

I am glad to take this opportunity to tell you some of what I learned from Afghani detainees who were held for years on Nauru about the effects of that detention.

I corresponded with a family of four. One child, three years old when released, knew of no other life. Her baby brother was born there. Since the Afghanis were released from Nauru in July 2004, I have worked with several families and young single people here in Melbourne and in Dandenong. Without exception, they speak of that time of incarceration as a time of bewildered and hopeless despair.

One man, a diabetic who was untreated for three years, has only now recovered his physical health. His mind is still affected by depression. Following are some quotes from the letters of Afghani detainees on Nauru:

(a)

' You can imagine some one who is far away from his/her country, relatives, and friends being detained with no sin and know guilt. All we did was escaping from persecution and saving our lives. If this is a crime, we are criminals and should be detained, but if it's not a crime, why are we in detention? Why are we isolated? Why are we not living in society like others? do they think we are not human beings?'

(b)

"Topside clinic is busy with every day increasing patients. People get different health problems and the medicines seem to be useless for them. The psychological section of the clinic is more busy than other sections. The number of people got psychological problems is increasing by passing every single day.....we have come here and escaped from our country of origion to live in peace and freedom. We don't want to be kept in cages like birds. We are human beings and deserve to live like other human beings. I wish to know the name of the one who created borders in the world. For sure he was the most evil man in the world.'

Yours sincerely, Bette Devine

Camberwell  
Vic