

5 March 2016 Refugee Action Coalition Media Release

Mardis Gras will Highlight Plight of Nauru Gay Refugees

A 200-strong “No Pride in Detention” float and contingent in Sydney’s Gay and Lesbian Mardis Gras will highlight the plight of Nima and Ashkan, (not their real names, photo attached) two gay refugees on Nauru.

A banner (design attached) saying “Nima and Ashkan: “resettled” in Nauru; bashed, abused, in hiding..” will be carried on the float along with placards calling for them, and others on Nauru and Manus, to be brought to Australia.

Nima told Australian authorities when he arrived at Christmas Island in 2013 that he was gay and was fleeing persecution in Iran on the basis of his sexuality; yet the government still sent him to Nauru, where being gay is a crime, “against the order of nature”, that carries a penalty of up to 14 years jail, with hard labour.

“The bottom line is that Nauru is not safe. Nima and Ashkan remain in danger. They should never have been sent to Nauru. Now they have been found to be refugees they must be given the protection and security that they need. Nima and Ashkan must be immediately brought to Australia,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

Nima and Ashkan faced harassment and abuse, in and out, of the detention centre. But in July last year they were severely assaulted in the community. Since then, the couple have been house-bound, fearful of leaving their donga.

They are escorted from their donga, once a week, to do their shopping.

“Nima and Ashkan’s situation highlights the plight of the other gay refugees on Nauru and on Manus Island. In both PNG and Nauru, gay asylum seekers and refugees face persecution because being gay is against the law”, said Rintoul.

“Awareness of their situation will bring even more attention of the fundamental problems with offshore processing and will add to the

growing concerns for the safety of the 267 people from Manus and Nauru who are in Australia facing the possibility of being returned offshore.

“For all the asylum seekers and refugees to find safety and protection, we have to close the camps.”

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