



**Edmund Rice Centre**  
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

### **February 2020 No.17**

Dear All,

Welcome to the 17th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

**REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP!**

Well its hard to imagine a sadder start to a New Year in our country than the one we have had. So much devastation and loss to so many people, the environment and our beautiful flora & fauna and indeed the whole of creation. The impacts of these bushfires will be felt for years to come. We have seen the best and worst of humanity and through it all one must remember to be compassionate, loving and never lose hope.

Thanks so much for your feedback, it is really appreciated. Please do send us your suggestions or any information you think would be good to include in further updates.

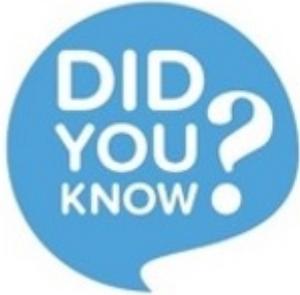
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

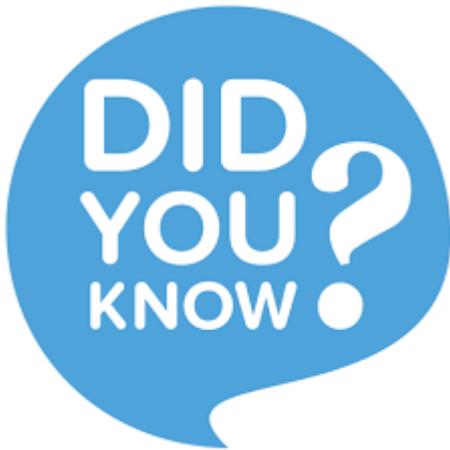
Peace

*Marita*

Communications Project Officer,

**Marita McInerney**

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2291 days



In January 2020 OXFAM International released a report entitled:

*'Time to Care : Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis.'*

- The world's billionaires, only 2,153 PEOPLE in 2019, have more wealth between them than 4.6 BILLION PEOPLE.
- If you saved \$10,000 a day since the building of the pyramids in Egypt you would have only one-fifth the average fortune of the 5 richest billionaires.
- the monetary value of UNPAID WORK globally for women aged 15 and over is at least \$10.8 trillion annually - three times the size of the world's TECH INDUSTRY.
- The combined wealth of the world's 22 richest men is more than the wealth of all the women in Africa.
- The world's RICHEST 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 BILLION PEOPLE.
- Taxing an additional 0.5% of the wealth of the richest 1% over the next 10years is equal to investments needed to create: 117 MILLION JOBS in education, health and elderly care and other sectors, and to close care deficits.



*Regrowth one month after fires at Colo Heights, NSW. A legacy of displacement and racism inflames bushfire trauma for Aboriginal Australians. Vanessa Cavanagh*

## **Strength from perpetual grief: how Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis**

*Bhiamie Williamson, Jessica Weir and Vanessa Cavanagh The Conversation, January 10, 2020*

*How do you support people forever attached to a landscape after an inferno tears through their homelands: decimating native food sources, burning through ancient scarred trees and destroying ancestral and totemic plants and animals?*

The fact is, the experience of Aboriginal peoples in the fire crisis engulfing much of Australia is vastly different to non-Indigenous peoples. Colonial legacies of eradication, dispossession, assimilation and racism continue to impact the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples. Added to this is the widespread exclusion of our peoples from accessing and managing traditional homelands. These factors compound the trauma of these unprecedented fires.

As Australia picks up the pieces from these fires, it's more important than ever to understand the [unique grief](#) Aboriginal peoples experience. Only through this understanding can effective strategies be put in place to support our communities to recover.

### **Perpetual grief**

Aboriginal peoples live with a sense of perpetual grief. It stems from the as-yet-unresolved matter of the invasion and subsequent colonisation of our homelands.....

**[Read more: Our land is burning, and western science does not have all the answers](#)**

### **Bushfire recovery must consider culture**

As we come to terms with the fires' devastation, Australia must turn its gaze to

recovery. The field of community recovery offers valuable insights into how groups of people can come together and move forward after disasters.

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***[Read more: New research turns Tasmanian Aboriginal history on its head. The results will help care for the land](#)***

### **Resilience in the face of ongoing trauma**

The long-term effects of colonisation has meant Aboriginal communities are (for better or worse) accustomed to living with catastrophic changes to their [societies and lands](#), adjusting and adapting to keep functioning.....

***[Read more: Australia can expect far more fire catastrophes. A proper disaster plan is worth paying for.](#)***

### **Moving forward**

The [agency](#) in charge of leading the recovery in bushfire-affected areas must begin respectfully and appropriately. And they must be equipped with the basic knowledge of our peoples' different circumstances.....

***[Read more: How should leaders respond to disasters? Be visible, offer real comfort – and don't force handshakes](#)***

Read More: [https://theconversation.com/strength-from-perpetual-grief-how-aboriginal-people-experience-the-bushfire-crisis-129448?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%201504914324&utm\\_content=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%201504914324+CID\\_6dc5e263c454601de4049d9ca867c3a7&utm\\_source=campaign\\_monitor&utm\\_term=Strength%20from%20perpetual%20grief%20how%20Aboriginal%20people%20experience%20the%20bushfire%20crisis](https://theconversation.com/strength-from-perpetual-grief-how-aboriginal-people-experience-the-bushfire-crisis-129448?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%201504914324&utm_content=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%201504914324+CID_6dc5e263c454601de4049d9ca867c3a7&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Strength%20from%20perpetual%20grief%20how%20Aboriginal%20people%20experience%20the%20bushfire%20crisis)



## **“Ancestors Are Saying Something”: Fires Turn Sky Into Aboriginal Flag, Stunning Australians**

*"Had we not killed loads of Aboriginals, AND learned their bush management wisdom, we might not have had such a terrible time as now."*

*Elias Marat, The Mind Unleashed, 5th January 2020*

As Australia continues to suffer from a wave of fires unprecedented in its modern history, a number of hauntingly beautiful images have emerged showing the elemental force of nature at its most awe-inspiring and terrible.

The most recent of these images is a photo of the apocalyptic skies in the country that bears a brilliant resemblance to the flag representing the indigenous population of Australia—or the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

The photo was taken by Rose Fletcher, a resident of southern Australia who captured it at Victor Harbour while the sun rose on New Year's Day with ferocious fires burning nearby.

Read more: <https://themindunleashed.com/2020/01/ancestors-are-saying-something-fires-turn-sky-into-aboriginal-flag-stunning-australians.html>



*Bomana Correctional Facility, Papua New Guinea Photo: RNZ / Johnny Blades*

**'Australia ruined them': Asylum seeker 'torture' at PNG's Bomana**  
*Benjamin Robinson-Drawbridge, www.nz.co.nz, 17th January 2020*

*Sleep deprivation could be a form of torture being used on asylum seekers detained in Papua New Guinea's Bomana prison.*

Eighteen men remain in the Australian-built immigration detention centre in Port Moresby, where they were locked up in August after seven years on Manus Island.

About 30 have been released, [malnourished](#) and psychologically broken, after agreeing to return to the countries they fled.

The general secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG, Father Giorgio Licini, has been providing pastoral care to some of those freed from Bomana.

Licini said they had reported sleepless nights during their internment.

"That is what they confirm: scarcity of food, sleeping conditions very hard. No pillow, noise around the facility - in some parts there are loud speakers. I heard them mention spending nights sleepless because of noise. What they understand is that all this is done for them to sign," he said.

"I wouldn't know if it is deliberate but certainly it is hard to sleep. They are reporting being given only a simple mattress without pillow. They are reporting this kind of noise around. They are reporting malfunctioning or no functioning at all of air cons and fans. The facility is hot inside.

"If you want to torture a little bit these guys - it is a kind of psychological and physical pressure to convince them to sign this document."

Licini said agreeing to Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) was the only way out of Bomana for the asylum seekers, who were known as the 'negatives'. Many refused to apply for refugee status in PNG, claiming they were trafficked there by Australia. Others were denied by a refugee determination process that's been labelled [a farce](#).

Of the 18 still inside Bomana, 10 have also consented to AVR and could be out by the end of the month, he said.

Read more: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/407483/australia-ruined-them-asylum-seeker-torture-at-png-s-bomana>

## **Australia should lead way on refugees**

*Peter Khalil, The Saturday Paper, Edition No. 283 December 14 – 20, 2019*

This corrosive debate around refugees and migrants weakens our democracy and social cohesion. Australia has become more polarised, less stable, less secure, because we cannot move past the toxicity and enact viable, humane solutions.

Next week, the first United Nations Global Refugee Forum will take place, where member states will try to co-ordinate a response to the largest global refugee crisis since World War II. It is the first step towards a necessary international processing and resettlement agreement.

Marise Payne, Australia's foreign minister, has not committed to attending. Nor has the Morrison government made any public statement about what role Australia might play in the UN talks. This is unsurprising, given Australia's approach to refugee policy: singularly focused on the domestic politics, consistently sidestepping broader engagement with the global challenge. We are a successful multicultural migrant nation with a history of welcoming refugees. Yet our potential to contribute to a global solution remains unrealised.

The UN refugee forum represents an opportunity for Australia to change this and lead the development and negotiation of a co-ordinated global agreement, one that could process and resettle hundreds of thousands more refugees each year. This new approach should be based on the principle of each country doing its fair share to respond to the crisis – replacing the policy disarray that defines the response to refugees worldwide and, in Australia, to the detriment of our security and prosperity.

We bear witness to population movements across the world at unprecedented levels and think we can avoid the cost or the impact. But no matter how insulated we believe we are from these forces, by virtue of our geography and

our current fortress mentality, the waves of future mass migrations could well breach the gates.

.....

***This corrosive debate around refugees and migrants weakens our democracy and social cohesion. Australia has become more polarised, less stable, less secure, because we cannot move past the toxicity and enact viable, humane solutions.***

Read more:

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/topic/2019/12/14/australia-should-lead-way-refugees/15762420009234>



Men and boys perform a special prayer for a good outcome at the ICJ hearing at a mosque at the Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh on 23 January 2020. (Photo by Allison Joyce/Getty Images)

## **A sign of hope for the Rohingya people**

***Bree Alexander, Eureka Street, Vol. 30 No.2, 31 January 2020***

On 23 January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) handed down an unprecedented unanimous decision on provisional measures in the case of *The Gambia v Myanmar*. It gave orders that Myanmar must protect its Rohingya population from acts that amount to genocide and preserve all possible evidence of genocidal acts. The judgement also instructed that Myanmar must report to the court on compliance with these provisional measures within four months and every six months after that.

The full ICJ decision however, concerning whether Myanmar has violated the Genocide Convention, could be years away and the potential for a successful

case before the International Criminal Court is limited by the fact that Myanmar would likely be unwilling to cooperate with bringing defendants forward. De-facto civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was present at the hearing, denied allegations of genocide and the government of Myanmar has since issued a statement stating that no genocide has taken place in Rakhine State.

While any of the 149 countries who are signatories to the Genocide Convention could have initiated the case, it was The Gambia who did so with the support of the 57 member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Gambian Justice Minister Abubacaar Tambadou was led to initiate the case after visiting Cox's Bazar, hosting the largest refugee camp in the world where hundreds of thousands of displaced Rohingya now reside. After listening to their stories, he was reminded of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and felt compelled to act.

Read more: [https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/a-sign-of-hope-for-the-rohingya-people?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2031%20January%202020&utm\\_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2031%20January%202020+CID\\_2b269b447a2260d495670506256e95d1&utm\\_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm\\_term=READ%20MORE](https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/a-sign-of-hope-for-the-rohingya-people?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2031%20January%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2031%20January%202020+CID_2b269b447a2260d495670506256e95d1&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE)



## **Kiribati: Joint statement 35th UPR session of HRC**

**22 July 2019 KIRIBATI**

**Human Rights Council 35th Session (20-31 January 2020)**

3rd Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR): Republic of Kiribati

**Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:** The Human Rights Situation in Kiribati

**Jointly submitted by:** Franciscans International (FI), Edmund Rice International (ERI), Kiribati Climate Action Network (KiriCAN), Life & Learn Kiribati, Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre

### ***I. Introduction***

1. This stakeholders' report is a joint submission of the above-mentioned organizations. The report highlights key concerns related to the Human Rights situation in Kiribati focusing on the environment and the impact of climate

change on the full enjoyment of human rights.

2. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from Franciscans International, Edmund Rice International, Kiribati Climate Action Network, Life & Learn Kiribati, and Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre Network in the Pacific region.

3. Franciscans International (FI) is a faith-based International Non-Governmental Organization with General Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It was founded in 1982 to bring to the UN the concerns of the most vulnerable. Edmund Rice International (ERI) is a faith-based NGO promoting and protecting human rights in over 30 countries. Established in 2007, ERI is primarily concerned with the Rights of the Child, the Universal Right to Education, and Ecological Sustainability. Kiribati Climate Action Network (KiriCAN) is part of global Climate Action Network (CAN) and desires to create a network of all other organizations in Kiribati and to liaise with the local government and international organizations on Climate Change issues affecting the Civil Society. KiriCAN priority is to support communities in sustaining their environments by improving practice. Most of our time and resources are spent with people in their community inspiring action and change. Life & Learn Kiribati works with communities throughout Asia and the Pacific, and in specific in Kiribati, to encourage individual and community attitudes, values and actions that are ethical and sustainable. Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre (KWCS) is Kiribati based organisation which provides support for women and children who are affected by violence.

Read more:

<http://www.edmundriceinternational.org/?p=3868>



Photo of Nunibeia's family trying to save their belongings from the floods.

## What's happening to our Pacific Neighbours

### **King Tides in Kiribati**

While Australia is experiencing extreme bush fires, our neighboring Pacific Islands are experiencing king high tides and storm surges. It has been dramatic and frightening for the people of Kiribati who have been subject to seawater flooding inland and ravaging food crops and homes. Many people are deeply concerned as they are having to crowd in with relatives.

Niunibeia Tab'aeko, 17 years of age, has told us that her family at Eita village could not sleep during the storm surge because their house was flooded by seawater as well as from the heavy rain. They had to stay awake the whole night trying to save their belongings and also helping their neighbours.

She said that the good thing in Kiribati is that everyone helps one another. Niunibeia said, 'I am very scared and my cousins were also scared. Our uncle and aunt told us that this is getting worse each year and that they will need to make sure that the family's house is strong and safe for future impacts from storm surges and king tides.'

### **King Tides in Tuvalu**

Tuvalu has also been hit by high tides and storm surges. A Tuvalu resident TC Tino said the following, "The worst overtopping storm surge I have ever seen."

Nanumaga has experience significant damage from the storm surge. The force of the current was still strong right in the middle of the island. It was a frightening scenario for all people of Nanumaga .

Teresa Lifuka-Drecala, the Director of the Tuvalu Association of Non-Government Organisations (TANGO) from Funafuti in Tuvalu also reported that the high tides and storm surges were causing much damage in Funafuti: "We have been receiving rain and strong winds due to tropical cyclones affecting other nearby Pacific Island Countries."

This is a [link to a video](#) of the recent flooding that Teresa sent us.

*Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang*  
*Pacific Outreach Officer*

# The Gardener

*Mary Oliver*

Have I lived enough?  
Have I loved enough?  
Have I considered Right Action enough,  
    have I come to any conclusion?  
Have I experienced happiness with  
    sufficient gratitude?  
Have I endured loneliness with grace?

I say this, or perhaps I'm just thinking it.  
    Actually, I probably think too much.

Then I step out into the garden,  
where the gardener, who is said to be a simple  
man, is tending his children, the roses.

*TheSilverPen.com*

## UPCOMING EVENT



Join us for the second in a series of conversations...

## Iraq Now Panel Discussion

✓ Human Rights ✓ Minority Issues ✓ Religious Freedom ✓ Political Scene

The panel is organised by Edmund Rice Centre in partnership with Iraqi Australian University Graduates Forum

**When:**  
5:30pm – 7:30pm, Thursday 27 February 2020

**Where:**  
15 Henley Road, Homebush West NSW 2140  
[Near Flemington Station]

**RSVP:**  
Email at [FArian@edmundrice.org](mailto:FArian@edmundrice.org) or call on 02 8762 4200

**Panelists:** Dr Ahmad Alrubaie, Senior Lecturer at UNSW  
Donna Mulhearn, Writer and Speaker  
Bashar Hanna, Community Leader  
Firas Najji, Community Activist

 Iraqi Australian University  
Graduates Forum

 Edmund Rice Centre  
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*The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education (ERC) in partnership with the Iraqi Australian University Graduates Forum (IAUGF) are planning to organise Iraq Now Panel Discussion to reflect on the current situation of human rights in Iraq. The panel aims to raise awareness about Iraq's current security situation, human rights challenges, minority issues, political instability, refugee rights and returnee difficulties.*

*The panel discussion on Iraq is the second on a series of conversations organised by ERC in partnership with community associations and community leaders to create a platform for the Australian community to take part in discussions on the political, security, social and economic situation of conflict-affected countries in the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa. The primary focus of these panel discussions is to offer an opportunity for a wide of range of Australian audience to learn about human rights, minority issues, religious freedom, political development, security situation and refugee rights in those conflict-affected countries that have a significant number of diasporas in Australia.*

*The expected outcome of the Iraq Now Panel Discussion is to raise awareness about human rights, minority issues, political developments and refugee rights in Iraq, and to propose recommendations to the Australian government and non-governmental stakeholders to take into consideration human rights issues in dealing with the Iraqi government and non-governmental actors. The panel discussion will be of interest to various stakeholders, including academics, researchers, human rights activists, refugee advocates, community development practitioners, humanitarian/relief agencies, community representatives and university students, who are working with the Iraqi*

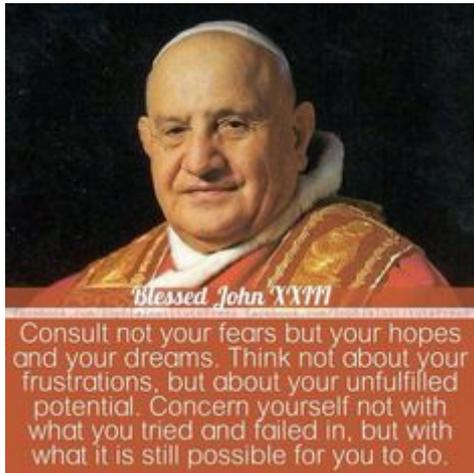
*communities in Australia or following socio-political and security developments in Iraq and the Middle East.*

Read more: [https://www.erc.org.au/iraq\\_now\\_panel\\_discussion](https://www.erc.org.au/iraq_now_panel_discussion)

**DATE:** February 27, 2020 at 5:30pm - 7:30pm

**WHERE:** Edmund Rice Centre, 15 Henley Rd, Homebush West, NSW 2140

**CONTACT:** Farhad Arian · FArian@edmundrice.org · 02 8762 4200



## REFLECTIONS

### Seeking, Gifting Mercy-Hope



Sun hidden, sun crowned in red.  
Fires destroying, smoke invading.  
Life, people, homes, properties, trees  
Victims grieving seeking, waiting mercy's or God's reprieve.

Spirit of life, spirit of hope.  
Hope sustaining in midst of great pain and loss.  
Gifting the welcome, the shelter, the fire fighting.  
Hearts offering prayers known, unknown, spoken, unspoken.

Spirit strengthening in midst of pain and loss.  
Pain, suffering so deep and shared.  
Creation, people seeking welcome respite.  
Presence, mercy, hope - life's rich gifts being shared.

*Jude Butcher January 1, New Years Day 2020*

A presence offered in midst of the fires and devastation on New South Wales  
South Coast.

***Br Jude Butcher cfc AM PhD***

## Doing It Tough



Doing it tough.  
Still doing it tough yesterday, today, this moment.

Trying, striving. Still trying, striving  
This trying-striving, gifted with mercy.

Still striving for the goal.  
Striving and goal, gifted with hope.

Within this doing it tough, mercy and hope gifting one still.  
Come, open, sustain one's new shoots of life for a new today and new tomorrows.

Jude Butcher January 21 Poem inspired by Nigel Graves

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

**Our mailing address is:**

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