



Dear Grandmothers and Friends

This month has seen the UN High Commissioner for Refugees visit Australia for the first time in 11 years.

Filippo Grandi has welcomed the reset in Australian refugee policy. He commended the recent decision to grant permanent residency to 19,000 holders of temporary protection and safe haven enterprise visas.

Nevertheless, he has noted the lack of resolution for the “residual offshore caseload”. And he has not held back in his criticism of the Australian model of “asylum denial practice” and offshore detention now being imitated by the UK.

In this edition we give you the YouTube link to Filippo Grandi’s recent address to the Melbourne Law School.

In recent months refugees have been speaking out and speaking up for their human rights and rights to asylum. In “[My Name is Elli](#)” you will hear the voice of a young refugee woman who tells how the change of rules affecting people who arrived by boat to seek asylum after 19 July 2013 ripped apart her relationship with her husband.

Elli’s story is evidence of what UN High Commissioner Grandi has called “the immense human cost” of Australian Refugee policy. Thousands are suffering in hopelessness, and they still need our help.

Grandmothers say, Let Them Stay.

Overall numbers attending Palm Sunday rallies this year seemed to be in decline.

Grandmothers in Melbourne, however, turned out in good numbers including some from very outer metro suburbs and even regional Victoria. See if you can find yourselves in our photo report.

And a reminder....it is not too late to get signatures for our petition to be tabled in Federal Parliament during Refugee Week. Details inside, and copies of the petition can be downloaded from our website www.grandmothersforrefugees.org



The immense human cost of Australia’s treatment of people seeking asylum is being paid by the most vulnerable.



GRANDMOTHERS STILL TURNING OUT IN STRONG NUMBERS FOR REFUGEES ON PALM SUNDAY IN MELBOURNE. >>>



Member for Kooyong Monique Ryan (Ind) joined the Melbourne rally with G4R Kooyong convenor Davina Lippman (above)





And they came, the young and the old(er).

“EVERYONE BELONGS INCLUDING REFUGEES”



Upcoming dates when we are called to stand with and for refugees>>>

18-25 June 2023
 20 June 2023
 19 July 2023

Refugee Week
 World Refugee Day
 10 YEARS TOO LONG day of action

My name is Elli

My husband and I have the same story, the same problems, the same documents, but somehow the Australian Government treats us totally different, because we arrived a few months apart. My name is Elli.

Ten years ago, my husband fled Iran urgently. We did not have time to make any plans or decisions about whether we would leave together; he just had to escape. So we became separated. When he arrived in Australia, he spent a short time in detention, and then he was free to live in Australia while his refugee claim was decided. But I had a very different experience. After he arrived, the Australian Government suddenly changed the rules. When I arrived just a few months later (after July 2013), I was not allowed to stay in Australia. I remember the face of the woman officer who interviewed me in Christmas Island. She told me, “*you will never see your husband again.*” She told me to go back to my country while I was still young.

I then spent five years in Nauru. Being in that environment without my husband was really shocking. As a woman alone, I was pressured many times. Doctors, interpreters, and guards all tried to take advantage of me. The loneliness and separation from my husband gave me anxiety and a different level of depression. I

could not tell my husband about all the things happening to me on Nauru because our phone calls were limited and there was no privacy. I could not tell him how much I missed him or how much I wanted to hug him and hold his hand.

There were other people in Nauru in the same situation. They had brothers, sisters, partners or even children in Australia, but they could not be with them. Some families arrived together in Nauru, but when people needed medical procedures, the Australian Government would fly half the family to Australia and keep the other half in Nauru. This cruelty was designed to break families apart to make us feel alone and put pressure on us to leave. It felt like they were punishing us for fleeing (danger in) our country and coming to Australia.

In 2018 I made a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Committee about this separation, along with thirteen other families. The Human Rights Committee told the Australian Government to urgently reunite those families while our complaint was considered. The Australian Government ignored this. While I was suffering in Nauru, my husband was also suffering. He was worried about me and felt guilty that he was free in Australia. He tried everything to get help. He wrote letters to politicians. He went to protests. And he threw himself into his work. It was the only way for him to survive.

At the end of 2018 I was very sick in Nauru. Only after lawyers threatened to take the Australian Government to court did they finally bring me to hospital here. In 2019 I was finally reunited with my husband.



(continued next page)

My husband and I have a strong relationship. We are lucky to have love. Lots of other families did not survive Nauru and have gotten divorced. But my husband has supported me in a thousand ways. He is the person who waited for me here. He worked hard to build a business so we could have an easier life. He has coped with my trauma and my many dark days. But all of those years of separation had an impact on us. We have been in survival mode for so long and we carry so much trauma. We have no intimacy - we shut down that part of ourselves when we were separated. We would love to start a family, but we cannot even talk about having kids. We are numb, but it is not our fault, and it is not a reason to be apart. This is what trauma and damage looks like in a relationship cruelly disregarded by Australia's refugee policy.

Elli's husband may soon be allowed to stay in Australia permanently. But unless the Minister for Home Affairs Clare O'Neil makes a personal exception for her, she has no legal options to stay in Australia with him. Her only option is to go to New Zealand.

I do not want to leave Australia, but I want the right to live somewhere permanently. I want to be able to work or study, to travel to see my family. Most importantly, I want to see my parents. My father is not well, and I need to see him soon.

It is not a question of whether we will have a better life in New Zealand. It is about our ability to cope with starting all over again. When you are just trying to survive each day, you have no capacity for something new and unknown. We were strong enough to survive all those years apart, but now we have used up all our energy. There is nothing left anymore. We have not yet healed all of this trauma, so we are not ready to build our lives all over again in New Zealand. It would bring us to the lowest part of ourselves and I believe that moment would break us.

We have spent so long waiting for an end to this uncertainty. Life is passing us by while we wait. There must be a solution for families like ours, and we need it quickly. We do not have any more time to wait. I know there are other people like me who have no choice but to go to New Zealand, even though they have family members here. It is hard for anyone to ask their husband or wife to give up their lives here. Other people will have to leave behind brothers, sisters, or parents who they cannot bring to New Zealand even if they wanted to.

When we left Iran, we were forced to be separated. We thought that if we survived, we would never go through that again. For us to make that choice to be apart again now is because we have no other options. The Australian Government has asked the UNHCR to find solutions for families like ours. But going to New Zealand is no solution at all – it is more of the same cruel treatment the Australian Government has subjected us to since we arrived ten years ago. We are treated like we are not people, as though the lost years of our lives meant nothing, as though our connections with each other and our community around us means nothing.

The Australian Government could end this cruelty today and allow families like mine to stay here together. I hope that you will continue doing everything in your power to convince the Australian Government to do this. **Please remember me. My name is Elli.**

If you care about Elli and the issues raised in her story, please know that she is just one of thousands of refugees still suffering in this hopelessness, and they need your help. Please, write or call your local MP to say how you feel and why you feel that Australia must give up its cruel treatment of people like Elli.

Grandmothers say, Let Them Stay. Please... just let them stay.

bloody

10 years too \wedge long, Australia

19 July 2023 is the 10th anniversary of the announcement that anyone arriving by boat to seek asylum would never ever be able to settle in Australia. It remains Government policy.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

- Urgent evacuation of ALL those left behind on Nauru and PNG
- An end to the ban on resettlement in Australia for Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals
- An end to offshore processing

AND WHEN DO WE WANT IT? **NOW!!**

UNHCR welcomes Australia's refugee policy reset

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has spent two weeks in Australia after a decade of "tough conversations on Australian domestic policy". Grandi has noted a reset in refugee policy in this country and says he has had "open and frank discussions" in his meetings with key Ministers including Andrew Giles and Clare O'Neil.



(L-R) David Manne, Executive Director Refugee Legal; UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, MHR Ged Kearney, and Minister for Immigration Andrew Giles at the official opening of Refugee Legal's new Melbourne offices and the launch of their Strategic Plan 2023-25.

Here is the link to Filippo Grandi's address at Melbourne University Law School on 21 April. Copy this link into your browser to access the full address <https://youtu.be/OuLOHCj6-Fc> (Note that the vision is interrupted temporarily although audio remains clear.)

What's on....in Perth

A Greater Perth member writes: *I recently joined some ladies who have formed the Perth Community Refugee Support Group. We have been established under the new-ish Federal Government Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia program. We hope to get a refugee family to Perth asap. Our first fundraiser is a 70's quiz night on May 27 at the Bayswater Bowling and Recreation Centre. I am busy with this as it is a completely new thing for me, plus I have had an unexpected increase in my work-load!*



 **PERTH Community
Refugee Support Group**

'70S QUIZ NIGHT FUNDRAISER

Help us welcome a refugee family to Perth. Money raised will be used to provide a range of practical supports to the family including short-term accommodation, short term financial assistance and furnishing a home.

**Saturday 27 May, 2023
Doors open at 6.30 PM
Baywater Bowling Club**

**\$200 - Table of 8
or \$25 per ticket**

**Wear your grooviest 70s
outfit...PRIZE for Best Dressed!**

Raffle fun and heaps of prizes!

**BYO nibbles to share,
DRINKS at the bar,
plus Decadent DESSERT bar \$10**

TICKETS:
<https://shoutforgood.com/event-ticketings/70sQuizNight>



event info: Felicity 0415 265 044 or email perth.crs@gmail.com

What's on ...in regional Victoria

Rural Australians for Refugees and Grandmothers for Refugees are both grassroots movements and members of ARAN, the Australian Refugee Action Network. The Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees has created a special event to give the local community an opportunity to meet and hear directly from refugees about their past and recent experiences. "Finding Freedom" will launch Refugee Week 2023 at the beautiful Kyneton Town Hall and all are welcome. Tickets are on sale now!



Finding Freedom: Real Stories of Human Survival.

Kyneton Town Hall, Sunday 18 June
1 - 4pm, 129 Mollison St, Kyneton

Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees is excited to announce a community event to launch Refugee Week, supported by Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Host and keynote speaker, **Tom Ballard**: actor, comedian and broadcaster.

Featuring **Muzafar Ali**: Hazara photographer, human rights activist and winner of the 2022 Fred Hollows Humanitarian of the Year award.

Presenting personal stories from four refugees: our very special guest speakers. Plus, hear about the launch of our **student writing competition!**

Cost: Adults \$35 / Students \$10



To book or for more information

Scan the QR Code, visit mrsc.vic.gov.au/refugee-week
call 1300 888 802, or email comdevadmin@mrsc.vic.gov.au



Refugee Week

Coordinated by
Refugee Council of Australia



A 94% CUT IN ASSISTANCE ADDS DESTITUTION TO THEIR HOPELESSNESS

The government's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program is meant to offer the basic safety net - minimal but vital assistance of \$42 a day for people seeking asylum in Australia. In recent years, the SRSS program has been cut by 94%, or over \$280 million. The number of people assisted has dropped from over 29,000 in 2015 to just 1,600 now. The government is abandoning people when they most urgently need support.

The solution is a change to the guidelines.

No legal amendments or regulatory changes are necessary to establish a safety net for the 15,000 seeking asylum who are living in deep poverty. There's no need to go before Parliament. All that's needed is for Minister for Immigration, Andrew Giles, to change the program guidelines.

CALL TO ACTION>>> Write to the Minister c/- Parliament House, Canberra, ACT2600 to urge restoration of the SRSS to all those waiting for resolution of their claims for asylum.

Thanks to the ASRC for reminding us of this ongoing and unresolved issue.

And finally...



Last weeks!!...to gather signatures for the Grandmothers for Refugees petition to be lodged in the Federal Parliament during Refugee Week 18-25 June 2023.

Hey! This bit is important...

PLEASE MAKE SURE THE ORIGINAL SIGNED PAGES OF THE PETITION ARE SENT OR DELIVERED TO:

**MARGARET BROWNE
CO-CHAIR GRANDMOTHERS FOR REFUGEES
3 HAWTHORN RD
NORTHCOTE
VIC 3070**

THE PETITION PAGES NEED TO ARRIVE SECURELY AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS BY FRIDAY 19 MAY 2023 SO THEY CAN BE CONSOLIDATED AND SENT TO CANBERRA.

Having doubts or difficulties? Email info@grandmothersforrefugees.org or Telephone 0402 944 193

Best wishes all,
Margaret, Jean, Marita, Janet, Virginia and Gael