



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE
of
Papua New Guinea and Solomon

AN APPEAL FOR ELDERLY AND SICK EX-MANUS REFUGEES

You shall also love the strangers, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut 10:19)

We, the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, regret that the call of Sir John Cardinal Ribat, MSC to Prime Minister James Marape on 22nd September 2020 on the fate of the ex-Manus asylum seekers and refugees went unheard.

After stating that,

"We have received reliable information that the government of Australia is preparing to pull out of the Regional Resettlement Arrangement come 2021 to 2022, leaving behind in Papua New Guinea possibly up to one hundred asylum seekers and refugees formerly detained in Manus Island".

the Cardinal was advising the head of government in clear terms,

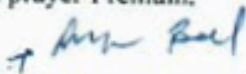
"I respectfully caution your government from entering into a possible agreement with Canberra to that effect, since the unfortunate men forced to stay back here, are generally the most vulnerable: elderly, sick, with poor professional skills, some unable to manage with English, and now too exhausted and unequipped to fend for themselves in our environment. They will meet early death after aimlessly wandering for some time the streets of Port Moresby. PNG does not have an institutionalized system to cater for refugee resettlement".

It is sad to notice the level of neglect and even contempt the voice of the Church on this issue has been met with over the past few years, especially by the Australian government. There will still be in fact about one hundred individuals - and mostly the type of people predicted by Card. Ribat - left in PNG when Canberra withdraws from the Regional Resettlement Arrangement on 31st December 2021, formally and officially ceasing any form of support.

We are particularly and extremely worried about a list of a dozen people, whose conditions will soon descend into utter despair and physical destitution. For them we ask from the Australian government prompt intervention, and a sense of responsibility and concern that is due to vulnerable human beings under whatever circumstances.

Works of solidarity and justice is what is needed at Christmas!

In prayer I remain,


+ **ANTON BAL**
Archbishop of Madang
President, CBC PNGSI

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Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands
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