

Here are the names and some information about the 12 people who have died, as of 2 November 2018, in Australia's offshore detention regime since 19 July 2013, when the way Australia responds to refugees seeking asylum became a policy of exile. Their stories deserve to be told, and their lives remembered.

At the time of writing, there are still approximately 1,400 people held on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, and in Nauru – they are struggling to hold onto their hope and their sanity.

No more deaths, and no more cruelty, should be accepted by Australians.

These are disturbing statements about the 12 people who have died. If anyone needs help or counselling, call Lifeline on 131144.

Reza Barati

On 17 February 2014, Reza Barati was murdered inside the prison camp on Manus Island, when refugees were violently attacked on mass.

Trouble began in late January when the refugees asked authorities how much longer they would be imprisoned. No answer was forthcoming, so the refugees staged peaceful protests for two weeks. Eventually immigration officials requested a meeting with refugee representatives. More than a thousand refugees hoped for an answer to their question. Again, no answer was forthcoming, and rioting started that night, on 16 February.

The next day, staff were evacuated. Then at night, the power was turned off, and in the darkness and with no CCTV cameras operating, local and expat staff, police, and local civilians came into the prison camp and attacked. Refugees were dragged from under their beds and out of their rooms. They were beaten, bludgeoned, slashed with knives, and shot at. Two men each lost an eye. One man's throat was slit. More than 70 were seriously injured. Many were brought to Australia for medical treatment.

And Reza was murdered. He was beaten on his head with a wooden pole spiked with nails. A witness statement provided to the police said, in part:

"Reza Barati was bleeding very heavily from the injury on his head. I saw Reza Barati was still alive at that time when he was lying on the wire floor. The G4S guards who were chasing him from behind reached him and kicked him on his head with their boots. I saw about a total of 13 G4S local officers and two expatriate officers kicked Reza Barati in his head with their boots. He was putting up his hands trying to block the blows from the boots.

"I then saw this man who was a (local) G4S guard with one eye. He held on to a stone, which was about 30cm wide and 50cm in height. Saw him lifted the stone up with both hands above his head and threw it very hard on Reza Barati's head while he was still lying on the wire floor. I think at that time when he threw the stone Reza died."

The Australian Government labelled the incident a "disturbance", and then Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, initially lied to the Australian public, saying that Reza died resulting from injuries he received outside the prison camp, and that the refugees had:

"decided to protest in a very violent way and to take themselves outside the centre and place themselves at great risk."

Within days, Morrison retracted and admitted that the violence took place inside the prison camp.

Across Australia, at least 15,000 people attended about 600 snap protests within days.

A parliamentary inquiry later found this violence was “eminently foreseeable” and the Australian government was responsible for Reza’s death.

Two years after Reza died, the two PNG nationals who had used the nail-spiked wooden pole and stone on Reza, were convicted of murder and sentenced to five years prison. One of them escaped in early 2017 and was last reported still at large.

The court heard that police tried to question an Australian, named Paul, and a New Zealander, named Anton, who worked at the prison camp and were allegedly involved in Reza’s murder, but they had quickly left the country and there was no cooperation to bring them back to Papua New Guinea.

Reza was 24 years of age when he was murdered. Behrouz Boochani shared a room with Reza for some weeks on Christmas Island before they were taken to Manus. On the fourth anniversary of Reza’s death, Behrouz wrote, in part:

“Reza was a kind-hearted and compassionate human being. His huge and strong build was the butt of jokes, and people would forget how gentle he always was to his fellow inmates. He possessed the face of friendship and warmth. However, he also revealed characteristics of youthful naiveté. Due to his kindness friends would call him “the gentle giant”. Reza was born in a small town called Lomar in Ilam Province, part of the Kurdistan region of Iran. This town is located along the river Seymareh and the ancient city of Sirwan. He was born in the same year that the Iran-Iraq war ended. He took his first steps in this world on the ruins of war, which means that he experienced years of hardship and affliction. He studied architecture at university and was determined to finish his studies. During those days on Christmas Island he would sometimes call and talk to his mother and little sister. He would share his feelings towards them with me in that childlike sincerity of his. He was essentially nothing more than an ordinary youth with the kind of dreams that every single young man from every single culture has for his future. He died at the hands of people who he requested to provide him protection and in a prison on a remote island.

His death is an utter tragedy. And it is because of this that he has become a symbol; he represents the innocence of the refugees held on Manus and Nauru. The way he was killed, and the violence that left him dead, more than anything else, echoes the level of ruthlessness inherent to the system of offshore processing.”

Sayed Ibrahim Hussein

On 22 June 2014, Sayed Ibrahim Hussein drowned in the ocean in Nauru. Sayed was caught in a rip swimming in the Galab channel off the island. A Nauruan man who tried to rescue him also drowned. A third person was injured.

Sayed was 23 years of age. He was a Pashtun refugee from Pakistan and had been living at the Australian-run prison camp on Nauru. Not long before his death, Sayed had moved into community accommodation after being among the first people recognised by Nauru as a refugee.

The Nauruan government labelled the deaths a 'tragic drowning accident' and asked that it not be used to gain political mileage, saying:

"We are devastated that we have lost a new member of our community, and applaud the bravery of those who attempted the rescue. We mourn the loss of one of those rescuers and our thoughts are with the second, who remains in a serious condition."

Australia's then immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, said at the time that the deaths are sad, but a matter for Nauru, and that:

"It is a very sad incident. This person I understand was a Pakistani national originally. They had been found to be a refugee and they had been resettled. So they were a private resident on Nauru just like someone who'd be on a visa in Australia. And once they're in that situation obviously they look after themselves with the support of a resettlement package."

Nauru's Opposition MPs said Australia was turning a blind eye to the fate of refugees and that Australia cannot simply wash its hands of its responsibilities to the refugees brought to Nauru under a special arrangement. They said Australia is forcing Nauru to take on responsibilities that were never part of the original deal, were unnecessary and only served Australia's political purposes, and should never have been agreed to. They also said two years ago Australia knocked back its own government proposal to fund a full time life saver on Nauru.

Apart from this, reports about Sayed are scant. His was the second offshore death since the policy of exile began on 19 July 2013. It seems perhaps because his death was accidental, the tragedy of his life and death on Nauru did not raise interest from the media and the Australian public. But Sayed is remembered in the many lists and acknowledgements of offshore deaths since 19 July 2013.

Hamid Kehazaei

On 5 September 2014, Hamid Kehazaei died at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane after a week on life support, and a decision was made to switch off the machines. He had been declared brain dead days earlier. Hamid had been suffering in the prison camp on Manus Island, with a minor infection from an insect bite on his leg. The sore became septic. On 23 August 2014, Hamid was feverish and was taken to the medical clinic of the prison camp in a wheelchair – his leg was so swollen from an infected blister in his left shin. He was diagnosed with severe life-threatening septicaemia in his leg spreading to the groin.

On 25 August, doctors recommended Hamid's transfer because all antibiotic treatment available on Manus was exhausted. But the Australian Department of Immigration delayed. By the next day he was in septic shock. Doctors now recommended urgent medical evacuation. Hamid was then taken to Port Moresby, where he was misdiagnosed, treated with broken equipment and left unattended. He grew critically ill. He suffered multiple heart attacks, and his brain began to die. He was evacuated to Brisbane on 27 August. By this time nothing could be done to save Hamid's life.

Hours before Hamid died, then immigration minister Scott Morrison praised the quality of medical care provided to refugees on Manus Island and Nauru, and said the medical services do an outstanding job.

Two months after Hamid died, the Department told the United Nations Committee Against Torture that healthcare for refugees on Manus was "comparable to that in Australia".

Dr Peter Young, the former director of mental health services at IHMS, that ran the health services on Manus at the time, said Kehazaei's death:

"... illustrates the deficiencies in being able to provide adequate medical care for people in offshore centres, how difficult it is to do that, the delays and obstructions that exist due to remoteness, and the lack of access to tertiary health care that is available to absolutely anybody in Australia."

He said the delay in Hamid's treatment was not an isolated case, but systemic failure, and that:

"This is how the system normally operates, these delays are inevitable, they cannot be avoided if people are held in these conditions."

The Coroner handed down his report on Hamid's death on 30 July 2018. In a 140-page finding, the Coroner found that Australia held sole responsibility for Hamid's care and for the failures that led to his death.

The Coroner was scathing about the standard of healthcare delivered to Hamid and found that his death was preventable. He recommended that healthcare on the offshore islands be properly funded and run – and under the control of doctors – or asylum seekers and refugees be moved to Australia.

The Coroner also recommended that all deaths of asylum seekers and refugees sent offshore by Australia should be subject to a mandatory inquest in Australia – essentially that they be treated as deaths in custody, as Hamid's death was. The Coroner also found that Hamid was a fit and healthy 24-year-old when he was taken from Australia to Manus Island by force in 2013. He had fled Iran fearing arrest and torture.

It is alleged that the failure of Australian government officials to eliminate risks that could have prevented Hamid's death is a criminal offence that may be prosecuted under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. The regulator, Comcare, failed to investigate at the time, but may now open a case since the Coroner's findings.

Hamid was of the stateless Kurdish people from Iran. He was well known and liked by everyone at the prison camp. His mother never had a chance to talk to him after he became ill. She welcomed the Coroner's findings and asked that this be taken seriously by the Australian government.

Omid Masoumali

On 29 April 2016, Omid Masoumali died in Brisbane hospital when life-saving machines were switched off because his organs failed. Three days earlier in Nauru, Omid publicly doused himself in petrol and set himself on fire, at Nibok settlement, outside a refugee compound, during a UN monitoring visit. He did this in front of three Canberra-based UN officials, after a meeting with them when he was told he would remain on Nauru for another decade. Omid had been requesting to be sent to a third country, but the UN officials allegedly were asking the refugees what they needed to assist them to stay in Nauru for another decade. Before setting himself on fire, Omid said, "This is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it any more." After he fell to the ground, bystanders smothered his flames with a blanket.

At least three other refugees attempted suicide after these meetings.

Omid suffered third degree burns to 57% of his body. Nauru hospital was unequipped to deal with his injuries. It was ten hours before he was given painkillers at the Nauru hospital, more 24 hours before he was put on transfer to Brisbane, then a six hour flight. It was 31 hours before he was taken to a burns unit. He suffered a cardiac arrest in hospital where doctors had to perform emergency surgery.

He was 23 years of age. He fled Iran with his partner, arriving to Christmas Island on 13 September 2013. On 22 September, they were taken to Nauru, where they first lived in a tent in the prison camp. It was dangerous but she had some protection being with Omid. In December 2014 they were both recognised as refugees and then lived outside the prison camp, and tried to earn a living. Omid learnt how to repair motorbikes and did some small trade that way.

After Omid set himself on fire, she was kept away from family and friends, and her phone was confiscated. She was then brought to Australia on a separate flight, soon after Omid. In Australia she has been detained in isolation. She has been handcuffed when taken for medical treatment. After almost a year of isolation she spoke up about her life with Omid, and Nauru. She said:

"There is an infinite scream inside of me, and I can't hold it in any more."

She described how people on Nauru often cried while watching the sun go down, as every sunset symbolised another day lost. But she said:

"... every evening Omid would sit with me and talk to me about all the things we had to look forward to ... he would just smile and say, 'We are young, we are together, anything is possible.'"

At the time she was speaking, almost a year after Omid's death, she had not seen another sunset.

She described how on 26 April 2016 Omid – "my breath, my hope, my life, my base" – took his own life.

Of the videos that circulated of his death, she says: "Those images are very painful for me. I want people to know who Omid really was. He was ambitious, intelligent, invincible. But after three years, even Omid was broken."

An inquest into Omid's death is expected to commence in February 2019. The coroner is expected to examine whether more could have been done to prevent Omid's death, and the health and medical evacuation services provided. The circumstances leading up to Omid deciding to set himself on fire will also be examined. But Australia's treatment of Omid, and Australia's obligation to him as a refugee, will not be part of the inquest.

Rakib Khan

On 11 May 2016, Rakib Khan died on Nauru. The cause of his death was suspected suicide. Rakib had checked himself in to hospital on Nauru two days earlier, after a suspected overdose at the prison camp where he lived. He suffered a series of heart failures and died. Rakib was aged 26. He was from Bangladesh.

Refugees on Nauru say Rakib deliberately took a massive number of pills, including Panadol, before he went to hospital.

The official Australian Immigration report said Rakib died of heart failure, but omitted to state the fact that his deliberate overdose almost certainly caused his heart to fail. Many refugees on Nauru were angry about this statement, they saw it as another cover-up. They wanted a proper investigation into Rakib's death. They were seriously concerned whether doctors at Nauru hospital had tried to pump his stomach, even though an overdose was suspected.

It is said that plans were made to take Rakib to Australia by air ambulance, but that he could not be moved.

Around the time of Rakib's death, refugees were being regularly attacked by locals throwing rocks at them to knock them off their motorbikes before assaulting them, and stealing their wallets, phones, and bikes.

On the day Rakib overdosed, more than 100 refugees on Nauru had signed a plea asking the Australian government to let them buy and prepare boats to leave Nauru to seek a new country. In part, this is what they wrote:

"The Australian government has refused to accept us. We've decided to rescue ourselves by getting on boats once again. At this time we want to leave Nauru island. All people have the basic right to be free. We want the ability to decide our own future. We won't let the Australian government tell us where and how we should live our lives! The Australian government has kept us as prisoners and slaves. They use us for their own political benefits, corporate profits, and games."

"If the Australian government won't let us choose our own future, then you should know that many of us are on the brink of suicide. Let this reality weight on your conscience. We are all tired and desperate because of the situation that we are living in for three years now. We choose to die instead of living in this hell."

Kamil Hussain

On 2 August 2016, Kamil Hussain drowned, after slipping on a rock and striking his head while swimming at a waterfall on Manus Island. About three months before this fatal accident, the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea has ruled that holding the refugees on Manus Island was unlawful. It was still unclear, as it is still now, two and half years later, how this ruling would bring about freedom for the men. But one immediate effect of the Supreme Court decision was that they could come and go from the prison camp during the day. So it was that Kamil and his friends ventured to the waterfall for a day out together, but Kamil did not return. He had disappeared in the water. His body was found after locals and police searched for two hours.

A spokesperson for the Australian Immigration Department said at the time:

“Australian government representatives remain in close contact with the Royal PNG constabulary which is managing the situation.”

Kamil was 34 years old. His wife and daughter remain in Pakistan. His family wanted his body returned to them. But the Australian and Papua New Guinea authorities both said it was the other’s responsibility. Papua New Guinea wanted to bury Kamil on Manus because they did not have the facilities to send his body to Pakistan. The Manus refugees said if the Australian authorities would not pay for Kamil’s body to be repatriated, they would themselves raise the money.

A spokesperson for the Australian Immigration Department said:

“Funerary arrangements for refugees and transferees dying in Papua New Guinea are matters for the Papua New Guinea Government.”

Meanwhile, Kamil’s body was rotting in Lorengau hospital. His fellow refugees from Pakistan were taking turns to visit his body and clean it each day.

Eventually, the Pakistani embassy in Australia agreed to foot the bill to return Kamil’s body.

A fellow refugee paid tribute to Kamil:

“RIP Dear Kamil,

happy freedom dear Kamil

u had alot of wishes like each of us inside this cage but Australia took away our wishes

we see them but we cant touch them ...

we passe away slowly slowly in the way of freedom from this cage....

Happy freedom dear Kamil my thought are with you, happy freedom dear Reza Barati, happy freedom dear Hamid Hhazai....

happy freedom dear Kamil,

i know how you got through so much,

not me everyone knows how we are suffering but.....

Dear kamil i wish will be the Next

happy freedom

R I P”

Faysal Ishak Ahmed

On 24 December 2016, Faysal Ishak Ahmed died in the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. Two days before, inside the prison camp on Manus Island, Faysal collapsed in yet another seizure, and struck his head. He was left waiting for more than 12 hours for officials to approve his evacuation. Flights then further delayed his evacuation. It is not yet clear whether Faysal died as a result of head injuries or because of his underlying medical conditions that led to his collapse. Faysal saw a doctor the day before he collapsed but it is alleged he was told he was not unwell.

Yet Faysal had been unwell with heart problems for six months, with repeated seizures. The Australian Senate later heard that Faysal had sought medical help 13 times in two months. He had complained repeatedly to Border Force and the health service, IHMS, about his lack of treatment. But he was persistently denied medical treatment and told he was malingering.

A witness said that when Faysal collapsed, he was first removed to a rest area for people experiencing mental health episodes, but he was complaining of chest pains. Another patient there heard him say, "I cannot breathe, my heart has stopped," and then he fell down on his forehead and thick liquid and water came out through his nose and mouth.

The day before he died, fellow Sudanese refugees wrote a letter outlining months of escalating health complaints that were ignored by medical staff. Exactly a week before he collapsed, Faysal himself wrote to IHMS, complaining that he was ignored and that he suffered chest and heart problems, and high blood pressure.

The day before Faysal collapsed, 60 Sudanese refugees in the prison camp signed a letter to IHMS in which they described his illness and rejection of treatment and warned: "If you have not listened to what we have advised you, IHMS will be held responsible for whatever happens to our brother Faysal in the very near future."

The day after Faysal collapsed, while he was still alive, his Sudanese friends wrote another four-page letter to IHMS, including:

"He saw a GP on the 21st of December 2016, and he was told by the GP there was nothing wrong was told that he was not going to be seen by any doctor again in the future and IHMS cannot help him anymore with that problem. When he came back from his appointment he was very much affected by the reply of the IHMS that they would not be assisting him in the future. He kept saying 'I swear, I am not pretending that this disease would kill me'. His condition got worse and worse on that day."

On Christmas Eve, the Department released a statement to confirm Faysal's death. Under the heading "Death of a Refugee", the department says it is not aware of any suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and expresses its sympathies to his family and friends.

A fellow Rohingya refugee on Manus said when they first met in 2013, Faysal was "full of life", very engaging, with no health issues at all. More recently, he said Faysal had lost a lot of weight, was very ill, and "a different man". He said Faysal began to fall apart in October 2015 after his claim for protection was eventually accepted.

After fellow Kurdish refugee, Hamid Khazaei, died the year before, many Manus refugees wrote an open letter that concluded with the question, who would be the next victim. Faysal had signed that letter.

Faysal had survived more than 10 years as an internally displaced person in Sudan and witnessed many horrors. He had carried a deep secret from his Manus friends long before he became the fourth Manus asylum seeker to die. He left behind a wife and baby boy when he fled Sudan in 2013, having refused to join the militias that had tortured him, killed several family members and raped his sister. He feared he would never be able to bring his wife and child from a refugee camp in Sudan. Back in February 2014, when he hid under his bed only metres from where Reza Barati was murdered, he later told his friends, he could only think of his wife and little boy, Mazim. The fear consumed him as he became weaker, and only days before he died, his last message to his friends was:

"If anything happens to me, I need you guys to look after my family."

Faysal's death at age 27 has been reported to the Queensland coroner.

Hamed Shamshiripour

On 2 August 2017, Hamed Shamshiripour was found hanging in the forest near the primary school, close to the Australian-run East Lorengau refugee transit centre on Manus Island. Papua New Guinea police say it was suicide. But where he was found hanging, Hamed's knees were touching the ground. And he had been targeted for violence in the community. His family in Iran demanded an autopsy and inquest to determine the cause of death. Hamed was aged 32.

Hamed had been suffering acute mental health crises for more than a year. His leaked psychological reports describe his presentation as 'chaotic' and 'erratic'. He had been injected with tranquilisers. At one time he was brought to Australia for treatment, but sent back again. He deteriorated markedly. He often became aggressive. Detention centre staff told reporters he was "a very sick man. He needs serious help."

Hamed's friends had pleaded with Australian authorities for him to be treated. When he had suffered acute mental health episodes, he had been beaten by guards, and arrested and taken to the Lorengau Prison several times. On one occasion he was imprisoned, then on his release he was attacked in Lorengau after being found wandering destitute.

On another occasion, Ron Knight, who was then Manus MP, arranged for Hamed's prison release so he could be treated, but no treatment was available. Knight said he asked the Australian high commission in Port Moresby to commit Hamed to a psychiatric facility. But they said Papua New Guinea authorities should handle it.

At the time of Hamed's death, the Australian government confirmed it was "aware of a death in Lorengau township", that "PNG authorities are investigating the matter", and that: "Further questions should be directed to the government of PNG."

Behrouz Boochani wrote about Hamed:

"I knew Hamed Shamshiripour through music. He was inspired by music; he loved to play the guitar and write lyrics. On one occasion he rushed over to see me eager to share a new song. But, over time, Hamed the musician began to disappear, he was becoming a different person. His mental health was deteriorating rapidly.

The refugees woke me in the morning with the news "Someone killed Hamed today." These words totally crushed me.

I was reminded of the time I saw him a month ago, sitting on the main road in Lorengau town. He was weary and emaciated. He was delirious, but he recognised me and asked: "Brother, when will we leave this island?"

I answered: "I don't know."

He looked sternly and repeated with more intensity: "I asked you, when will we leave this island?"

And so I answered: "Very soon, we've already been here for four years. We'll be leaving very soon."

Then he smiled."

"The Hamed I knew was a kind person, capable of being a creative musician and someone with the capacity to make a valuable contribution to society. He was worthy of respect and dignity. He didn't deserve to be neglected and abandoned the way he was."

Rajeev Rajendran

On 2 October 2017 Rajeev Rajendran was found in the early hours of Monday morning, hanging outside the kitchen of the Lorengau Hospital on Manus Island. The Friday before, he had cut his own throat and was admitted to hospital. His friends say he was denied medical treatment. He had gone to the hospital for care, but he died there.

Although it was suspected suicide, the death remains suspicious, particularly because his body was found hanging in a very similar way to that of Hamed Shamshiripour just two months earlier.

Rajeev's death went unremarked upon by the Australian government, which retains it is a matter for Papua New Guinea.

Rajeev was aged 32. He was a Tamil refugee from the Jaffna region of Tamil Eelam, in Sri Lanka. It is understood he fled Sri Lanka after being threatened by the military. He fled to Australia with his girlfriend. They were separated by Australia when she was taken to Nauru, and Rajeev was taken to Manus Island where he lived for more than four years.

Rajeev had been suffering depression for more than a year and became more distressed in his last few months because his father was suffering from cancer but he could not support him.

Several months previously, the Manus police had charged Rajeev with rape – charges Rajeev vigorously denied.

His friends say he was a quiet person who needed treatment. On his death it was a day of mourning for Rajeev, while the daily protests against imminent closure of the prison camp did not go ahead.

His family in Sri Lanka were told by Australian authorities Rajeev's family would have to pay more than \$7,000 to have his body transported home.

Jahingir

On 2 November 2017, Jahingir was killed when he was riding his motor bike on Nauru. He was 29 years old and had been living in the prison camp for four years. Since the prison gates were opened during legal challenge to Nauru detention, he and others came and went from the prison camp during the day. Yet he remained a prisoner.

The crash scene where Jahingir died was hastily cleared of all evidence. This is not the way crash sites involving Nauruan victims are usually managed. It is alleged Jahangir's motor bike was hit from behind. The other vehicle was not seen after the accident so it could not be assessed for possible cause of the accident based on damage to the vehicle.

Sources reveal Jahingir was run down on his motorbike on Fly Camp Rd – called after the nearby 'Fly Camp' for single men – by a carload of Nauruans. Yet it is said there were no witnesses. The driver of the car, a Nauruan man, has been charged over the incident.

The Nauruan government said that the claims that this was more than an accident are false.

Unlike all the other births, deaths and marriages in the Nauru 2017 Government Gazette, no 'tribe' is recorded against Jahingir's name. Jahingir was a refugee from Bangladesh. He fled with his sister and her family, seeking asylum in Australia in 2013. He was lonely and isolated on Nauru after his sister and her family were transferred to Australia for medical treatment in 2014. Jahingir's sister missed him so much. She cried and begged with Australian authorities for her brother to be brought to Australia, but she was only told that if she wanted to be with him, she could go back to Nauru where her medical needs could not be met. So they were separated. They never saw each other again.

Salim Kyawning – ‘Man of Flowers’

On 22 May 2018, Salim Kyawning, the ‘Man of Flowers’, committed suicide on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. On that morning, Salim was riding on a bus taking refugees into town. He got out of his seat, opened the door and jumped from, and under, the bus. The wheels of the bus crushed his head into the concrete and he died right there. Many photos were taken of Salim in the year before he died, at the hundreds of days of peaceful protests at Australia’s prison camp for men on Manus. He always carried and wore flowers. That is why we call him ‘Man of Flowers’. Salim was of the stateless Rohingya people from Burma. He was 52 years old.

Salim had been held by Australia five years, mostly on Manus Island. The whole time he was on Manus, he suffered seizures. A few years ago, he was brought to Darwin and detained at Wickham Point, where he was supposed to receive medical treatment. However, when his seizures stopped, he was sent back to Manus untreated. His seizures recurred.

Kon Karapanagiotidis from Asylum Seekers Resource Centre met Salim on Manus Island late last year. He said it was abundantly clear he needed Australia’s help, that he was suffering from extreme epilepsy and extreme mental unwellness. He couldn’t even get out of bed. Kon was so shocked and distressed, asking “how was this man here?”

The day after his death, an ASRC advocate called Salim’s wife to express condolences. This was the first news his wife received of his death. Australian authorities had not bothered. In response to questions, a spokesperson for the Department of Home Affairs only said: “this is a matter for the PNG Government”. When pressed in Parliament, Peter Dutton said: “I’m not going to take a morals lecture from the Greens when it comes to border protection policy.”

Behrouz Boochani wrote about Salim, in part:

“Salim would at times fall to the ground and begin to tremble. His mouth would foam and he would yell. All the refugees were familiar with his situation. All the staff working in Manus prison, the medical personnel, everyone in the immigration department including the immigration minister, human rights organisations, and the journalists reporting about Manus, they all knew about Salim. We introduced him to every authority figure who visited Manus from Australia.”

“I had known Salim for a long time. The first time I encountered him was in Oscar prison. It was the same day that Sudanese refugee Faysal Ishak Ahmed died due to numerous health issues which included heart problems. For six months Faysal had been begging doctors from International Health and Medical Services to help him. Like Faysal, Salim was struggling to stay alive. He approached me, indicating to his heart, to his head, trying to tell me that he was afraid he would end up like Faysal.”

“He was always in anguish, but he had an extraordinary love of flowers. He would pick flowers from along the prison fences and playfully place them behind his ears or put them in his hair.”

“There was a time when he was more vigorous. It was in November when we were under siege for 23 days by Australian immigration and the local police. In the final days when they began to attack with more force, Salim took his flowers and went to welcome them to the prison – he showed compassion and respect to the same people who had come to beat us.”

“Many, like Salim, have lost all hope in the political system and the medical services. It is not surprising that the first reaction from many of the prisoners was: “Good for him, at least now he’s free.” “

“He was a father and a husband. He had three children: eleven, eight and five years old. He had never seen his youngest because the child was born while he was on his way to Australia.”

“These words are a form of lament in honour of a man who always had a few flowers tucked into his hair.
Just like the falling rain ...
wash over this jungle ...
cleans these plains.”

Fariborz Karami

On 15 June 2018, Fariborz Karami committed suicide on Nauru. He was 26, a fine athlete and recently married. His wife found him almost dead in his tent in what's known as 'RPC3' - the Australian-run prison camp for families, where he lived with his mother and young brother for five years. He could not be revived. His wife and mother were hospitalised after his death, and his younger brother taken into the care of camp authorities.

Fariborz and his family are of the stateless Kurdish people from Iran. When he was 10 years old, Fariborz was kidnapped and held by his captors for three months, and threatened each day that he would be killed, yet his protection claims were rejected. Fariborz was studying to become a dentist before he fled to Australia seeking asylum.

Soon after Australia detained him, Fariborz began asking for medical help for his deteriorating mental health. Over years, Fariborz continued to cry out for help. In one plea to a doctor Fariborz wrote, "The thought of suicide doesn't ever leave me. I am suffering intensely every day." Psychiatrists identified him as "being severely traumatised" and said his declining mental health was exacerbated by his long-running detention, uncertainty over his future, and concern for his brother and mother. Fariborz told a doctor during one of his many appointments, "no-one steps forward for us, and we live in a hot tent and can't breathe." His extensive medical file is littered with requests for appointments with psychiatrists and psychologists, and charts his downward spiral to death.

Just weeks before his death, Fariborz' 12 year-old brother Ali made a public plea for help by video to Australia, saying:

"I feel helpless because there is no one to help us. There is no one to see how we are suffering. My mother is very sick and my brother is totally depressed."

Fariborz' family did not want his body to be buried in Nauru or Iran. An autopsy has been completed, but Fariborz mother is told her son's body could be held for some months. She wrote a letter to Australian Border Force, begging them to give her back her son's body. She wrote, in part:

"Hello my oppressors and heartless prison officers"

"Do you know me? I am the same suffering and miserable mother who repeatedly begged you to help."

"For five years you incarcerated me and my innocent children in Nauru and ignored us. I know that your violence and cruelty is deeply rooted and against that I am a powerless woman. You even deprived me from having a mobile phone, lest I speak up? But I always told you if any harm befell my children, I wouldn't remain silent."

"Since Friday, you have kept my son's corpse in IHMS's fridge, to look for his murderer? Since then, have you not smelled your own hands? My 26-year-old son had his last breaths in your mouldy tents and closed his beautiful eyes to your abomination, injustice, and disgusting policies. You even hesitate to provide him a bottle of cold water."

"For five years, you tortured his athletic body under deadly heat. Now, you confiscated his dead body and keep him in a cold place. You don't allow me to bury him and entrust him to eternal peace with his beautiful face and body."

She signed the letter from, "Slaughterhouse and torture house of Nauru."

Crowd funding raised money to bring Fariborz' body to Australia to be buried.