

PALM SUNDAY RALLY and MARCH

**BE COVID
SAFE**

Anyone with COVID symptoms should not attend.



PEACE not WAR

PERMANENT VISAS FOR ALL REFUGEES

Sunday March 24, 2pm Belmore Park (near Central Station, March to Victoria Park)

Climate Action not AUKUS Nuclear Subs

WAR CREATES REFUGEES

Thamilselvan Selvakumar
Sri Lankan Tamil Asylum Seeker on
Bridging Visa

Susan Connelly
Sister of St Joseph

Craig Foster Refugee Advocate,
Australian Republican Movement

Reem Borrows
Palestinian advocate, Arab Council
Australia

Ms Shaye Candish
General Secretary, NSW Nurses &
Midwives Association

War Creates Refugees; Refugees Need Permanent Visas

When the Federal Labor government was elected, Prime Minister Albanese said no one would be left behind. But refugees are well and truly being left behind.

More than 1,100 refugees from Nauru and PNG are now in Australia but they are being denied permanent settlement here. Despite Labor recognising that the fast-track system introduced by the LNP was fundamentally unfair, 10,000 asylum seekers who were rejected under the fast-track system are also being denied permanent visas. It is blatant discrimination, when Labor has increased the skilled migration numbers but won't give permanent residency to refugees who have been living in Australia for many years.

The Labor government is spending \$350 million each year, 2025-26 and 2026-27, to maintain offshore detention on Nauru. Nauru was emptied in June 2023, but in October 2023 the government sent 11 asylum seekers intercepted at sea there; another 12 were sent in November. Since Labor was elected, nine asylum boats have also been turned around at sea, potentially returned to danger.

In PNG, 52 refugees (and their families) are in dire straits, with all essential support services cut while they are still living there waiting for permanent settlement, even though the Manus Island detention centre was formally closed in 2016.

The number of refugees being accepted under the humanitarian program will increase from 13,750 to 20,000 in 2024 - but Labor has not lifted the ban imposed by the previous government on accepting refugees from Indonesia, so 14,000 refugees, including 7000 Afghans, remain stranded there.

While the Labor government leaves the victims of war and persecution under Australia's jurisdiction in limbo, it also refuses to call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, even after the International Court of Justice's decision ordering Israel to take "all measures within its power" to "prevent acts that could amount to genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". It has now frozen funding to the UN refugee agency UNRWA, the organisation that provides Humanitarian Aid programs and places of shelter so desperately needed to avert homelessness, disease, and starvation.

At the same time as denying humanitarian aid, the Australian government continues to prepare for war on China. It is expanding military bases to allow US B-52 bombers to be deployed in the Northern Territory; and under the AUKUS agreement with the US and UK, the government is spending \$368 billion on nuclear submarines. That's \$368 billion that could be better spent on public housing, fully funding schools, and increasing staff (and wages) in hospitals and aged care.

Being pro-refugee and anti-war goes hand in hand. As the great Nelson Mandela once said, "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

We need to keep fighting for humanitarian refugee policies, and for the Australian government to end the alliance with the US war machine and consistently promote peace not war.

Donate to Sydney Palm Sunday Committee at BSB 082024. A/c No: 561401082