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August 2022 ARAN UPDATE

VIGILS AROUND AUSTRALIA
A year since the fall of Kabul

ADELAIDE Sunday 14 August 2022 - 5:30PM Victoria Square (Northern End), Adelaide, South Australia	BRISBANE Sunday 14 August 2022 - 2:00PM King George Square, Brisbane, Queensland
MELBOURNE Monday 15 August 2022 - 6:00PM State Library of Victoria (front steps), Melbourne, Victoria	SYDNEY Monday 15 August 2022 - 6:00PM Sydney Town Hall (front steps), Sydney, New South Wales

Join us in commemoration
of this tragic event and
calling on the Australian
government to fulfill its
moral obligation to the
people of Afghanistan.

#ActionForAfghanistan

PLEASE WEAR
A FACE MASK

A lit candle with a bright flame, set against a dark background. The base of the candle is decorated with the colors of the Afghan flag: black, red, and green.

WHAT'S IN THE UPDATE?

THIS WEEK: Vigils marking 12 months since the fall of Kabul – calling for the Australian government to offer protection to Afghan refugees. See further information in Other News below

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- Letter writing August - Abolish the Fast Track Assessment Project
- Dignity, Not Destitution for Refugees
- Women and children stranded in Syria

Coming events

- Monday 15 August 5-6.30pm Webinar After Taliban's Takeover of Afghanistan – Where are the Women and Girls? Monash University
- Tuesday August 23 1-2pm Free online Human Rights forum
- Thursday 25 August 2022 – 5.30pm – 7.00pm AEST Webinar in human rights crisis in Sri Lanka
- Saturday 10 September – Compassionate Resettlement for Refugees – online and in-person forum
- 16-18 September – RAR Conference
- Refugee Fridays

Other News

- Nadesalingham family granted permanent visas
- Links to information on the situation in Afghanistan
- Fundraiser - Music from Freedom Street film – CD on sale
- Asylum Insight
- Kaldor Centre Data Lab

CURRENT ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Letter writing – Abolish the Fast Track Assessment Process

The **ARAN Network of Letter Writing Groups** has prepared a Letter Kit for August.

Why this issue is important: People who arrived by boat and sought asylum between August 2012 and January 2014, and also refugees who are reapplying for Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) are currently subject to Fast Track Assessment and Removal Processes. As of December 2021 - 31,122 people were classified as being in the Legacy Caseload – most of these people have been subject to Fast Track, with around 66% being found to be refugees. The remainder have either been rejected or have yet to have their claims determined.

Risks of 'Fast Track' - the Human Cost: The 'Fast Track' policy drastically changed the refugee determination process, removing a fair review process, and employing very short timeframes for lodging applications. The government also cut 85% of funding for legal services to assist people with their application for protection, so that people often had to lodged their application without legal advice or support.

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face persecution in violation of the UN Refugee Convention. Many people are in fear of being deported to danger without the opportunity to appeal a negative decision.

Go to the Kit for further background and suggestions for emails and letters to the Minister Andrew Giles, Minister for Immigration, and Minister Clare O'Neill, Minister for Home Affairs. We suggest you also send copies of your letters to your local MP. Please circulate through your groups and networks – and perhaps organise a letter writing session.

The Kit is available online at - <https://aran.net.au/resources/letter-writing/> and also <https://ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au/write-a-letter>

Dignity, not Destitution for Refugees

People who are seeking asylum in Australia are usually given Bridging Visas while they wait for a decision about their claim for protection - they usually have the right to work, but if they are unable to find employment, they are **NOT** eligible to receive any financial or other support from the government except Medicare. Some people are unable to work due to their poor state of health due to years of suffering and uncertainty.

Write to the Minister for Immigration (Andrew.Giles.MP@aph.gov.au) and suggest the following:

- Allow all people on Bridging Visas to have work rights, including all those currently in appeals processes
- Provide eligibility for Centrelink – or reinstate the SRSS payments for all those who are unable work because they have young children, or health issues which prevent them from working.

Australian women and children abandoned in Syria

There is mounting pressure on the Australian Government to repatriate women and their children who are held in the 'widow' camps in Syria

See relevant reports here:

SBS reported in June 2022: “..Save the Children has estimated more than 60 Australians, including 47 children, are located across the Al-Hol and Roj camps” The plight of women and children from Australia in camps in northeast Syria must be urgently addressed by Australia's new government, according to the United Nations special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin.... the conditions had been assessed as meeting the threshold for "torture" and 'inhumane and degrading treatment' under international law..... the situation in the camps is dire... These children are essentially growing up in a mass detention site with absolutely no rights and no access to the most basic of services."

Report from Relief Web “..These women and their children face chronic and high levels of violence, including neglect, verbal, physical and sexual abuse, as well as child marriage and child labour. Boys are especially at risk of recruitment into armed groups, and later radicalisation..... in contrast to other displaced women in general internally displaced

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these camps choose to take their own lives when faced with overwhelming levels of deprivation, stress and desperation..." [See World Vision Report here](#)

[July 2022 - France repatriates women and children](#) "...France's repatriation of 35 French children and 16 women held in northeast Syria is welcome news.... These French nationals are among tens of thousands of foreigners from about 60 nationalities held in northeast Syria as ISIS suspects and family members since at least 2019..."

COMING EVENTS

Monday 15 August 5-6.30pm AEST Webinar **After Taliban's Takeover of Afghanistan – Where are the Women and Girls?** Monash University. Free online event – More details and registration [here](#).

Tuesday August 23 1-2pm AEST **Free online Human Rights forum** How does a new government affect the chances of achieving an Australian Charter of Human Rights? What should happen next, and what can we all do to play our part? Join our webinar to find out. See details and register [here](#). Hosted by the Human rights Law Centre

Thursday 25 August 2022 – 5.30pm – 7.00pm AEST Webinar The panel will discuss Sri Lanka's ongoing unprecedented humanitarian and human rights crisis. This webinar is a collaboration between the Diplomacy Training Program, Jubilee Australia Research Centre, Centre for Policy Alternative (CPA) Sri Lanka and La Trobe University. Register [here](#).

Saturday 10 September 2-3.30pm AEST. Forum – online and in-person at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne *Compassionate Resettlement for Refugees - What can Australia learn from New Zealand's approach to refugee resettlement?*



Abbas Nazari



Zaki Haidari



Dr Claire Loughnan

[Book your free tickets here:](#)

[FB event](#) – share through your networks

Further detail [here](#):

16 - 18 September - RAR National Conference 2022 is being held at Katoomba, 2 hours outside Sydney in the Blue Mountains

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We are very excited about the program. Tickets are now on sale and there are places for non-RAR people to join us. Numbers are restricted to 300, Covid-safe space in all the sessions, and vaccination is a requirement for attendance. See details on program and accommodation here: <https://ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au/new-page>. Ticket can be purchased here <https://events.humanitix.com/rar-conference>

And remember... every Friday is Refugee Friday – *initiated by Amnesty Refugee Network*

All refugee advocates are being called to demonstrate solidarity and commitment to the just treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by wearing a visible statement of their support every Friday.

OTHER NEWS

Nadesalingham family in Biloela and now have permanent visas

At last, this family has the safety and security they have longed for. Write to your local MP (https://www.aph.gov.au/senators_and_members/members), the Minister for Immigration (Andrew.Giles.MP@aph.gov.au) and Minister for Home Affairs (Clare.ONeil.MP@aph.gov.au) to let them know you approve of this long overdue decision.

Links to articles or podcasts on the situation in Afghanistan - the immediate past and present dilemmas and challenges.

Return to Afghanistan - The Foreign Correspondent ABC TV

<https://www.abc.net.au/foreign/under-taliban-rule/13743922>

Reporter Yalda Hakim returns to Afghanistan for the first time since the Taliban took power. She finds a war-ravaged country on the brink of starvation and economic collapse, and a new terror threat on the rise. In a BBC-Foreign Correspondent co-production, Hakim travels around Afghanistan and witnesses the devastating impact on ordinary people of two decades of war and new economic sanctions. Includes an exclusive interview with a rising star in the new Taliban regime, Anas Haqqani. The Haqqani name is infamous. The group has been linked to Al Qaida and been responsible for some of the most devastating terrorist attacks inside Afghanistan. Anas Haqqani says now the war is over. But what about **reprisals against Afghans who helped foreign forces or supported the former**

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How Kabul fell to the Taliban with Andrew Quilty

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/how-kabul-fell-to-the-taliban-with-andrew-quilty/14003128> Andrew Quilty had been living and working in Kabul as a photographer and journalist for more than eight years when the Taliban arrived at the gates of the city. Despite the risks, Andrew felt a strong need to stay in the city he called home, not only to document the event as a journalist, but to support friends and colleagues who did not have the choice to leave.

<https://www.interaction.org/blog/interaction-members-raise-concerns-on-the-humanitarian-situation-in-afghanistan/>

<https://acfid.asn.au/media-releases/year-fall-kabul-afghan-people-face-starvation-and-desperation>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/return-to-afghanistanreturn-to-afghanistan/13748818>

Music from the film Freedom Street - CDs for sale – proceeds to assist refugees in Indonesia <https://seanhayward.bandcamp.com/album/sea-of-change>

[Asylum Insight – updates on the latest news on refugees.](#)

Kaldor Centre Data Lab - Kaldor Centre Deputy Director Daniel Ghezelbash is leading a new research stream that uses data to examine decision-making in Australia's refugee legal system. The Data Lab will grow and link to others around the world will make Australian data available for all. See further detail [here](#).

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