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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MIGRANT & REFUGEE OFFICE

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MEDIA RELEASE Sydney, Wednesday, 4 April 2012

Research in Afghanistan uncovers horrors faced by Australia's deportees

As death risks rise, humanitarian appeal launched - to other nations!

Deportations research just conducted in Afghanistan by the respected Australian social justice organization, Edmund Rice Centre, has revealed further horrors confronted by asylum seekers who have been returned there by the Australian Government.

"In this visit to Kabul, further to our previous visits, we met and interviewed another 31 returned asylum seekers. Sadly, 29 of these 31 are living in extreme danger," affirmed ERC Director, Phil Glendenning. "We confirmed the deaths of another two returnees and the kidnapping of one other who is now presumed dead."

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"The majority of these men are unable to live with their wives and children because of the risk their simple presence would pose to the safety of their family," he said. "We were able to find a 17 year old boy who was sent back from Australia last year and has ended up living on the street."

"One man I interviewed had recently survived a rocket being fired through his house. His wife and his father were killed instantly. He lives now in hiding in Kabul - along with his six children – all under the age of nine."

"The returnees are being actively targeted for having left the country, because they are seen as being favourable to the West, and many are falsely held to have converted to Christianity. According to the Independent Human Rights Commission the situation is deteriorating rapidly and security just fifteen minutes on the road to Ghazni cannot be guaranteed," Mr Glendenning continued.

"We hold deep concern as to both the accuracy and independence of the information about the security situation for civilians in Afghanistan that was provided to asylum seekers whilst held in Australia's detention centres. The evidence provided by the returnees in our interviews indicates the systemic use of deceptive practices as part of a strategy to coerce the signing of forms accepting voluntary repatriation or to encourage acceptance of forcible removal from Australia."

"These asylum seekers and their families should never have been returned to Afghanistan. They must not now continue to be forgotten," he said.

"The Edmund Rice Centre is recommitting to doing three things: firstly, publishing the results of our research of the deportees' cases for the UN and the Australian Government; secondly, with this research lobbying in Australia and internationally for changes and increased safeguards and oversight; thirdly, rebuilding public awareness to highlight the appalling mistakes made and the need for Australia to take responsibility for what we have done, and to work to get these poor people finally to safety."

"In the past the Edmund Rice Centre has had some success in advocating through the UN for the asylum seekers deported from Australia to achieve resettlement in the US, UK, Canada, NZ and Sweden. This year we will be taking this humanitarian appeal to these same nations again," Mr Glendenning said.

"It is hard to believe we share the same planet. At some stage our nation has got to recover its humanity. I think that doing whatever we can to help those thrown away by us is a step in that direction."

Over the past ten years the Edmund Rice Centre has conducted research into what happens to Australia's rejected asylum seekers. Two major reports have been published Deported to Danger and Deported to Danger II – leading to the making of the television documentary, A Well Founded Fear, which screened nationally in 2008.

For interview or comment contact:-

Phil Glendenning: 0419 013 758 or Sean Cleary: 0403 434 512

Community Placement Network

About the Community Placement Network

The Community Placement Network (CPN) is an initiative of the Australian Homestay Network (AHN) to offer short-term, homestay accommodation to eligible asylum seekers leaving immigration detention.

The Australian Red Cross will provide – complex case work support, a basic living allowance, support in accessing accommodation options, access to general healthcare and referrals to services such as social support and education.

Asylum seekers leaving immigration detention to reside in the community on a Bridging visa

The CPN initiative complements the Australian Government announcement of greater use of community detention and temporary visas to more flexibly manage irregular maritime arrivals seeking asylum in Australia.

A Bridging visa allows an asylum seeker to live lawfully in Australia rather than in an immigration detention facility until their immigration case is resolved.

Asylum seekers leaving immigration detention on Bridging visas will not be provided with public housing. It is expected that many will find their own accommodation in the private rental market. However, some may have family, friends or other community support mechanisms available to them.

Others, who demonstrate a need for assistance, may be eligible for transitional support, including short-term accommodation, under existing support programs. Visit the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) website for more information.

All irregular maritime arrivals released from immigration detention to reside in the community on a Bridging visa are granted permission to work.

The Community Placement Network as short-term accommodation support

The Community Placement Network screen, train, guide and support volunteer hosts throughout their homestay experience. The homestay arrangement is for a period of six weeks and hosts are reimbursed agreed accommodation costs through AHN via their guest paying board.

In line with existing DIAC programs, the Australian Red Cross administers transitional and ongoing support services to eligible asylum seekers on a needs basis. The Community Placement Network facilitates short-term accommodation when leaving immigration detention, under homestay arrangements. This short-term accommodation support is designed to assist eligible asylum seekers as they establish their own living arrangements in the community while their immigration case is being resolved.

Would you like to be a host in the Community Placement Network?

- Do you have a spare room/s?
- Do you live near public transport?
- Are you interested in assisting an asylum seeker to support themselves in the Australian Community?
- Are you respectful of different cultures and keen to learn about other cultures?

If you answered "YES" to all of the above questions then you may be able to [Join as a Host](#) in the Community Placement Network.

Contact the Community Placement Network by phoning **1300 "MY STAY"** (1300 697 829) or +61 2 8905 0321.

Upcoming Events

Second annual Bishop Joseph Grech Memorial Colloquium
on Ethics and Migration

***Australia's Moral Obligations to people
Seeking Asylum***

Thursday 30 August 2012 : 7pm- 9pm

Central Hall Melbourne : Australian Catholic University

"I HAVE HEARD THEM CRYING OUT" Ex 3:7

Third National Conference on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees

5-7 December 2012

St Patrick's Campus Melbourne: Australian Catholic University

