

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Mandatory Detention:

I have been in contact with a number of immigration detainees since 2002. Overall I have been appalled by the conditions of detention. I want to outline some examples.

Example One: Z██████████ - Port Hedland IRPC

I started having contact with Z██████████ in April 2002. He was an intelligent and sensitive man who had already been in detention for three years when I met him. We became close friends. We would talk regularly on the telephone. Some days the background noise would be loud and busy, with children shouting, people talking and even, occasionally, singing. On other days the centre would seem silent. I once asked Z██████████ why this was and he replied that on the quiet days everyone was too depressed to make noise.

In August 2003 Z██████████ was deported to his home county Bangladesh. On the day he was removed from Port Hedland he had arranged to call me. When he hadn't called by 9pm I tried to call him. The receptionist I spoke to at the centre was unnecessarily harsh and seemed very angry when she explained that Z██████████ was no longer in the centre. Below is an excerpt from a letter Z██████████ wrote describing his deportation.

"Australia immigration deported me on 3rd August 03 (Sunday) morning 4:30am. ACM took me 'k-block' (that time I was sleeping) and lock up me in a room, and they bring me my all things from my room and give me for packing my luggage. I had been did it. Even then my friends no one also don't know like this happening going with me (that time they were sleeping.) Then 8:00am they took me Port Hedland Airport. 9:00am I and with me two ACM officer fly to Perth. 12pm we were arrived in Perth and they keep me in Perth detention centre in a separate room. That time I was request to them many time for a phone call but they refuse me. Then next morning (Monday) 6:00am they took me Perth Airport."

I find it cruel that the deportation took place without warning so early in the morning- this practice can do nothing to enhance the detainees' sense of security. It also seems unfair not to allow Z██████████ the chance to call me, as this caused both him and me considerable distress.

Example Two: Baxter IDF

In May 2003 I began corresponding with a young man in the Baxter IDF. I will not use this mans name because he requested that I never publicise any of his details.

One evening when we were talking on the telephone he seemed quite distressed, he told me that he had found a friend of his wandering aimlessly around the compound talking to himself. He explained to me that he had not known how to help his friend so all he did was make a cup of tea. The incident had upset him greatly. He was worried about the mental health of his friend, and himself. He used to say to me 'Do you think I am crazy?' I would reply 'No.' He would then say 'If I'm not crazy then what am I?' I do not feel that his mental health needs were adequately met.

Example Three: Topside and Statehouse Camps, Nauru

Since 2003 I have received a number of requests for everyday items from detainees in Topside Camp, then later Statehouse Camp. Items requested included treats like chocolate, dried fruit and nuts (mostly for children) and clothes such as shirts, dresses, pants, socks and headscarfs. Soap and hand lotion was also requested. "Would you mind sending me dresses and pants and shirts for my brother Ali?" "We request you to send some clothing for my two children and some chocolate and other dried food." "Please I need scarf, soap and socks." "On first I say to you, but I feel quite ashamed for you, I am sorry I need on this time necessary T-shirts." (Excerpts from letters received from asylum seekers on Nauru. Of course, phone cards were and are also always highly sought. It appeared to me that even basic items such as clothes and soap must not have been adequately provided. The detainees were not requesting brand name clothes or expensive soaps. I also received complaints about the quality of the food "If anyone can eat food for more than 2 years every day some without she liked it."

The Immigration Minister has made it clear that the recent changes that have seen the release of children into 'community detention' do not extend to the Offshore Processing Centre (OPC) on Nauru. While there are no longer any children remaining in the Nauru OPC there are no measures in place to prevent children being detained there in the future.

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