

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: ASA 12/008/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 124
18 July 2002

Australia/UK: Governments fail to heed children's desperate plea

Amnesty International is extremely disappointed by the hasty decision made by the UK Foreign Secretary regarding the desperate requests for protection made by two children, aged 12 and 13, and believed to be ethnic Hazara Afghans, in the British Consulate in Melbourne, Australia. Following this decision, the boys have been handed over to the Australian Federal Police and taken to Maribyrnong Detention Centre in Melbourne.

Both the UK and Australian governments have committed themselves to a raft of international law which should have been used as the standards for the treatment of these children. The UK should have taken a more cautious approach in keeping with its obligations to the boys under international law, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires all decisions regarding children to be made in the best interests of the child.

"Both the UK and Australian governments have failed these children on a grand scale. The series of events these children have endured speaks volumes about their desperation; their flight to Australia, being held for 18 months in the notorious Woomera Detention Centre which has seen serious disturbances including self-harm, hunger strikes, riots and escapes, and now being denied protection by the UK government," Amnesty International said.

"It is difficult to find any evidence that either party has given any regard to the best interests of these boys."

"Detaining children for up to five years, frequent rioting and self-harm by detainees, are not acceptable by-products of refugee processing. Legitimate border control and the fight against people smuggling can be achieved without violating human rights," Amnesty International said.

Pending resolution of the family's refugee status, Amnesty International urges the Australian Immigration Minister to use his discretion to release the children from custody.

Public Document

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