

Medevac Refugees on Hunger Strike Have Been Hospitalised

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[Green Left](#)

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Fourteen refugees have been on hunger strike for more than a week in protest at their imprisonment in a refugee prison in Broadmeadows. Some have been detained by the federal government for eight years.

Refugee rights supporters organised a snap vigil on June 21 outside the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) to show their support. By June 25, two refugees had to be hospitalised.

One of the MITA hunger strikers, [quoted by the Refugee Action Collective](#) (Victoria), asked: “Why is the government torturing us for nine years? We want to know what is the difference between us and the others [Medevac refugees] who were released six months ago? We can’t be in detention anymore.”

Around 90 refugees were brought to Australia for medical care in 2019 from detention camps on Nauru and Manus Island. Some are still being held in prison hotels and detention centres in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

People brought for medical treatment after the repeal of the Medevac law are also still being held in detention in Sydney and Darwin and Adelaide.

Between December and February, about 100 Medevac refugees were released into the community on bridging visas.

More than 60 Medevac refugees wrote to Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews in May, asking her to use her discretionary powers to release them. They are still waiting for an answer.

“All the Medevac refugees must be released,” RAC spokesperson Ian Rintoul said on June 24.

“In many cases, the government has not even provided medical treatment they were brought to Australia to receive. After detention on Manus and Nauru, and two years of detention in Australia, every day in detention worsens their mental distress. They need freedom.”

Some refugees are being sent overseas, instead of being released into the community. Two Medevac refugees were flown to the United States on June 21, leaving 33 still locked up in the Park Hotel in Melbourne.

One of them was [Babkir Omda](#) who had been held in Melbourne hotel prison for almost two years. He spoke to Green Left before flying out of the country. “I’m happy to be free and breathe fresh air again after 22 months, but I wish I could have been released in Melbourne where I know people. I was given no choice.”

[RAC has called a [snap rally](#) on June 25 at 4.30pm in solidarity with the hunger strikers. A vigil is being organised on [July 19](#) will mark their ninth year in detention.]

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