



## **National Day of Action Tomorrow to Stop Deportations and Free Saeed.**

**Media Alert for Tuesday 11th April 2017. Planned day of action**

**For immediate Release**

#StopDeportations #FreeSaeed

A national day of action will be held tomorrow on Tuesday 11 April 2017 calling on Prime Minister Turnbull and Immigration Minister Dutton to Free Saeed and stop dangerous deportations. The message is clear: the people will not stand by quietly while the Department of Immigration and Border Protection deports asylum seekers to danger. Actions will range from online participation through to actions of civil disobedience across the country.

"These actions will be a continuation of the #FreeSaeed campaign, following protests in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart. A sustained direct-action campaign is happening at the gates of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre to protect an asylum seeker, Saeed, (not his real name), from being deported" stated a spokesperson for the Close the Camps Collective.

Monday marks Day 17 of the #FreeSaeed campaign at the gates of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. Since Friday the 24th of March, members of the community and refugee rights advocates have kept a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week watchful presence. Peaceful resistance to the government's detention and deportation regime has resulted in antagonistic behaviour from police, paramedics and workers at the centre. On the 24th of March, there were 5 arrests with 1 person released without charge. During the campaign, cars have sped towards people watching the gates, and most sickeningly, a

man wearing a SERCO uniform screamed and banged on windows of a van imitating and pretending to be Saeed in distress.

As a member of a persecuted minority, Saeed faces violence and the risk of death in his country of origin. He fled with his brother to seek asylum in Australia and has been detained for four years, while his brother's almost identical application for a humanitarian visa was approved. Saeed's claim was denied due to an administrative technicality. He also speaks little English and was not informed about his right of appeal. His deportation back to danger would be another human rights violation by the Australian government.

Alison Battisson, a human rights lawyer who is now representing Saeed, said: "Saeed's case is another example of an asylum seeker getting lost in an unfamiliar legal system. Australia's system for hearing and reviewing protection claims is so complex that many find it impossible to navigate. All we ask is the minister hear Saeed's full story."

Lyle Davis, a Gadigal elder of Black Duck country, on which Villawood Detention Centre stands, expressed deep concern about the human rights violations taking place: "We have always welcomed and protected people on our country. We have never ceded our sovereignty and [what is happening to Saeed] is wrong; this is something we would never do."

Prior to being held at Villawood, Saeed was detained at Melbourne Immigration & Transit Accommodation (MITA). Saeed went on a hunger strike for over three weeks. Once alerted of Saeed's imminent deportation, the community maintained a defence at MITA for 4 days. However Australian Border Force stole Saeed out of the compound. He was sedated and force fed against his will in a suburban Melbourne hospital in preparation for deportation. Saeed was then snatched in a white van with six Australian Border Force guards and a doctor and driven to the Villawood detention centre in Sydney. Saeed is 60 years old, unwell and not in any condition to fly. Saeed says "Please do not deport me, I am a human being too."

Aboriginal community leader and organiser on the ground at Villawood, Donna Bartlett agrees:

"For thousands of years people came in peace and left in peace. If they needed protection, they got protection. The operation of Villawood and the deportation of asylum seekers to certain death and violence is illegal and they (the government) do not speak for the traditional owners of Australia."

About the #FreeSaeed campaign and the Free Saeed and Close The Concentration Camps collective

- The #FreeSaeed campaign demands that Saeed be granted full access to his lawyer, that he is given his right to appeal in the Federal Court, and that the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton, listens to his full story.
- The #FreeSaeed campaign plans to stay at Villawood and engage in other actions around the country for as long as necessary, to prevent Saeed from being deported to

danger.

- Tuesday the 11th of April will be a National Day of Action to #FreeSaeed and #StopDeportations.
- The #FreeSaeed campaign stands in solidarity with all asylum seekers and refugees and will continue this struggle until every onshore and offshore concentration camp funded by the Australian government is closed.

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#FreeSaeed campaign spokespeople at the gates of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre:

The #FreeSaeed campaign can also be contacted via our Facebook page 'Free Saeed, Close the Concentration Camps'.