

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – AUGUST X, 2017

Tragedy on Manus highlights need to #BringThemHere

The tragic death of a 31-year old man in immigration detention on Manus Island should finally force the Federal Government's hand to #BringThemHere, says the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA).

"There have been so many horrifying stories and tragic events within Manus Island and Nauru, and the senseless death of Hamed Shamshiripour this week brings into sharp focus the fact that vulnerable people are suffering and resorting to tragic actions, on the Federal Government's watch," says Julie Edwards, Chair of CAPSA.

"Stories such as this demonstrate that offshore detention is systematically destroying people's spirits and hopes for a better life, all the while plans to resettle people in the USA remain unclear and the futures of many are in limbo.

"We, representing the Catholic community, call on the Federal Government to stop playing politics with so many lives and #BringThemHere."

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Migrants and Refugees, says Australia has long been known for its generous welcome of migrants and refugees however is drastically failing to show leadership.

"It is not illegal to seek asylum and I, and thousands of other members of the Vietnamese community, have been welcomed to Australia with open arms in the past," says Bishop Long.

"Australia is a wonderful country but where it is in terms of its treatment of asylum seekers should galvanise us into action. Pope Francis has called for a coordinated and effective response to people seeking asylum and it is imperative that Australia heeds his call."

CAPSA previously offered to lead a coordinated approach to support the people currently on Nauru and Manus Island and stands ready now to receive and support them if they can be brought to Australia. Many parishes, schools, community service organisations, health services and local communities are ready and keen to assist.

"CAPSA reiterates that it is ready and willing to coordinate the provision of housing, education, health and social services to those seeking asylum in Australia, and believes the Government cannot stand by and continue these cruel and inhumane policies that result in devastating consequences."

Bishop Long says that there is no excuse for Australia not to find more just and humane ways to deal with people seeking asylum. Most of those who are detained on Manus Island and PNG are proven refugees and the government and the people of Australia have an obligation to protect them and not to subject them to further suffering. We can no longer leave them languish in offshore detention centres without inflicting more pain and causing more tragedies to occur.

"Enough is enough – we must immediately #BringThemHere to afford them rightful protection, to prevent further harm and allow these vulnerable people the chance to seek asylum in Australia instead of inflicting further pain and punishment on them."

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