

2016 12 11 Refugee Action Coalition Media Alert

Monday Protest At NSW Education Department

Solidarity Protest With Teachers For Refugees

Stop The Intimidation: Hands Off The Teachers; End Offshore Detention

Refugee groups, Refugee Action Coalition, Mums for Refugees and Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children, and Sydney University Campus Refugee Action Collective have joined forces to call a protest in support of Teachers for Refugees and the right of teachers to wear pro-refugee T shirts saying “Close the Camps, Bring them Here” to school.

The protest will be held, Monday 12 December, 12.30pm, at NSW Department of Education offices, 1 Oxford St, Darlinghurst.

Teachers have received a message of support from refugees on Manus Island – see below.

Despite high levels of intimidation from federal and state government, hundreds of teachers in NSW and Victoria will be wearing T shirts and holding protests at schools in the week starting 12 December.

Some school principals have taken extraordinary steps of circulating “code of conduct” (and in some cases directly approaching teachers) messages along with threats of disciplinary action. In Victoria some principals are supporting the teachers’ right to wear the T shirts.

“It is a disgrace that the NSW Education Minister has gone along with the demands of Federal Education Minister Birmingham and Prime Minister Turnbull’s attempt to intimidate teachers from taking action in support of refugees,” said Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition.

“The government is only concerned when professionals like teachers, nurses and doctors take a stand against government-sanctioned human rights abuses. Nothing was said when teachers wore white ribbons in school to make a statement about domestic violence. The difference is that the violence against asylum seekers is government policy.

“For over three years, the government stalled on providing resettlement for those it had sent to Nauru. But in the face of the revelations of abuse documented in the Nauru files the government has been forced to negotiate a resettlement deal for Nauru refugees with the US.

“The attempt to intimidate teachers is just a crude extension of the government’s Border Force Act which is designed to silence critics of its detention policies.

“We want the teachers to know that there widespread community support for the teachers’ action. And we want to tell the federal and state government to end the threats against the teachers. There is now majority support for the refugees on Nauru and Manus to be brought to Australia.”

For more information contact Ian Rintoul; mob 0417 275 713.

Message from Manus Island:

*"In this difficult moment we are sending our warm and special appreciation to teachers for standing with us and fighting for us. We have not seen our families for over three and half years, we have been tortured and traumatized for no reason. The Supreme Court ruled that Manus is illegal in April but we are still waiting for our freedom. The US deal is still not clear and there's no certainty. We worry about our future.*

*We are saddened but not surprised that the Australian government doesn't want the truth to be discussed in schools. We have faced much intimidation over the last three and half years and we oppose it against teachers. Teachers and students have the right to free speech, and we have the right to freedom. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right and there isn't any law that will prevent a person from seeking asylum. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest detention or exile, we have right to seek asylum.*

*Aziz from Manus Prison"*