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More than 120 vulnerable parents and children currently detained in Darwin face forced transfer to Nauru following High Court loss

Darwin Asylum Seeker Advocacy Network (DASSAN), with the Human Rights Law Centre and legal practitioners in Darwin and across Australia has worked tirelessly over the past 6 months to support 120 vulnerable parents and children detained in Darwin to sign onto the 'M68' High Court challenge to offshore detention. Until now, this has kept them safe from forced transfer to Nauru Regional Processing Centre.

A decision was handed down this morning at 10.15am EADT. The challenge, which claimed that it was not lawful to spend Australian tax money detaining men, women and children in other countries, was lost after the Government declared the processing centre in Nauru to

be 'open' two days prior to the hearing in late 2015. The consequences for the families detained at Wickham Point detention centre in Darwin are massive.

Last week, the children were excited to go back to school after spending the entirety of their school holidays behind bars. Their parents were excited to see them go. This week, they face the real prospect that they could be woken in the middle of the night, their fathers' wrists flexi-cuffed, and the whole family dragged forcibly onto a bus for transport to the airport, and then on to a dirty tent in a remote camp on Nauru.

The group to be sent includes 9 women who have disclosed disturbing accounts of sexual assault, harassment or rape to their legal representatives and DASSAN visitors, perpetrated on Nauru by Australian-funded staff in a breathtaking abuse of power. They are now set to be sent back to their abusers. All in the group, including children, have now been detained for over two years. For many of the children, this is their whole lives.

"The fear leading up to this court decision has been palpable" said Natasha Blucher, DASSAN's Advocacy Coordinator. "The concern of parents is mainly for the children and babies in the group, along with the elderly – Nauru is simply not a safe place for them. Most of these children already have symptoms of depression, nightmares, developmental delays, and many are already self-harming at a young age as a direct result of their long term detention."

"The Australian Government has been successful in ensuring that these people are kept away from Australians, so they cannot be seen and heard." Blucher said, "But the first thing you realise when you know them, as many of us here at DASSAN do, is that they are simply ordinary families who have been forced to flee death, torture or other atrocities in their country and just want a safe life for their kids. We don't think that's too much to ask, and instead they will now be sent to a place that will inflict even more damage upon them. DASSAN calls on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to please, let them stay."

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