

## **Australia Should Halt Plan to Deport Refugees, Migrants to Nauru Multi-million-dollar Deportation Deal Puts Lives at Risk**

Last week, the Australian government struck a A\$400 million (US\$260 million) deal with Nauru to [deport 280 people](#) to the small Pacific island nation. It is also [proposing new](#) legislation to strip those facing deportation of their basic procedural rights.

The government is targeting refugees and migrants whom it had previously been forced to release from its onshore immigration detention system following a [landmark 2023 high court ruling](#). The court ruled that Australia's use of indefinite immigration detention was illegal. This triggered the release of about 280 people whom Australia had been holding indefinitely because the authorities were unable to deport them to their countries of origin, either because they would be put at risk at home or were stateless.

Rather than instituting a rights-respecting system, the government enacted [new laws](#) in 2024 allowing it to pay third-party countries to accept non-citizens, including refugees. These laws do not include adequate safeguards to protect refugees from harm or being returned to countries where they face persecution.

The government's proposed laws would also deny people targeted for deportation their due process rights. [A bill](#) amending the Migration Act states "the rules of natural justice do not apply" in deportation cases with third-party foreign country agreements. Human Rights Commissioner Lorraine Finlay [said](#) the bill removes "one of the most basic legal protections of a fair society: the right to be heard."

In February, the government [disclosed initial plans](#) to deport three men to Nauru. One [filed a complaint](#) with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, arguing that if he is deported to Nauru, Australia would be breaching its obligations under international human rights law not to deport him to a place where he may face death or ill-treatment. The Human Rights Committee has asked Australia to halt his deportation while it reviews the case.

Refugees and asylum seekers previously forcibly transferred to Nauru by Australia have died from [medical neglect](#) and [suicide](#). Human Rights Watch research has [found](#) that people forcibly transferred to Nauru have suffered severe abuse, inhumane treatment, and neglect. This latest deportation plan will put hundreds more lives at risk.

Australia's punitive migration system has [already caused immeasurable harm to thousands of people](#) over decades in violation of international law. It is not too late for the government to halt this plan and prevent further abuses.