



Christmas Island detention places Papuan families in direct murder danger

Media Release

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"The fact that DIMIA has placed Papuan families, men, women and children in staff housing, openly visible from the beach on Christmas island, places them as well as their families and relatives in West Papua in a direct 'line of fire' and in direct danger of being identified by Indonesians who travel directly to the island under the guise of a holiday visa on the weekly one-hour flight from Denpasar," WA Rights group Project SafeCom said this morning.

Australian West Papua Association member Mr Ned Byrne, who lives in Bunbury in Western Australia, is convinced that Indonesians want nothing but the deaths of the families, while Christmas Island refugee advocate Kaye Bernard 'arranged' for photos of some children to be taken from the beach earlier this week. (photo available on request)

"Not only this, Mr Byrne also confirmed to Project SafeCom that a Priest in Wamena, who was the first political prisoner in West Papua and who's three children are amongst those who sailed to Australia two weeks ago, has been approached by Indonesians with a list of names and was asked whether this was the list of people who were indeed on the boat - and that the Priest felt he had no choice but to admit to these facts and confirm this list of names."

"Ms Bernard said that it was unbelievably easy to arrange photos to be made from the families. This is how easy it is for Indonesians 'who arrive on Christmas Island on a holiday' to photograph or film the families. There are just two Federal police officers on the island while everyone on Christmas Island is keen for Indonesians to frequent the island as tourists. Last week Indonesian officials travelled as soon as they could to Weipa to check up on the 43 Papuans who had just arrived - they were just a few hours too late."

"Placing the West Papuans in detention on Christmas Island, although it was slammed by the Commission of International Jurists, advocacy groups and activists as disgraceful because the Papuans came to the nearest country available to them, made themselves immediately available to authorities and came in their own hand-made traditional vessel - and not a vessel supplied by people smugglers - was endorsed by the Prime Minister John Howard, and surely the Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone was also directly ordered by the PM to transfer the families to Christmas Island," said Project SafeCom spokesman Jack H Smit.

"Mr Howard's view of Australia as a country that has balanced also the influx of refugees is spin and self-aggrandisement and false, because his central tenet is the false notion that it is "illegal" to arrive unannounced on Australian shores, while those who do are claiming the well-established international right reserved under the Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention."

"Mr Howard's view of history is fabricated and manipulated; his skills of manipulating the facts for political gain are indeed the greatest skills he has - but it would be great if Australians on this Australia Day named these skills for what they are: mean, devoid of heart, compassion and generosity, and manipulative, skills that seek to delude the nation and re-write history in Mr Howard's own image."

The issues connected with the arrival of the Papuans will be discussed during a Forum in Fremantle at Kulcha Multicultural Association. In addition to Project SafeCom's Mr Smit, Mr Byrne and Ms Bernard as well as Greens Senator for NSW, refugee spokesperson for the Greens Kerry Nettle - who will visit Christmas Island this weekend - will be part of the Forum. Contact details for Mr Byrne and Ms Bernard are available on request.

Fremantle Forum details:

Kulcha Multicultural Association, South Terrace, Fremantle WA, Tuesday January 31, 7pm

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