



No government spin will undo Australia's 'dirty push-back deals' with Indonesia

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"No matter how fast and how hard the Immigration Minister and the Foreign Affairs Minister push their spin lines this week over "some people who are not Indonesian who might like to come to Australia" now that Indonesia alludes to releasing its held asylum seekers, those spin lines remain just that - because pushed-back asylum seekers, warehoused by Indonesia under its secret deals with the Australian government, remain and will always remain Australia's responsibility," WA Rights group Project SafeCom said this morning.

"Mr Howard and the Foreign Minister, the Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty and the Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone may not want to release any details of the vast amounts of money that went to Indonesia under its dirty deals to hold back legitimate asylum seekers who since Tampa in 2001 have attempted to cross to Australia, but they may not need to release these details: it seems that Indonesia may do that releasing for Australia, by now starting to release the asylum seekers it has held, and helping them into boats to cross to Australia," spokesman Jack H Smit said.

Today, political commentator Michelle Grattan in The Age mentions a figure of "many thousands" when she comments on those who are stuck in Indonesia at the behest of Australia.

"Perhaps finally, we will be able to uncover Howard's dirty deals with Indonesia and the AFP's dirty deals with Indonesia, by which Howard has been able to silence his critics, and claim he is in control of our northern borders."

"The truth is, that Indonesia and not the Australian Prime Minister is in control of the downflow of boatpeople through Indonesia, and the truth is, that Australia remains responsible to receive and process in accordance with the UN Convention those who seek asylum in our country, also those who arrive via other countries that have not signed the UN Refugee Convention, and also those who were stopped as long as five years ago at the height of Operation Relex and its associated operatives inside Indonesia."

"If asylum seekers from countries like Iraq and Afghanistan have been warehoused by Indonesia for years and years at the behest of John Howard, they remain legitimate asylum seekers."

"Howard's dirty deals with Indonesia since Tampa may start to come unstuck. Project SafeCom welcomes that. The Prime Minister created this mess, and it is the Prime Minister who now has to face up to his own music. You can set up dirty deals with a country like Indonesia only for as long as you don't do the wrong thing by them. If you break this embedded code in any dirty deal, it will come unstuck," Mr Smit said.

"The sea cannot give up its dead, as in the case of the SIEV X, but Indonesia may very well start spewing up the thousands of legitimate asylum seekers it has up till now held back from reaching Australia. They should indeed all come, and be fairly and quickly processed in accordance with the UN Refugee Convention," Mr Smit concluded.

For more information:

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