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# MEDIA RELEASE

## Behind Australian Doors: Examining the Conditions of Detention of Asylum Seekers in Indonesia.



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3 November 2009

**EMBARGO: 12.01AM TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2009**

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## **New Empirical Report Finds Asylum Seekers Detained for Years in Inhumane and Dangerous Conditions Across Indonesia**

A new empirical report released today describes poor conditions across many Indonesian immigration detention facilities. The report, produced by lawyer and refugee advocate Jessie Taylor, highlights cramped conditions, grossly inadequate hygiene and sanitation, rodent infestations, inadequate and inappropriate food, polluted water, and a lack of medical care available to asylum seekers.

'Behind Australian Doors: Examining the Conditions of Detention of Asylum Seekers in Indonesia' is based on Taylor's examination of detention facilities throughout July 2009, during which she met with over 250 asylum seekers in 11 places of detention and accommodation across the Indonesian archipelago. Along with Taylor, film-maker David Schmidt obtained many hours of footage of conditions inside detention centres, and interviews with detainees, including children.

"Conditions in asylum seekers' accommodation ranges from acceptable to appalling", said Taylor. "In the worst places, we saw babies and children behind bars, with filthy drinking water, deprived of basic education, malnourished and very, very frightened".

"Particularly confronting were conversations with unaccompanied minors, many of whom are housed in immigration jails with adult male populations", Taylor said. According to the report, families are generally housed in more appropriate accommodation, when there are women and babies. However, there are many 13 to 17 year old children in adult jails, slipping through the cracks because they are alone and do not have parents or siblings to look out for them. The report observes that many are orphans with no family at all, while some have families who sent them away from home after older siblings were killed.

Taylor expressed her surprise at the hesitance of asylum seekers to get on a boat. "On one thing, the Australian government and the asylum seekers agree completely: that it is a terrible idea to attempt the boat journey to Australia. Asylum seekers are horrified at the prospect, and are driven to make an attempt only after they are convinced at the hopelessness of their situation. At the moment, there is just no viable prospect of a safe, formal resettlement into Australia".

Department of Immigration and Citizenship figures indicate that in 2008-2009 there was resettlement of 35 people from Indonesia. According to Taylor, “these figures display the gross inadequacy of Australia’s resettlement program in dealing with the ‘queue’ in Indonesia. It must come as no surprise that, given the apparent impossibility of resettlement, asylum seekers make the frightening decision to attempt the boat journey, channeling profit to people smugglers”.

The report recommends that in order to stop boats from coming, the Australian Government needs to install a controlled, robust and fair assessment and resettlement process from Indonesia to Australia, wiping out the demand for people smugglers. It must also increase its resettlement intake slightly to accommodate those found to be genuine refugees, in accordance with international obligations.

“Given that there is no sign of a decrease in global refugee numbers, it is in the best interests of all parties (except people smugglers) that Australia should increase its resettlement intake and bolster the processing capabilities and efficiencies of the UNHCR, taking a leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region, and satisfying its obligations under international law”, Taylor said.

Taylor and Schmidt hope to produce a documentary with the footage they have obtained, and are in the process of seeking funding to do so.

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