MEDIA RELEASE Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites 24th April 2016

BEHROUZ BOOCHANI RESISTS: 'I have worked hard with film-makers, fellow journalists, organisations and lawyers but now I want to send out Manus voice by my body'

'I left my country because I am a liberal writer and I will always fight for democratic values even with my body', writes Behrouz Boochani, Kurdish-Iranian journalist and writer detained in Australia's black site on Manus Island.

Mr Boochani, has chosen to resist the farcical conferring of a positive refugee status by PNG immigration upon him even as he has refused to give his claim for asylum to PNG. He has climbed a tree, using his body to send out a message that he will resist further moves to force him to comply with 'this cruel policy'.

Mr Boochani has requested that RAPBS send out the following statement to the media:
Tomorrow morning [24th April] they will move me to Oscar. I want to resist. They must take me by force. They said 'you only have 15 minutes. If you resist we will take you by PNG police by force.'

I received a positive refugee status determination on 18 April 2016 from the PNG immigration. I arrived in Australia 3 years ago and asked Australia for asylum under international law. The Labour government of Australia exiled me to their prison camp in Manus Island PNG by force. I have been imprisoned here for almost 3 years and have been under a lot of pressure to fill in the protection application in PNG but I have constantly denied to do so. I did not arrive in PNG and did never give the PNG government my case for asylum. I have never wanted to resettle in this country.

This is part of my fight. I have worked hard and tirelessly during the last 3 years to send out Manus voice. I wrote lots of articles and pieces in my real name and fake name. I have worked hard with film-makers, fellow journalists, organisations and lawyers but now I want to send out Manus voice by my body. I don't have any other way.

I don't want to lose my personality. I don't want to be a nameless detainee. 'By the 19 July law our legal status has been suspended and we become legally un-nameable beings. We are made into non-beings without dignity. Think of Hamid Khazaei, his body was used to violently send a message to the world' (Boochani, unpublished article, Nauru and Manus Islands and the law: The State of Exception).

This is a fight for Western democratic values of freedom, equality, the right to safety, the right to asylum, the right to freedom of speech and movement, and mutual respect. I will resist not for myself but for humanity values. I left my country because I am a liberal writer and I will always fight for democratic values even with my body.

I fight to show people that Australia has tortured people in this hell prison for three years.

In his article 'A Critical Silence' published on RAPBS website, Boochani provides a forensic analysis of element[s] of control and domination' used in the black site and identifies 'the authorities fear [of] a public protest, even a peaceful one, being mounted'. We at RAPBS are concerned that the boost in security personnel, further overcrowding, lack of sanitation and the presence shown by PNG police and para-military, the separation of men who have become like family and the despair and degradation that 3 years of humiliating, degrading and inhuman punishment 'tantamount to torture', with no hope for safe resettlement has produced, sets the conditions for a violent confrontation

As we wrote in our commentary on the recent divisions of inmates into two camps, a sense of deep unease and even desperation are pervasive among the inmates.

We ask that concerned media treat Mr Boochani's statement and action with the gravity it deserves.

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