



AUSTRALIA

Refugee claims spark fresh call for Royal Commission

Monday, 27 October, 2008

A claim that up to 20 Afghans denied entry into Australia were later killed by the Taliban has sparked fresh calls for a royal commission into the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

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VIDEO: Refugee claims rock Australian politics

Edmund Rice Centre director Phil Glendenning says he has documented the deaths of nine of the Afghans, rejected under the Pacific Solution scheme, but believes the number is really 20.

Mr Glendenning makes the claims in a new documentary, *A Well-Founded Fear*, to be aired on SBS television next month.

Immigration Minister Chris Evans has asked the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for a full briefing on matters raised in the film.

'A sense of justice'

The Australian Greens today said the claims underlined the need for a royal commission.

"The decisions made about immigration by the Howard government have cost people's lives," Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said.

"Now the Rudd government has the chance to demonstrate the understanding, compassion and sense of justice that the Howard government lacked so callously.

"Immigration Minister Evans must demand the establishment of a royal commission into the way Australia's immigration policies have treated asylum seekers, as a matter of urgency."

Senator Hanson-Young said only a royal commission would bring a complete picture of the damage caused by Australia's immigration policies.

Hundreds sent home

A spokesman for DIAC said the department takes seriously its obligations to asylum seekers, and does not return them to places where there is "a well-founded fear" of persecution.

"The department is not responsible for all aspects of the future wellbeing of a person in their homeland," he said.

About 400 Afghans detained on Nauru during the Howard government's so-called Pacific Solution were returned to Afghanistan after having their asylum claims rejected.

Another 400 who refused to go voluntarily were eventually found to be refugees and were resettled in Australia or other countries including New Zealand.

Source: SBS Staff and agencies



There have been claims that up to 20 Afghans who were denied entry into Australia were later killed by the Taliban (Getty)

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