



Media Statement

Immediate release

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ChilOut Calls for Immediate Return of all Children to Australia in Wake of Nauru Files

ChilOut calls for the immediate return of all asylum seeker and refugee children and their families to Australia in the wake of the Nauru Files, published in today's *Guardian*.¹ The leaked documents include over 2000 incident reports spanning 8000 plus pages. They outline shocking evidence of physical and sexual assaults, self-harm attempts, poor living conditions, poor medical treatment, hunger strikes, injuries, threats and lack of accountability of corporations running the centre and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) charged with their care.

ChilOut's campaign coordinator and human rights lawyer, Niru Palanivel, states, 'ChilOut is gravely concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the 49 children currently being held in Nauru's immigration detention centre. These most vulnerable children have been placed in singularly dangerous and shameful environments in Nauru. Australia needs to stop this systematic and institutionalised abuse of children.'

ChilOut is deeply concerned about the fact that children are overrepresented in the findings. Despite only making up 18% of the population in detention from May 2013–Oct 2015, children were involved in an alarming 51.3% of the incident reports. Within this, there were 'seven reports of sexual assault of children, 59 reports of assault on children, 30 of self-harm involving children and 159 of threatened self-harm involving children'.

Miss Palanivel, states, 'This is not acceptable, and goes against Australia's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well our domestic child protection laws. Despite DIBP and its contractors' assurances that children are safe and procedures are in place, the leaked reports prove otherwise. Alarming accounts of abuse and trauma are clearly commonplace in Nauru.'

The Nauru Files are the latest in a long line of revelations regarding Nauru. Earlier this month, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch – after secretly infiltrating the camp – released a report detailing systemic abuse and neglect.² In June, the Australian Women in Support of Women on Nauru released their report, *Protection Denied: Abuse Condoned; Women on Nauru at Risk* that was summarily ignored.³

Miss Palanivel states, 'Report after report has revealed shocking conditions; most are ignored, or paid lip service. But this time something must be done.'

Children simply don't belong behind bars. They belong in the home, classroom, playground and the outside world. These children are being traumatised, objectified, abused and their childhoods are being taken away as we speak. Australia needs to act now, and ensure that we don't allow for this shameful period in our history to continue.'

ChilOut is urgently calling on the Australian government to immediately return all refugee and asylum seeker children and their families on Nauru to Australia and give them the opportunity to enjoy freedom, have the right to play, learn, be healthy and grow up in a safe environment.

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¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-2000-leaked-reports-reveal-scale-of-abuse-of-children-in-australian-offshore-detention>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/australia-abuse-neglect-of-refugees-on-nauru/>

³ <http://www.awswrn.org/the-report/>