

To whom it may concern.

I am writing this email to add my voice to the others in this country concerned about the treatment of refugees in detention centres.

I have been involved in voluntary work with newly arrived refugees for many years and have made friends with many of the people i have worked with. I have heard so many horrible stories about detention centres and the pain suffered by those who spend years in these prisons.

The worst outcome of time in detention that i have witnessed, has been the condition of young children who have spent time in detention. I have met children who have nightmares every night, where they relive seeing older people cutting or burning themselves in detention. Other children react by becoming mute or emotionally distant and can not communicate with people outside their families.

Many of the people i met have spent years waiting and waiting in detention, never knowing when they might be released or be deported. I oppose the indefinite, or prolonged, detention of humans who have committed no crime - especially as these are people fleeing desperate and traumatic experiences who require immediate psychiatric assistance or counseling. These people never receive the sort of help they need and deserve in detention; instead they are kept in limbo and treated like criminals. Being in long term detention has severe psychological and emotional effects. I know this from talking to people who have spent years in these centres - the pain they suffer is real and can effect them forever.

I oppose the deportation of refugees to countries where they may be persecuted and even murdered. The deportation of refugees contrivines international law and conventions and is completely immoral.

Many of my friends, especially young men, have reported being abused by people working in detention centres. This abuse has been both physical - hitting, kicking - and emotional - being told they are terrorists, scum, criminals. Young men and women have reported being laughed at, especially if they dont speak english well, and humiliated in public.

One man from Lebanon remembers being told by someone working in a detention centre, that it would have been better for his family if he had been killed by the people persecuting him in Lebanon.

I am writing this in a hurry, so i can not recall any specific stories of abuse in detention centres or abuses of power by the department of immigration. HOwever, i wish to state that i do not support the government's policy of mandatory detention or the current visa system. I believe that this is a racist system that is completely and utterly inhumane. It is inexcusable for a country like Australia to treat refugees in this way. People are hurting and being treated in a cruel manner, this is just not right.

The media and government in this country make it seem as though there is little support for refugees in this country. After working in this area, i have seen firsthand the massive outrage at the government over this issue. I have seen many people, from every part and level of society, working together to help refugees.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.
yours

Nina Boddenberg