest trading partner, China's Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Li Baodong, said he was concerned about the "very important issue" of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, especially children, who arrive in Australia by boat.

"Indeed, we have proposed this question very candidly and also stated our concerns," Mr Li told reporters in Beijing. "We also asked if these refugees will be illegally repatriated to other countries."

Earlier on Thursday, Prime Minister Tony Abbott stood by Australia's tough offshore processing regime, insisting he would not give in to "moral blackmail" and expressing confidence in the facility.

"We will ensure that these camps are run fairly. They will be firm if necessary," Mr Abbott said.

Monday night's violence - sparked after protesting asylum seekers apparently pushed down a fence and broke out of the centre - left one Iranian asylum seeker dead and scores injured.

Mr N'Drasal told Papua New Guinea newspaper *The National*: "The Australian government should change its approach and act quickly on the petition which was handed to the authority last week by the transferees."

He said the Australian government should hire detention centre staff with better experience, such as "those who have worked in refugee camps".

"These asylum seekers are educated people and should be treated like one," Mr N'Drasal said.

He confirmed to Fairfax Media that he had made the remarks but said he had been forbidden by his superiors in Port Moresby to say anything further on the issue.

His remarks came as Manus Island Member of Parliament Ron Knight said he believed that gun butts and batons had been used against rioting asylum-seekers by the notorious "mobile squad", a paramilitary branch of the police who are the main law enforcers outside the camp.

Mr Knight said the blame for the violence lay primarily with the asylum seekers but said that their claims should be processed more quickly and the security infrastructure should be improved.

"I think it could have been handled a bit more diplomatically in the way they approach the asylum seekers and let them know information," he said.

Mr Knight backed the squad's use of force, saying it "had to be brutal to be effective" and adding that the present unit stationed there was professional and disciplined. A previous unit beat a local man to death last year.

Security continues to be bolstered on the island, with Mr Morrison confirming 50 more Wilson security staff were on standby on Thursday if violence again erupted.

Within a week the security firm G4S would be completely removed from the island as its contract would end, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said.

On Wednesday, 51 Wilson security staff that are subcontracted to Transfield flew to the island. They joined 130 Wilson staff who were already stationed at the centre.

"In the 12 months we have been operating in Nauru not one person has come to any harm through our services," Transfield spokesman David Jamieson said. "If there is any concern about taking over Manus, judge us by our actions."

The concerns from China were raised in the context of a regular human rights dialogue, this year held in Beijing. But in previous iterations, both Chinese and Australian officials have usually responded to questions from reporters with general answers in order not to risk offence, keeping criticisms behind closed doors.

The leader of the Australian delegation, Gillian Bird, deputy secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, appeared to stick to the script. In a series of cautious answers, she said she was "very happy to respond on Australian policies and to explain and answer any questions".

www.smh.com.au/national/manus-island-police-chief-slams-tony-abbott-20140220-334ch.html

PMs hold line as Manus riot blame row flares

Rowan Callick and Paul Toohey
The Australian
February 21, 2014

ASYLUM-SEEKERS injured in Monday's night's deadly melee were being flown off Manus Island yesterday as conflicting claims of who was to blame for the violence drew defensive responses from both the Australian and PNG prime ministers.

Tony Abbott yesterday declared his government would not be intimidated into backing away from its strong border protection stance as more conflicting claims emerged over how the detention centre violence started.

"We will not succumb to pressure, to moral blackmail," the Prime Minister said in Sydney.

"We will ensure these camps are run fairly, if necessary, firmly."

He said Australian authorities acted swiftly to secure the centre after the disturbances, in which one man was killed and 77 injured.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill commended the people of Manus Island for "coping with all the disturbances that have been going on there" this week.

He said that during the two days of protests at the asylum-seeker centre, the villagers of Manus Island and others living nearby were subjected to some level of danger by the disgruntled transferees, "but they behaved well".

He pledged to parliament in Port Moresby that the investigations resulting from the incident would be thorough and said the centre was being searched for weapons, including some that may have been homemade.

Yesterday on Manus Island, three men who appeared to be Iranians were escorted to an Air Niugini commercial jet to be taken to Port Moresby and possibly on to Australia.

Immigration and the Australian government's security contractor G4S refused to allow interviews with the men, who all had heavily blackened eyes but were able to walk unassisted.

The riot — apparently a combination of poor crowd control, inadequate fencing and furious asylum-seekers, who have been unable to get answers to what their future holds — has raised serious questions about Australia's reliance on outsourced security in far-flung offshore centres.

G4S will cease providing security at the detention centre within a month, after the Abbott government did not renew its contract.

Monday night's violence followed on from Sunday night's demonstration, when G4S guards, both Australians and Papua New Guineans, lost control of rioting inside the centre and became irate when demonstrators began chanting abusively.

Manus MP Ron Knight alleges G4S guards made sexual comments, "saying they were going to get out and rape their mothers and their sisters".

“It started with them — they got nasty and they broke down the gate,” Mr Knight told AAP.

He received the account from a PNG defence force officer as the drama was unfolding.

“He was standing quite close to the fence, by a coconut tree, observing everything,” he said.

One of those seriously injured survived after his throat was apparently slit with a machete on Sunday evening, after he and six others apparently broke free from the compound. By Monday evening, PNG riot police entered the compound and repelled rioters with fire after another attempt to break out. One man was shot.

Manus police commander Alex N’Drasal told PNG media that the Australian government needed to deploy qualified people who had experience working in detention centres.

“These asylum-seekers are educated people and should be treated (as such),” Mr N’Drasal said.

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/pms-hold-line-as-manus-riot-blame-row-flares/story-fn9hm1gu-1226833251415

Shocking claims after Manus Island bloodbath

By Kelmeny Fraser and Paul Toohey

News Limited Network

February 21, 2014

As blame is exchanged on the Manus Island detention centre bloodbath, it has been claimed that the Iranian asylum seeker killed on Monday night may have been murdered by out-of-control guards who stomped his skull as he lay defenceless on the ground.

According to an account from an Australian guard working for security contractor G4S, obtained by News Corp, local guards working for G4S were in a frenzy and jumped on the man's head in a rage on Monday night, inside the detention compound.

But Papua New Guinea clearly believes the Australians are covering up, with Prime Minister Peter O'Neill insisting that no New Guineans were involved in any of the troubles, which led to the one death and two others being medi-vacced to Australia.

Monday night's violence followed on from Sunday night's demonstration, when G4S guards, both Australians and Papua New Guineans, lost control of rioting inside the centre and became irate when demonstrators began chanting, "F**k PNG! F**k PNG!"

Another man survived after his throat was apparently slit with a machete on Sunday evening, after he and six others apparently broke free from the compound.

By Monday evening, Papua New Guinean riot police entered the compound and repelled rioters with fire after another attempt to break out. One man was shot in the behind.

On Thursday on Manus Island, three men who appeared to be Iranians were escorted to an Air Niugini commercial jet to be taken to Port Moresby or possibly on to Australia.

Immigration and G4S refused to allow News Corp to speak to the men, who all had heavily blackened eyes but were able to walk unassisted.

The debacle — apparently a combination of poor crowd control, inadequate fencing and furious asylum seekers, who have been unable to get answers on what their future holds — has raised serious questions about Australia's reliance on outsourced security in far-flung offshore centres.

G4S will cease providing security at the detention centre within a month, after the Abbott Government failed to renew its contract — though this was decided prior to the recent riots.

Local Manus police commander Alex N'Drasal told PNG media that the Australian Government needed to deploy qualified people who had experience working in detention centres.

"These asylum seekers are educated people and should be treated (as such)," he told The National.

An Australian health worker said that a fortnight ago, the 1340 asylum-seeker population was relatively calm and there were no signs people were starting to crack.

That changed after they were apparently told — falsely, according to Immigration Minister Scott Morrison — that they would never settle anywhere, including PNG, and were to be sent home.

The detention centre appeared calm yesterday, as asylum seekers went about their business, washing clothes and sitting around talking outside their shipping container homes.

It appears the Australian Government has relied on only flimsy perimeter security to secure the compound, using only two-metre cyclone fences without barbed or razor wire.

While that has mildly reduced the centre's sense of being a prison, it has also provided the opportunity for frustrated detainees to see the possibilities of escape, even though there was no chance of a getaway on the remote island.

The reaction on Manus Island is that people are not enjoying the attention and are blaming Australia for not properly protecting all people involved in the rioting, whichever side they are on.

Operation Sovereign Borders commander Lieutenant General Angus Campbell assessed security measures on the island on Thursday and is travelling back to Australia.

His visit came as the Australian Greens called for a royal commission into the incident and Labor asked for a government explanation.

"I do think that the Abbott Government would be wise to dispense with its addiction to secrecy," Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said.

However, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said his government would not be intimidated into backing away from its strong border protection stance.

"We will not succumb to pressure, to moral blackmail," Mr Abbott said.

"We will ensure these camps are run fairly, if necessary, firmly."

www.news.com.au/national/shocking-claims-after-manus-island-bloodbath/story-fncynjr2-1226833207973

MEDIA RELEASE (& staff tribute): Minister can't guarantee Manus Island safety

Friday 21 February 2014
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

The statement below was written on behalf of Manus Island detention centre as a tribute to the murdered asylum seeker, Reza Berati.

"Today's harrowing report that Reza's head may have been crushed by the boots of G4S guards highlights the fact that the Minister cannot guarantee the safety of asylum seekers on Manus Island. Reza's killers may still be working inside the Manus Island detention centre," said Ian Rintoul.

"Scott Morrison seems oblivious to the danger in which he has left the asylum seekers. Morrison said he could promise safety if the asylum seekers stayed inside the detention centre, but that is exactly where the asylum seekers were attacked.

"Morrison has sent Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell to boost security, but the asylum seekers need protection from the guards and the PNG police.

"There is also a danger that valuable evidence will be lost to any inquiry into Reza's death because G4S is handing control of the Manus Island detention centre to Transfield this Saturday."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Staff tribute to Reza Berati

Staff from inside the centre want to express their distress and devastation at the loss of Reza Berati. We want to convey our sincere condolences to Reza's family, and state we are grieving with them. We are sorry that Australia was unable to provide safety for Reza.

Reza was known to staff to be kind, gentle and very popular amongst the asylum seekers. Reza had a keen love of sport, and was studying hard to learn English. Reza always spoke to staff with care and respect, Reza was known to always look after his friends when they were in need.

Staff know that he would never have participated in any riot or protest actions. He was not known to have had any previous altercation with staff inside the centre, he held a low security risk rating, and was transferred to MIKE compound for good behaviour.

Again, we want to state that Reza was kind and gentle, we are devastated at this terrible, needless loss of Reza's life. We are deeply sorry that we let you down Reza.

Manus Island inquiry will be led by Robert Cornall, says Scott Morrison

Former civil servant also investigated sex abuse claims on Manus Island in July last year

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Friday 21 February 2014

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has announced that a former public servant, Robert Cornall, will conduct a review into the circumstances surrounding the Manus Island disturbances this week.

Ongoing protests had been occurring at the Manus facility, which escalated on Sunday night, leading to violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. One asylum seeker was killed during the disturbance and several were seriously injured.

Cornall was previously a secretary in the Attorney-General's department and has conducted numerous reviews of government actions.

"This was a very serious incident and it is one that will take some time to collect information to determine the facts and get the answers we are all intent on getting," Morrison said in a news conference on Friday afternoon.

Cornall was also brought in to undertake a review on Manus Island following claims from whistleblower Rod St George about an asylum seeker being sexually assaulted on the island in July last year. St George said he was dismayed with Cornall's findings in the review.

Morrison also identified the name of the asylum seeker killed during the violence as Reza Berati, a 23-year-old asylum seeker from Iran. Berati had arrived in Australia on 24 July, 2013, and was sent to Manus Island.

"The family expressed their wish to have the body returned home for burial arrangements," Morrison said.

The body was being held in the Manus Island morgue but is now being moved to Port Moresby with a Papua New Guinea police security escort for an autopsy to be conducted. Morrison said Australia was "assisting" with the autopsy.

It is not yet clear whether the PNG coroner will also conduct an inquiry into the death of Berati. Coronial inquests are required to be approved by the PNG National Executive Council, and it has not yet issued any approval relating to Berati's death.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/21/manus-island-inquiry-will-be-led-by-robert-cornall-says-scott-morrison

UN Office criticizes Australian Detention Policies

New York Times
Nick Cumming-Bruce
February 21, 2014

Australia's treatment of asylum seekers sent to offshore processing centers is cruel, inhuman and degrading and it violates international law, the United Nations' human rights office said Friday.

It called for an investigation and punishment of those responsible for an outbreak of violence at a center in Papua New Guinea that houses asylum seekers sent there after trying to get to Australia.

Clashes between inmates and guards at the Manus Island processing center in Papua New Guinea this week left one person dead and 77 injured. Ravina Shamdasani, a spokeswoman for the United Nations human rights office in Geneva, noted reports that private security guards employed at the Manus Island center were involved in the violence and added that "states maintain their human rights obligations when they privatize delivery of services such as security, and must take steps to investigate, redress and punish human rights abuses by third parties." Prime Minister Tony Abbott elected in 2013 partly on the promise of a tough policy toward migrants and asylum seekers, said the government would not succumb to "moral blackmail" and would ensure that the camps were run "fairly, if necessary, firmly."

www.nytimes.com/2014/02/22/world/asia/un-office-criticizes-australia-detention-policies.html

Neck of asylum seeker killed on Manus Island 'had been cut'

The Age

February 22, 2014

Michael Gordon & Judith Ireland

The Iranian man who died during violent clashes on Manus Island this week suffered a cut to the neck and head injuries, according to an employee at the detention centre who was with him before he died.

The man, who has asked that his name not be used, also said he saw another asylum seeker whose throat had been cut, and another whose face was swollen beyond recognition. He said more than one of those injured suffered gunshot wounds.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison confirmed on Friday that the deceased asylum seeker was 23-year-old Reza Barati, who arrived on Christmas Island last July and been transferred to Manus Island in late August.

The employee said he helped tend to the injured after the attack, which asylum seekers told him had been perpetrated by locals employed by security contractor G4S and police. He said asylum seekers in fear of their lives had been pulled from their rooms, beaten and told by their attackers: "You want freedom? We'll give you freedom tonight."

He also supported the account of interpreter Azita Bokan, who told Fairfax Media the asylum seekers had been told last Sunday that they had no prospect of being resettled and should return to their homeland - a claim that has since been denied.

Mr Morrison said Mr Barati's body was being moved to Port Moresby with a police escort, to "maintain the integrity of evidence".

An autopsy will be conducted in Port Moresby with assistance from Australia. Once police investigations are complete, Australia will "assist" with the repatriation of Mr Barati. Mr Morrison said Australian diplomats had conveyed "the deep sympathies of the Australian government to the family of the deceased".

Mr Morrison also named the former head of the Attorney-General's Department, Robert Cornall, as leader of a government inquiry into this week's violence on Manus Island. The terms of reference will be finalised next week and published on the department's website.

The Immigration Minister said the review would "look closely" at the actions of security services contracted at the detention centre. He also told reporters in Canberra on Friday there were "many answers that still have to come" about the clashes that left Mr Barati dead and dozens injured.

"We intend to be patient and ask that you also be patient," he said.

Mr Morrison revised the number of asylum seekers injured in Monday's incident from 77 to 62. He also told reporters that no boats had arrived in the past week.

"There has not now been a successful people-smuggling venture to Australia for 64 days," he said.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/neck-of-asylum-seeker-killed-on-manus-island-had-been-cut-20140221-337po.html

Squalid jail conditions on Manus Island

The Age

February 22, 2014

Rory Callinan

They are the squalid, inhuman jail conditions for asylum seekers that the Australian Immigration Department doesn't want anyone to see.

For more than 48 hours, a group of frightened asylum seekers suspected of breaking out of the detention centre were caged in a cell at the PNG police station in Lorengau, the main town on Manus Island, in shocking conditions.

The six men were locked in a metal cage about 15 by 15 metres with an assortment of alleged murderers, rapists and drunks who had either just been arrested or were serving their time in the cage, which is the island's only jail.

The cage, which adjoins some dank, mosquito-infested small cells and a toilet which cannot be used because it has been blocked for more than a year, doubles as a lock-up for those with severe psychiatric problems. The sleeping arrangements are a mattress on the concrete floor and the shower facilities are non-existent.

It was the sort of scenario that would have no doubt been of interest to Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell who has been assigned to conduct an investigation of the facilities and the operations of the detention centre following a riot that left one asylum seeker dead, one shot and wounded and more than 70 injured.

But, 24 hours before Campbell arrived, the asylum seekers were discreetly shifted back to the detention centre. To Campbell's credit, he visited the police station on Friday morning and spent a few minutes inspecting the cell.

But when Fairfax tried to photograph the amiable general inside the cell, an Australian Immigration Department official decided to stifle press freedom and the public's right to know.

"You can't take photos," he said, trying to position his body to block Fairfax's pictures and despite the fact several pictures had already been taken of the general and his entourage as they walked around the police station.

Realising Fairfax would continue taking pictures he scuttled over to tell local police commander Alex N'Drasal that we had no right to be taking pictures in the police station. The commander, unsure but acting on the instructions of the Australian official, immediately moved to take my camera and phone and refused to return them.

He ordered me to remain in the police station for an hour then returned the camera and computer, but only after insisting on deleting any photographs and articles about the situation.

Campbell observed the situation but merely stated he had no involvement in the camera being taken. Fairfax was able to restore the deleted photos and article.

Asked what he thought of the facilities, he said: "I am just going to keep looking and learning."

The failed exercise in censorship illustrates a key question about the detention centre. Standards and codes of conduct expected under Australian law are not the same under Papua New Guinea law or practice. Because of the detention centre's location, how and which laws apply are impossible to predict.

Complicating matters is the presence of the G4S security company which has a contract to secure the centre and inmates - a contract due to be handed over to a different company, Wilson Security, next month.

While the Abbott government was hoping Campbell's inspection would hose down criticism in Australia and a boost of security forces would stop any further rioting, asylum seekers were still said to be protesting in the centre.

On Wednesday night, there were reports the protesters were still chanting "freedom, freedom" and yesterday were reported not to have returned to their rooms but were insisting on sleeping out in a large shed. They appeared to be furious about their treatment during the protest. One man, Besa Darwich, said they had been brutally bashed.

He said the man who died had been hit with a baton.

While the protest has made headlines around the world and prompted condemnation of its handling, islanders remain largely supportive of the centre.

They have watched the centre bring jobs, money and development to their island in a province which is one of the poorest in the country.

"In my opinion, it's all right. It's created job opportunity, everything," says Alan Pomat, a land owner whose family has a contract associated with development of the centre.

"We now have five to seven barges coming in a week. In the past we used to get one barge in every two weeks. Young people have got jobs, there used to be humbugs (louts) on the streets, now they are gone."

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/squalid-jail-conditions-on-manus-island-20140221-337ke.html>

The cell that Immigration did not want you to see

Sydney Morning Herald
February 22, 2014
Rory Callinan and Michael Gordon

They are the squalid, inhumane jail conditions for asylum seekers that the Australian Immigration Department does not want anyone to see.

For more than 48 hours, a group of frightened asylum seekers suspected of breaking out of the detention centre was caged in a cell at the PNG police station in Lorengau, the main town on Manus, in shocking conditions.

The six men were incarcerated in a metal cage about 15 metres square with murderers, rapists and drunks who had either just been arrested or were serving their time in the cage, which is the only jail on the island.

Also on Friday, a witness revealed the man who died during violent clashes on Manus Island on Monday evening had suffered a cut to the neck.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison identified the man as 23-year-old Reza Barati, who arrived on Christmas Island last July and been transferred to Manus Island in late August.

The Iranian man suffered a cut to the neck and head injuries, according to an employee at the detention centre who was with him before he died.

The man, who has asked that his name not be used, also said he saw another asylum seeker whose throat had been cut and another whose face was swollen beyond recognition.

He said that more than one of those injured had suffered gunshot wounds.

Mr Morrison said Mr Barati's body was being moved to Port Moresby with a police escort to "maintain the integrity of evidence". An autopsy will be conducted in Port Moresby with assistance from Australia.

Mr Morrison said Australian diplomats had conveyed "the deep sympathies of the Australian government to the family of the deceased".

He also named former head of the Attorney-General's department Robert Cornall to lead the government inquiry into the violence on Manus Island earlier this week.

Mr Morrison has updated the number of asylum seekers injured during Monday's incident, revising the number down from 77 to 62.

On Manus Island, the cage used for detainees adjoins dank, mosquito-infested cells and doubles as a lock-up for those with severe psychiatric problems.

The sleeping arrangements are a mattress on the concrete floor. Shower facilities are non-existent.

A nearby toilet cannot be used because it has been blocked for more than a year - when prisoners need to use the toilet, they are taken to the beach and told to relieve themselves on the sand.

It was the sort of scenario that would have no doubt been of interest to Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, who has been assigned to conduct an investigation of the facilities and the operations of the detention centre following this week's riot that left one asylum seeker dead, one shot and wounded, and more than 60 injured. But 24 hours before General Campbell arrived, the asylum seekers were quietly shifted back to the detention centre.

Nevertheless, he visited the police station on Friday morning and spent a few minutes inspecting the cell.

However, when Fairfax Media attempted to photograph him inside the cell, an Australian Immigration Department official intervened.

"You can't take photos," he said, even though several pictures had been taken of General Campbell as he walked around the police station.

The official told the local police commander, Alex N'Drasal, we had no right to be taking pictures in the station.

The commander immediately took Fairfax's camera and phone, and refused to return them. After an hour he returned the camera and the computer after deleting the photographs.

General Campbell observed but said he had no involvement in the camera being taken.

Asked his opinion of the facilities, he said: "I am just going to keep looking and learning."

The exercise in censorship illustrates a key issue with the Manus Island detention centre.

Standards and codes of conduct expected under Australian law are not the same under PNG law or practice. Complicating matters is the presence of the G4S security company, which has a contract to secure the detainees and the centre - a contract which is due to be handed over to Wilson Security next month.

While the federal government was hoping General Campbell's inspection might hose down criticism in Australia and a boost of security force numbers would stop any further rioting, asylum seekers were still said to be protesting in the centre.

www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-island-the-cell--that-immigration-did-not-want-you-to-see-20140221-337n0.html

Scott Morrison admits information he gave on Manus riot was wrong

The Age

February 22, 2014

Bianca Hall

Australian security staff will be investigated over their role in the Manus Island detention centre riot that left one man dead and scores injured, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has conceded.

In an extraordinary statement issued late last night, Mr Morrison admitted that much of the information he had given to the Australian public since Monday's riot was now in doubt.

The most explosive admission is the revelation that most of the violence probably took place within the detention centre's fences, rather than outside its boundaries, as Mr Morrison had previously claimed.

"I wish to confirm that, contrary to initial reports received, I have received further information that indicates that the majority of the riotous behaviour that occurred, and the response to that behaviour to restore order to the centre, took place within the perimeter of the centre," the minister said in the statement.

"In a situation where transferees engage in riotous and aggressive behaviour within the centre, this will escalate the risk to those who engage in such behaviour. However, in such circumstances service providers must conduct themselves lawfully and consistent with the service standards set out in their contract."

A spokesman for security company G4S, which is contracted to run security on Manus Island, flatly denied to News Corp Australia on Thursday that its staff were involved in the riot, saying: "G4S was not involved in any violence with detainees."

Fairfax Media was unable to contact G4S on Saturday night.

On Friday, Mr Morrison said the security company would be off the island within a week, when its contract expired.

Transfield, which runs operations on Nauru, will take over security on the island.

The conduct of staff on the night will be investigated as part of the review ordered by Mr Morrison, as well as that of others within the detention centre compound that night.

During the week, Mr Morrison had claimed that the 23-year-old Iranian man killed on Monday night, Reza Berati, had been outside the centre.

"This is a tragedy, but this was a very dangerous situation where people decided to protest in a very violent way and to take themselves outside the centre and place themselves at great risk," he said.

But in the Saturday night statement, Mr Morrison said he had new information that cast further doubt on that claim.

“The precise nature of these events are the subject of the review and police investigation that has been initiated,” he said.

“It will be the task of that review and the police investigation to determine the facts of this incident.”

Labor immigration spokesman Richard Marles said: “It's become very clear minister Morrison has absolutely no idea what has happened and what is happening at the Manus Island detention facility. This should be a great concern to the Australian public.”

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/scott-morrison-admits--information-he-gave-on-manus-riot-was-wrong-20140222-339hs.html

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison doubts details of Manus Island detainee's death

ABC News Online

First posted Sat 22 Feb 2014, 10:56pm AEDT

Updated Sun 23 Feb 2014, 9:13am AEDT

The Federal Government says it has received more information suggesting that the violence that led to the death of an asylum seeker happened inside the perimeter of the Manus Island detention centre.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says new information casts doubt on initial reports that 23-year-old Reza Berati died from injuries he sustained outside the centre.

In a statement, Mr Morrison says he is unsure where Mr Berati suffered his fatal injury on Monday night and who was responsible. Mr Morrison says further reports indicate the majority of the unrest, and attempts to restore order, took place within the centre.

"As advised on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 18, I indicated that I had received further information which meant that I could no longer confirm that the deceased man sustained his injuries outside the centre," the statement said. "The further information I have now received casts further doubt on the initial advice that his injuries were sustained outside the centre."

More than 60 other people were injured in the violence, and Australia and Papua New Guinea are both conducting investigations.

Mr Morrison says detainees risk their safety if they engage in riots, but says that service providers must abide by the law in any response.

The Greens and asylum seeker advocates have said that Mr Berati was "murdered" on the island.

Greens immigration spokeswoman Senator Sarah Hanson-Young says the Government is in cover-up mode and that eyewitness accounts since Monday have been dismissed.

"The Greens will be pushing for a parliamentary inquiry once parliament resumes this week because at the very least as parliamentarians we must keep the Government accountable for these appalling actions," she said.

"The Australian people are shocked at what happened on Manus Island.

"There is a firm view in the community that things have gone too far, Manus Island should be shut down and we should be treating people with more dignity and respect."

The Government says it will wait for the findings from its official review before commenting on individual reports about what took place.

Review may take months

Mr Morrison warned on Friday that an investigation to be conducted by former Attorney-General's Department secretary Robert Cornall would take "some time" to gather the facts about the "very serious incident" in which 67 asylum seekers were injured.

The review is likely to take months, but Mr Morrison says it could take longer.

"I have indicated over the next few months I would like to see this matter at least get to some point of knowledge on this," he told reporters in Canberra.

"If that is not possible, it will take longer and [Mr Cornall] will be given support to do that."

Mr Berati arrived at Christmas Island with no family members on July 24 and was transferred to PNG one month later under the resettlement policy introduced by former prime minister Kevin Rudd.

One asylum seeker was flown to Australia for treatment for head injuries as a result of this week's riots. Four others, including one shot in the left buttock, are being treated in Port Moresby, while another asylum seeker is awaiting transfer to the capital.

Mr Morrison says he takes responsibility for things that happen on his watch.

"I do take responsibility for things that happen within my portfolio under my management, of course I do," he said.

"Since we came into office, I have been taking steps every day to try and upgrade and get the offshore processing facilities in a far better shape."

www.farmingahead.com.au/News/general/22/02/2014/207074/immigration-minister-scott-morrison-doubts-details-of-manus-island-detainee-s-death

Scott Morrison contradicts first account of Manus Island unrest

Immigration minister concedes most events – including the death of one asylum seeker – took place inside compound's perimeter

Paul Farrell

theguardian.com

Saturday 22 February 2014

Scott Morrison has contradicted his previous account of last week's unrest at the Manus Island processing centre, now conceding the events – including the death of one asylum seeker – occurred largely within the perimeter compound.

The immigration minister released a statement late on Saturday night saying: “I wish to confirm that contrary to initial reports received, I have received further information that indicates that the majority of the riotous behaviour that occurred, and the response to that behaviour to restore order to the centre, took place within the perimeter of the centre.

“As advised on the afternoon of Tuesday February 18, I indicated that I had received further information which meant that I could no longer confirm that the deceased man sustained his injuries outside the centre. The further information I have now received casts further doubt on the initial advice that his injuries were sustained outside the centre.”

Protests at the Manus centre escalated last Sunday night, leading to violence involving guards, local contractors and asylum seekers. One asylum seeker was killed during the disturbance and several were seriously injured.

At media briefings during the week Morrison berated journalists for raising reports that contradicted his initial statements about the location of events. Morrison had emphasised the greater risk to asylum seekers who had left the perimeter of the facility and the limited guarantees of protection Australia could provide for those outside.

The Labor frontbencher and former immigration minister Chris Bowen said on Sunday the developments were “deeply concerning”.

“We've had a death, which is a tragedy, and we've got a minister who frankly treats the public, the parliament and the media with contempt and drip-feeds out information – and now we see that information is wrong as often as it is right,” Bowen told the ABC on Sunday.

“If he thinks a written statement at 9 o'clock on a Saturday night is being transparent then he is sadly mistaken. He should explain not only what went on here but also when he was told that the information he had previously released was wrong.”

Bowen said Morrison was “very certain of his facts last week”.

“He was lecturing the Australian people and journalists and the shadow minister and everybody to be clear of their facts. Now we know he was the one that was wrong and he's got a lot of explaining to do.”

Bowen said the Manus Island centre was an important part of Australia's immigration policies but Morrison must ensure it was being run in a way that did “not unduly endanger human life”.

At a media conference about the unrest on Tuesday, Morrison said: “The deceased person involved a head injury and that person passed away on transfer to the Lorengau Hospital. The injury was sustained outside the centre.”

On Friday Morrison identified the dead asylum seeker as Reza Berati, a 23-year-old from Iran. Berati had arrived in Australia on 24 July, 2013, and was sent to Manus Island.

It is not yet clear whether the PNG coroner will also conduct an inquiry into Berati’s death. Coronial inquests must be approved by the PNG National Executive Council. It has yet to issue any approval in Berati’s case.

Morrison initially appeared certain about the accuracy of the information he was receiving about the riots, but he has gradually retreated from his original statement.

In Tuesday’s media conference he emphasised the limited protection Australia could offer asylum seekers who had escaped the perimeter compound.

“If people chose to remove themselves from that centre then they are obviously putting themselves at a place of much greater risk and in an environment like that where there is violent behaviour on the part of those who are breaching the perimeter fence and going out of the centre then this is a disorderly environment in which there is always great risk.”

In his second media conference he said he had received “conflicting reports” about the incident and the location of the asylum seeker who was killed.

“Where physically this took place based on the information I have received this afternoon, that is a matter where there are some conflicting reports.”

A review has been commissioned into the incidents at Manus Island that will examine the conduct of service providers and people found to be within the compound. An investigation by Papua New Guinea authorities is also under way.

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/scott-morrison-contradicts-account-manus-island-unrest

Scott Morrison denies communication breakdown with G4S over Manus

Immigration minister declines to say who provided incorrect information about the Manus Island violence

Paul Farrell
theguardian.com
Saturday 22 February 2014

Immigration minister Scott Morrison has denied a breakdown in communication with detention centre service provider G4S after he was forced to correct earlier statements he made about the Manus Island disturbances.

On Sunday the minister defended the clarification he issued late on Saturday night, which conceded the events – including the death of one asylum seeker – occurred largely within the perimeter compound.

Asked who provided the initial incorrect reports and what steps had been taken to verify them, Morrison said: “You do the normal discussion you have with the people who are reporting to you on that morning and make the usual requests you do in that situation, and as I said they were qualified [and] they’ve been updated ... I’m not going into the source of those.”

In defence of the clarification, the minister said that “information is rarely perfect so soon after the event”.

“This does not rule out incidents having occurred outside the perimeter of the facility, however it is important to have made this clarification.”

In a remarkable development, G4S appear to have been unaware of the minister’s press release from last night, despite the fact that it directly contradicts their own release about the events on Manus on 18 February that “a number of transferees were injured after they breached the perimeter fence and the matter became a law enforcement issue for PNG authorities”.

A spokesman for G4S asked Guardian Australia to pass on a copy of the minister’s release on Sunday. A statement from G4S is expected shortly.

The Greens leader, Christine Milne, called on Tony Abbott to sack Morrison over his handling of the situation.

“The prime minister must sack the minister and close his cruel refugee prisons immediately,” she said.

The Labor frontbencher and former immigration minister Chris Bowen said on Sunday the developments were “deeply concerning”.

“We’ve had a death, which is a tragedy, and we’ve got a minister who frankly treats the public, the parliament and the media with contempt and drip-feeds out information – and now we see that information is wrong as often as it is right,” Bowen told the ABC on Sunday.

“If he thinks a written statement at 9 o’clock on a Saturday night is being transparent then he is sadly mistaken. He should explain not only what went on here but also when he was told that the information he had previously released was wrong.”

www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/scott-morrison-denies-communication-breakdown-g4s-manus

Tony Abbott defends Scott Morrison's bungled information on Manus Island violence

The Age

February 23, 2014

Jonathan Swan, James Robertson and Bianca Hall

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has defended Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's bungled information about the death and violence on Manus Island, adding that there was "very little damage" to the detention centre and that the riot had been "dealt with".

Mr Abbott also rejected any suggestions he might have lost confidence in the Immigration Minister, saying Mr Morrison was "strong and decent" and that Australians would not want a "wimp" defending their borders.

"The point I want to make about Scott Morrison is that he is an absolutely outstanding minister," Mr Abbott told journalists in Sydney on Sunday.

"He's doing a great job for our country. You don't want a wimp running border protection, you want someone who is strong, who is decent and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent."

Mr Abbott said the "important thing" was that his government was "stopping the boats" and "ending the deaths".

Pressed further, in light of the death of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati, who now appears to have been killed inside the Australian government-controlled detention centre, Mr Abbott said Mr Morrison was doing an "absolutely sterling job".

"We are stopping the border protection costs blowout that existed under the former government," Mr Abbott said.

The Prime Minister said Mr Morrison had provided the information about the Manus Island riots as soon as it arrived.

"It was a very, very serious riot," he added.

"The interesting thing is that, despite the seriousness of the riot, there was very little damage unlike an earlier riot in Nauru, unlike an earlier riot at Villawood.

"There was very little damage and by the next morning the centre was operating, people were being fed, housed and clothed.

"Now, obviously you would rather not have riots, but if there are riots they have to be dealt with and this one was dealt with."

Only told on Saturday: Morrison

Earlier, Mr Morrison said he was told during the day on Saturday that he had misinformed the public about violence that occurred inside the Manus Island detention centre.

Fronting a hastily convened press conference in Sydney on Sunday, Mr Morrison reiterated that he had been wrong to assure the Australian public on Tuesday that violent riots - that led to a death of an asylum seeker on Monday night - had occurred outside the Manus Island detention centre.

In a statement issued on Saturday night, Mr Morrison admitted that much of the information he had given to the Australian public since Monday's riot was now in doubt.

Mr Morrison said on Sunday that his initial information was that the violence had taken place outside the detention centre.

"It was important to brief on the issue as early as possible as there had been a tragic death," Mr Morrison said.

During the week, Mr Morrison had claimed that Mr Berati had been outside the centre when he died.

"This is a tragedy, but this was a very dangerous situation where people decided to protest in a very violent way and to take themselves outside the centre and place themselves at great risk," the minister said on Tuesday.

But in the Saturday night statement, Mr Morrison said he had new information that cast further doubt on that claim.

The minister's press conference was quickly followed by a statement from the company that runs the Manus detention centre, G4S, which said it would review its original account of the riot because "new information [had come] to hand".

"G4S will take the strongest disciplinary action against any employee found to have been involved in any wrongdoing against any person in our care," the company said.

Mr Morrison had said G4S staff would be investigated as part of an independent review he commissioned into the incident would look at the service provider's actions.

"When transferees engage in riotous and aggressive behaviour in the centre this will escalate the risk to everyone," he said.

"However, in such circumstances service providers must conduct themselves lawfully."

Mr Morrison admitted on Sunday that information was "rarely perfect" immediately after an event. He added that he had tried to update the public as information became available.

But he declined to say whether G4S had provided his office with information that suggested the incident had taken place outside the centre.

"I'm not going into the source," he said.

"The information was provided in good faith."

Mr Morrison also did not explain why it took until Saturday night to confirm conclusively that Mr Berati had died inside the centre.

"As time goes on the picture becomes clearer," he said.

He declined to comment on whether he believed that Mr Berati was necessarily behaving in a "riotous" manner, or the behaviour of G4S staff at the time of the incident.

"I'm not going to speculate," he said.

Mr Morrison said these questions would be determined by an independent review and police investigation.

Mr Morrison said Mr Berati's body was in the process of being sent to Port Moresby and would undergo an autopsy.

Mr Morrison said he had faith in the PNG justice system and would not comment on whether it was appropriate to have allowed G4S guards to watch over Mr Berati's body despite also potentially being subjects of an investigation.

"These centres by definition will always be tense places because people don't want to be there," he said. Mr Morrison said the government was in control of the Manus Island centre.

"The centre is under control as we speak right now," he said. "Within hours of this incident taking place, the centre resumed operations."

Mr Morrison also quashed reports the government was considering closing the PNG detention centre.

"The Manus Island processing centre will remain under this government," he said.

When asked about whether Australia's international standing had been damaged by images of the riot and disorder, he said: "I have a very clear task and that is to stop the people smuggling trade coming to Australia," he said.

"[Asylum seeker deaths at sea] were as tragic as the death I had to report earlier this week."

Labor attacks Morrison

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles attacked Mr Morrison for releasing the information in the "dead of night" about 9pm on Saturday, after the Sunday newspapers had been sent to the printers.

Mr Morrison denied he had done this deliberately, saying he had spent some time on Saturday confirming the information before he dispatched his press release last night.

But Mr Morrison said the Abbott government would not be "intimidated" into shuttering the Manus Island detention centre, despite suggestions that the security agency in charge of the centre had lost control of the detainees.

A spokesman for G4S flatly denied to News Corp Australia on Thursday that its staff were involved in the riot, saying: "G4S was not involved in any violence with detainees."

Fairfax Media was unable to contact G4S on Saturday night, but it appears communication is less than perfect between the government and the security company.

Fairfax Media heard a voicemail message on Sunday in which a G4S spokesman asked a Guardian Australia journalist if he could send him a copy of the statement Mr Morrison "has allegedly made".

On Friday, Mr Morrison said the security company would be off the island within a week, when its contract expired.

Transfield, which runs operations on Nauru, will take over security on the island.

The conduct of staff on the night will be investigated as part of the review ordered by Mr Morrison, as well as that of others within the detention centre compound that night.

The Greens have called for Prime Minister Tony Abbott to sack Mr Morrison and close the Manus Island detention centre immediately.

"Tony Abbott had a direct line of duty of care to Reza Berati and he is now dead," Greens Leader Christine Milne said.

"He must take personal responsibility. Blaming the victims of this tragedy is cowardice."

Senator Milne repeatedly asserted that the asylum seeker's death was "murder", but could not say what evidence she had to support her assertion.

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-defends-scott-morrison-bungled-information-on-manus-island-violence-20140223-33a98.html

MEDIA RELEASE: Scott Morrison must resign; Manus Island is a crime scene and must be closed

RE-OPEN THE PHONES AND INTERNET

Sunday February 23, 2014

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Scott Morrison's admissions that he gave incorrect information about the attacks on asylum seekers on Manus Island is reason enough for him to resign.

Scott Morrison chose to ignore the huge amount of evidence that asylum seekers had been brutally attacked by G4S guards and PNG police.

"The evidence that the attacks occurred inside the detention centre was overwhelming, but Scott Morrison, relied on a concocted story to portray the asylum seekers as the ones responsible for the violence in the detention centre," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"It is clear that Morrison cannot guarantee the safety of asylum seekers. Worse, in spite of the obvious danger to the lives and welfare of the asylum seekers, he refuses to take measure to ensure their safety. He shows no interest in bringing those responsible for the violence to justice. Yet Reza was killed inside the detention centre, an area where Morrison said he could guarantee safety. He couldn't then; he won't now."

"Phone and internet access for asylum seekers has been cut off since Monday night -- those communications must be immediately restored," said Rintoul.

"In spite of the handover from G4S to Transfield that took place yesterday, Saturday 22 February, the same people who killed Reza Berati and savagely attacked 77 others still have the run of the Manus Island detention centre. Rarely has a minister been so derelict in his duty and cavalier regarding the welfare of those he is meant to protect.

"The Minister sent Lieutenant General Angus Campbell to review security -- but not for the asylum seekers. Like his Minister, the military head of Operation Sovereign Borders showed no interest in ensuring there is an open inquiry or that asylum seekers are safe. Manus Island is a crime scene. Mike compound in particular should have been sealed off to allow to collection of evidence.

"Scott Morrison must step down or be sacked. The violence of Operation Sovereign Borders has been starkly revealed in the turn backs and now the attacks on defenceless asylum seekers inside the wire on Manus Island

"The asylum seekers must be immediately moved off the island to guarantee their safety. Manus Island must be closed."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Scott Morrison defends release of new information on asylum seeker's death

ABC News Online

First posted Sun 23 Feb 2014, 5:14pm AEDT

Updated Sun 23 Feb 2014, 5:21pm AEDT

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says he only learnt of new information yesterday that the fatal injury of an asylum seeker on Manus Island may have occurred inside the detention centre.

In initially announcing the news of last Monday's riot, Mr Morrison had said 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Berati sustained a fatal head injury outside the centre.

But he released a statement last night saying that new information suggests the incident, along with much of the riot, occurred inside the detention centre's perimeter.

More than 60 other people were injured in the violence, and Australia and Papua New Guinea are both conducting investigations.

The Federal Opposition has called for an explanation and suggested Mr Morrison was not being transparent by releasing the statement on a Saturday night.

But Mr Morrison told a press conference this afternoon that he only received the updated information yesterday.

"I'm simply giving you the information that I have and when that information is updated, I'm updating you. That's the transparent approach," he said.

Govt 'won't be intimidated'

Greens Leader Christine Milne says Mr Morrison should be sacked and the detention centre should be closed.

"Prime Minister Abbott must take personal responsibility for the death of Reza Berati on Manus Island," she said.

"He must close down Manus Island immediately and sack his minister Scott Morrison."

But Mr Morrison says the centre will not be shut down.

"This Government will not be intimidated into closing this centre, nor will we be intimidated into walking away from polices that are stopping the boats," he said this afternoon.

"These updates were provided in good faith and we will continue to provide updates in good faith."

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles says Mr Morrison has "no idea what the facts are".

"This is a man who is not in charge of the Manus Island detention facility, and it raises enormous questions about his ability to continue to manage this issue," he told ABC News 24.

"His statement last night raises more questions than answers."

However, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has praised his minister's handling of the incident.

"The point I want to make about Scott Morrison is that he is an absolutely outstanding Minister. He's doing a great job for our country," he said.

"You don't want a wimp running the border.

"You want someone who is strong, who is decent, and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent."

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-23/morrison-defends-new-info-on-asylum-seeker-manus-death/5278046

600 vigils for slain asylum seeker on Manus

Australians to hold vigils for slain asylum seeker on Manus

AAP / The Age
February 23, 2014

Thousands of Australians will gather at vigils across the country to light candles for slain Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati.

Sam McLean from activist group GetUp says more than 600 snap protests are planned for Sunday night, from Queensland cattle stations to Sydney's Town Hall and Federation Square in Melbourne.

The protests come days after Mr Berati, 23, was killed and 62 other asylum seekers were injured in violent scenes at the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

Mr McLean said the mood would be sombre on Sunday as families and friends observed a moment's silence.

"I think people are very sad and, I would say, a little ashamed that Australia is turning its back on these people," he said.

"A lot of vigil organisers have said they'll be singing the Australian national anthe [which includes the words]: 'To those who come across the seas, we've boundless plains to share.'

"Those people have told me they want to see us advance Australia fair, not advance Australia cruel."

He said participants wanted more transparency about the Manus Island facility from Immigration Minister Scott Morrison.

"We don't know what is being done in our names," he said.

"We don't know the conditions children are being held under on a malarial island. Journalists are not being allowed in to report back to us.

"Our strong message to Scott Morrison is: end the secrecy."

The vigils are due to take place at 8pm (local time) in most major cities, with prominent figures including Imogen Bailey, Father Bob Maguire and Tim Costello all tipped to take part.

www.theage.com.au/national/australians-to-hold-vigils-for-slain-asylum-seeker--on-manus-20140223-339w2.html

Vigils for slain asylum seeker

The Age

February 24, 2014

Goya Dmytryshchak

Among a sombre crowd at Melbourne's candlelight vigil for slain asylum seeker Reza Berati was one man who shared the same name, the same Kurdish background and a similarly harrowing background.

Reza, 29, was among about 5000 people who lit a candle at Federation Square on Sunday night to mourn and remember the 23-year-old detainee who died during violent clashes at an Australian-run detention centre on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

The Glenroy man said he had come support the Iranian man's family and "all the other Rezas" who had died.

"I'm a refugee myself," he said.

"I came four years ago by boat and I was in a detention centre and I've been through all those difficulties that asylum seekers are going through now these days.

"I just came to show Reza's family that we will never forget Reza and, at the same time, to tell the federal government we are not happy with these changes and policies, and we will support asylum seekers as much as we can, and we will never forget Reza and other Rezas who die in the sea.

"A lot of Kurdish have been killed in Iraq, in Syria, in Turkey and other countries, and we thought we will be safe and secure if we leave our country and come to first-world countries like Australia."

A tattoo on his forearm states: "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

World Vision Australia CEO Tim Costello and former Victorian of the Year Father Bog Maguire spoke at the event, which was organised by activist group Get Up.

"I'm coming to the vigil straight from Sunday Mass, and the message is the same at both: our decency is judged by how we treat poor souls like Reza," Father Bob said.

"This young man came to us seeking protection and safety. Instead he was brutally killed in our care, in our detention, and in our names."

Werribee woman Karen Morrissey said she believed Manus Island should be closed down.

I don't think the refugees there are safe.

"It really really worries me about how the government is treating people who are running away from life-threatening situations in other countries, and it really bothers me that at Manus Island and at the other places where the asylum seekers are detained that we're treating them so appallingly."

Altona Meadows' mother Shelley Bernoth, who lit a candle with daughter, Stephanie, said attending the vigil meant a lot to them because seeking asylum was not illegal.

"No one should be dying in detention centres and we should be caring more for people who are in detention," she said. "We should have never had to be here tonight."

Iranian refugee Jahangir Hosseini also came to the square with daughter, Nosrat, who is involved with the Iranian Women's Association.

"I've come out today, along with other members of the Iranian community, to show my support and my solidarity for refugees who have fled from horrific circumstances in their home country, whether that be Iran, Iraq or Afghanistan," Ms Hosseini said.

"This is a bleak chapter in our history and the international community will judge Australia very harshly for its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees whose only crime is to seek asylum."

GetUp national director Sam Mclean said that about 15,000 people attended more than 750 vigils across Australia to demand an independent inquiry into Mr Berati's death and "proper public scrutiny of detention camps".

www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/vigil-for-slain-asylum-seeker-20140224-33axg.html

Candlelight vigils held for slain asylum seeker Reza Berati who died on Manus Island

ABC News Online

First posted Mon 24 Feb 2014, 6:46am AEDT

Updated Mon 24 Feb 2014, 6:49am AEDT

Thousands of people have held candlelight vigils around Australia for slain asylum seeker Reza Berati, who died in violence at the Manus Island detention centre last Monday.

A crowd of 5,000 people gathered in Melbourne's Federation Square while 4,000 more rallied at Sydney's town hall, with candles lit for the 23-year-old man.

Activist group GetUp organised the rallies and said hundreds more events were held in other cities and towns around the country, in what were also intended as protests against the Federal Government's asylum seeker policies.

At the weekend, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison released a statement saying that new information suggests the fatal head injury sustained by Mr Berati, along with much of the violence that night, occurred inside the detention centre's perimeter.

The Federal Opposition has called for an explanation and suggested Mr Morrison was not being transparent by releasing the statement on a Saturday night.

Meanwhile, GetUp national director Sam McLean says the response to the recent unrest on Manus Island has been extraordinary.

"I think Australians are really turning around on this issue as we see more and more of what is being done in our names and with our taxpayer dollars and on our conscience," he said.

"I think Australians have been really shocked to see somebody who came here seeking our protection, as Reza did as an asylum seeker, to instead meet a very brutal death, and we're also very concerned with the way that all asylum seekers in our care are being treated."

Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support Network spokeswoman Emily Conolan, who spoke at the Hobart event, says a message needs to be sent to policy-makers.

"This is obviously not the first asylum seeker who has died while under Australian care," she said.

"[But] I suppose what this represents is a catalyst or a flash point which has mobilised people all round Australia who are shocked and disgusted and outraged at the events that have led to this."

Greens call for Morrison to resign

The Greens and refugee advocates are calling for Mr Morrison's resignation.

"[Prime Minister Tony] Abbott must take personal responsibility for the death of Reza Berati on Manus Island," Greens leader Christine Milne said.

"He must close down Manus Island immediately and sack his minister, Scott Morrison. Scott Morrison has continued to mislead the Australian people about what's been going on in Manus Island for a very long time."

But Mr Abbott has praised his Minister's handling of the incident.

"The point I want to make about Scott Morrison is that he is an absolutely outstanding minister. He's doing a great job for our country," he said.

"You don't want a wimp running the border.

"You want someone who is strong, who is decent, and Scott Morrison is both strong and decent."

Government 'won't be intimidated'

Mr Morrison has rejected calls for the detention centre to be shut down.

"This Government will not be intimidated into closing this centre, nor will we be intimidated into walking away from polices that are stopping the boats," he said.

"These updates were provided in good faith and we will continue to provide updates in good faith."

But Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles says Mr Morrison has "no idea what the facts are".

"This is a man who is not in charge of the Manus Island detention facility, and it raises enormous questions about his ability to continue to manage this issue," he told ABC News 24.

"His statement [on Saturday] night raises more questions than answers."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-24/candelight-vigils-for-slain-asylum-seeker/5278430>

Up to 1,000 people attend candlelight vigil in Perth over asylum seeker death on Manus

ABC News Online

First posted Mon 24 Feb 2014, 10:20am AEDT

Updated Mon 24 Feb 2014, 5:13pm AEDT

Around 1,000 people attended a candlelight vigil at Stirling Gardens last night to remember Reza Berati, the Iranian asylum seeker who died at Manus Island detention centre last week.

Berati died and several others were injured during a riot last Monday at the centre.

Vigils were held last night in cities across the country.

An estimated 4,000 people attended an event in Sydney, while in Melbourne around 5,000 people gathered at Federation Square.

Activist network GetUp's national director Sam McLean says too little is known about what is going on.

"The most concerning thing here at the moment is that we appear to have absolutely no idea what was going on on Manus Island because our Immigration Minister has pulled down a veil of secrecy over the island," he said.

"We don't know what's being done in our names, let alone with our taxpayer dollars."

A volunteer with the Refugee Rights Action Network, Sarah Ross, was at the Perth event.

Ms Ross says she has been receiving frequent text messages from asylum seekers and staff at the Manus Island centre.

"One particular message told a horrific scene of people wandering out of their rooms to check what was going on and having their hands held behind their back while they were attacked with a knife and receiving wounds on their neck that had to be stitched up," she said.

The Greens and refugee advocates have called for the Immigration Minister Scott Morrison to resign.

But the Prime Minister Tony Abbott said Mr Morrison is an absolutely outstanding minister, doing a great job.

www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-24/up-to-12c000-people-attend-asylum-vigil-in-perth/5279036