

FAST OF SOLIDARITY WITH WOOMERA REFUGEES

July 7, 2002.

With extraordinary compassion and kindness to the refugees, the two South Australians, Craig Hendry and Jack Desbiolles, have been fasting since Monday. Craig and Jack have taken this action in solidarity with Woomera refugees who have been in hunger strike for two weeks. The two hunger strikers have been maintaining their vigil at the steps of South Australian Parliament House since the commencement of the solidarity action on Monday July 1, 2002.



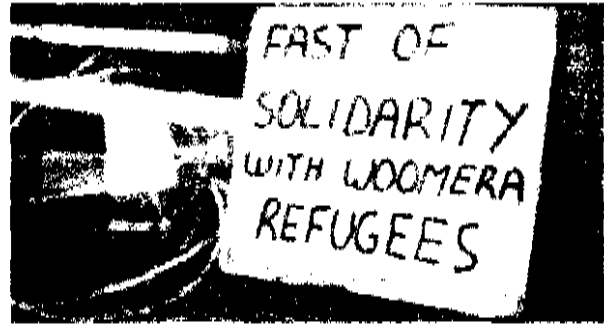
Craig Hendry

The two hunger strikers believe that Australian Government's treatment of Woomera refugees is unjust and appeal to the government for leniency in dealing with refugees. By taking hunger strike action here in Adelaide, they wish to send a message of hope and solidarity to the refugees in

**Reported by The Network for
International Protection of Refugees**
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Woomera who already are in their 14th day on hunger strike.

Woomera Immigration Detention Centre is located in the middle of South Australian desert 500km north of Adelaide. The Australian Federal Government is implementing the policy of long-term mandatory detention for asylum-seekers who arrived Australia by boat.



Since its opening, the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre has been rife with protests, hunger strikes and numerous cases of suicide attempt by the detainees. Of the latest, 190 detainees including children have been involved in the hunger strike. Fifty of the detainees have sewed their lips.

Since the beginning of the hunger strike in Adelaide, various South Australian refugee support groups have rallied behind the action of two activists. Flinders University Chiloout Group and Refugee Action Collective (SA) have been mobilising to support with a National Day of Hunger Strike. The South Australian Justice for Refugees has also been planning to maintain a vigil in front of the Parliament House every evening in the next week. Many groups in other states are also planning for supportive actions.

Jack Desbiolles



The Network for International Protection of Refugees has asked the two hunger strikers if they wanted to convey any message to the people in Adelaide. Craig and Jack said that they are especially touched by the sincerity and commitment of individuals and organizations in Adelaide which support refugees. They also thank people who have rang them and supported their action.

**Craig and Jack can be contacted by mobile
040-881-1824 or you can visit South Australian
Parliament House in Adelaide.**

50 refugees sew lips in hunger strike

The Canberra Times 28.6.02

ADELAIDE: Fifty asylum-seekers at the Woomera detention centre had sewn their lips together as part of an ongoing hunger strike, a detainee said yesterday.

About 190 asylum-seekers including 15 children, aged between six and 12, and a pregnant woman, were refusing to eat at the centre in South Australia's north, detainee Ramzi Rihei said by telephone.

They have vowed to continue the hunger strike until they die.

Mr Rihei said children had chosen to take part in the hunger strike, which entered its fourth day yesterday, against the wishes of their parents. "The parents, they obligate the children to eat," Mr Rihei said. "But the problem is [the] children, they don't want to eat."

"There's a woman pregnant. We tried to ask her to eat and her husband said to her and some officers [said]: 'Please eat'. But she didn't. She didn't want to eat. She wants to kill herself." He said the hunger strikers had started to feel weak.

The Immigration Department said yesterday 164 detainees, including 21 minors, were claiming to be on the hunger strike and did not attend dinner on Wednesday night. It said only four adult men had sewn their lips together.

But Mr Rihei said the department was playing down the scale of the hunger strike because "they want to cover everything up".

He said five detainees admitted to the Woomera hospital for self-harm injuries before the hunger strike were brought back to the detention centre at 11 pm on Wednesday to prevent them from talking to the media.

SA Justice for Refugees chairman David Winderlich said a 37-year-old woman was among those moved from the hospital.

He said the woman had tried to commit suicide in the belief it would give her son a better chance of staying in Australia.

"Things are hotting up and the fear is [that] if nothing is done to improve the situation they [the detainees] will be driven to take greater action," Mr Winderlich said.

An Immigration Department spokesman said there were no reports of detainees receiving medical treatment or attending hospital because of the hunger strike.

Join one of these active organizations and support refugees' human rights

Flinders University Chilout Group

Recently formed by Flinders university students, focusing to free the children from detention. Contact: Constance Lever-Tracey: <Soel @ psy1.ssn.flinders.edu.au>.

Refugee Action Collective(South Australia)

Collective of groups and individuals supporting refugee rights.

Meets every Tuesday 6:00pm at Adelaide University Student Union Building.

Exchange information: Organise rallies and raise public awareness.

Contact: Sarah Hanson 8303-5182: <greengirl @sarah-coral.com>.

South Australians for Justice for Refugees

Organise rallies, lobby politicians, raise public awareness and also provides humanitarian support to refugees. Can be joined with a small membership fee.

Contact: Serafina 8226-4118 <serafina@sacoss.org.au>.

Australian Refugee Association

Provides refugees with resettlement and humanitarian assistance;

Organise seminars to raise public awareness about refugees.

Contact: Director, Kevin Liston <refugee @australianrefugee.org.au>

Amnesty International Australia

The International human rights group which has several members within South Australia. AI in South Australia has a refugee team dedicated to lobby politicians and to raise awareness about refugees.

Contact: Nina Boydell 8221-5979: <sant@amnesty.org.au>.

The Network for

International Protection of Refugees

Formed since December 1998: Patron -- Sr. Janet Mead

Chair -- Rev'd Martin Chittleborough; Secretary -- Dr. U Ne Oo

Treasurer -- Mr. Salai Nilan; Executives -- Juan Garrido, Danny Connel,

Mary Secker, Tom McEvoy. The executive members meet on occasions.

We lobby the governments in Asia-Pacific region and offer free membership to those willing to help lobby the governments

(mostly letter writing).