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Beheaded after trying for asylum in Australia



Mohammed Hussain ... murdered.

Photo: *Glen Mccurtayne*

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AN AFGHAN asylum seeker rejected by Australia under the Howard government was tortured and beheaded by kidnappers less than four weeks ago in a province south of Kabul.

The man, Mohammed Hussain, was thrown down a well by gunmen, believed to be the Taliban. Then in front of onlookers including members of his family, the killers threw a hand grenade down the well and he was decapitated.

Accounts of the killing were given to Phil Glendenning, director of the Edmund Rice Centre, this week. He told the *Herald* he has verified the events with four different sources in Afghanistan.

Mr Hussain was a self-described poet who was detained on Nauru by Australian authorities under the Howard government's so called "Pacific solution". But his claims for asylum were rejected by immigration officials and he was sent back to Afghanistan.

Mr Glendenning met Mr Hussain in January in Kabul, where the Australian was filming a documentary, *A Well-Founded Fear*, about asylum seekers rejected during the Howard years.

Mr Hussain told Mr Glendenning he could not live in Afghanistan because of the Taliban and other factional enemies, and now lived in a place where there was a coal mine, "a mountain and no one else".

Shortly after Mr Glendenning saw Mr Hussain, he learnt the Afghan had been kidnapped by gunmen in a 4WD vehicle with blackened windows.

According to accounts given to Mr Glendenning, Mr Hussain was held for weeks by his captors before he escaped to Iran. After authorities began deporting Afghans home, he fled to Pakistan, but the Taliban forced him out and he returned to Kabul.

It was from here he sent a message to Mr Glendenning, asking him "could I contact anybody that might be able to help him to get out of the country because he was going to be killed by his enemies from the Mujahadeen war".

From here Mr Hussain fled south to the Afghan province of Ghazni, where again six weeks ago he was kidnapped by enemies believed to be the Taliban.

Then 26 days ago Mr Glendenning says Mr Hussain's captors threw him down a well "in front of many witnesses including villagers and some family members".

Says Mr Glendenning: "It further underscores the fact that the Pacific solution hasn't ended, and that those who were the victims of it remain the victims of it."

Mr Glendenning wants the Immigration Minister, Chris Evans, to reopen the cases of the rejected Afghans "as a matter of urgency". He also wants the Government to "put in place processes and policies to make sure this never ever happens again".

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