



WHAT ARE THE NAURU FILES?

The Nauru Files refer to the more than 2,000 incident reports written by staff of the Nauru Offshore Detention Centre that were leaked to The Guardian newspaper in August this year. The reports detail allegations of sexual and physical abuse, neglect and self-harm reported between 2013 and 2015.

Inhumane conditions and violence are endemic not only in the culture of the Nauru detention centre but across the Australian Government’s asylum seeker policies and operations.

Nauru may be the world’s smallest island state, but it is effectively a “client state” of Australia and as such, Australia is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the detainees housed there.

On the last official count at the end of June 2016, 442 people – 338 men, 55 women and 49 children – were held on Nauru at Australia’s request.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence and intimidation are continual themes in the incident reports. In one report, an asylum seeker described being told she was “on a list” written by local Nauruan guards they were “waiting for” and had offered “to get her pregnant when she gets out”. She also reported that, when on an excursion, another female aslyum seeker had been approached by a local Nauruan “who offered to take her virginity if she was still a virgin”.

CHILDREN IN DETENTION ON NAURU

Although children constitute less than 20% of those in detention on Nauru, they are involved in more than 50% of the incident reports. There are seven reports of sexual assault on children, 59 reports of assault on children, 30 of self-harm involving children and 159 of threatened self-harm involving children.

In one incident, a mother reported how, four months earlier in January 2015, her husband and their son had been alone with two Wilson security guards. The son told his father that one guard had “put his hand up his shorts and was playing with his bottom”. The father did not say anything to the Wilson security guards nor did he report the incident “as he feared the two Nauruan officers”.

The files also document sexualised behaviour demonstrated by some of the children on Nauru; a behaviour which often indicates trauma and sexual abuse.



Image from the Australian Human Rights Commission. (Submission 194 to the AHRC inquiry into children in immigration detention - depicts an incident of self-harm).

SELF HARM

Self-harm is reported at an almost epidemic rate on Nauru, with incident reports including people ingesting chemicals, swallowing rocks, and one man even trying to eat a sandwich full of metal screws.

A report from March 2015 details a male asylum seeker who attempted to cut his wrists. "There were three cuts to his left wrist area... blood on the floor.. drops of blood in the hallway leading to the room".

Another report from June 2015, details a young male drinking from a bottle of cleaning fluid; he "reached up and took a bottle of cleaning fluid... took the top off and ran out of the classroom. As he ran he attempted to drink the liquid... he did ingest up to a cup full of the liquid".

RESPONSE TO THE NAURU FILES

Of more than 2,000 incident reports written by staff at the Nauru detention centre, 19 have been referred to Nauru police and there have been no prosecutions.

President of the Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, said that the material was extremely distressing to read and that children were vastly over-represented in the incident reports. Australian Human Rights Watch director, Elaine Pearson, said that the files paint a "disturbing picture" of conditions on Nauru.

Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, has called for a Senate inquiry into the abuse on Nauru. Greens leader, Richard Di Natale, has supported the call for a Senate inquiry but has also called for a royal commission into the allegations of abuse, self-harm, and neglect documented in the Nauru Files.

The Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has rejected calls for a royal commission, claiming further investigation into the reports is needed before action is taken. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton ruled out a royal commission, dismissing many of the incidents as "false allegations in an attempt to get to Australia."

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Find out more about the Nauru Files through The Guardian's interactive database:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-the-lives-of-asylum-seekers-in-detention-detailed-in-a-unique-database-interactive>

Join the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA)

which brings together Catholic peak bodies across education, health, welfare and the broader church along with key national Catholic organisations and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Many parishes and local communities are ready to assist to 'Bring Them Here' to Australia.

You are invited to contact CAPSA at www.capsa.org.au or info@capsa.org.au.

Social media - #BringThemHere #WithRefugees #YearOfMercy

Participate in the **Welcome to Australia "Walk Together 2016"** rally which will be taking place on **Saturday October 22**. Find out more at: <https://www.welcometoaustralia.org.au/walk-together-2016/>

Join the **Welcome Dinner Project** (photo below) an initiative by Joining the Dots which invites new and established Australians to share a meal together: <https://www.joiningthedots.org/>



Image from Sydney Morning Herald