



News release

15 November

**Be compassionate, don't be afraid  
our plea to the Australian government**

The Catholic Diocese of Auckland Justice and Peace Commission calls on the Australian government to accept New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's 1 November offer to take into New Zealand 150 refugees from the Manus Island detention camp.

The Commission described the conditions for the 600 men in the camp as a violation of basic human dignity – theirs and ours.

The Catholic Church says we must focus on the needs of those who are the most vulnerable in society.

“This compels all of us to stand in solidarity with the people detained in the Manus detention camp,” said spokesperson Philip Cass.

The Australian government told Prime Minister Ardern that it was worried that sending refugees to New Zealand would encourage boat people to keep sailing for Australia.

“Pope Francis has said that we should not be afraid of refugees,” said Philip Cass.

“He has repeatedly urged countries to welcome migrants and refugees, saying that their dignity and right to protection outweigh national security concerns.

“New Zealand wants to hold out a hand to some of the people in the Manus detention camp.

“Our question is simple, ‘Why should the Australian government be frightened if New Zealand chooses to act with compassion?’ “

**For more information, contact:**

**Philip Cass**

**cass.philip@gmail.com**

**Ph: 027 379 9033**

**Background**

In April 2016 last year, the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea found that the Manus Island Centre breached the PNG constitution's right to personal liberty and described the detention of the refugees as unconstitutional and illegal.

The men in the Manus detention camp refused to leave, even after water and electricity was cut off. They say they are frightened of being attacked.

Australia has used the Manus detention camp as an offshore detention centre since 2001, when the country struck a deal with PNG and Nauru to hold refugees fleeing to Australia in camps on the islands.

### **To summarise**

- The Catholic Diocese of Auckland Justice and Peace Commission calls on the Australian government to accept New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's offer to take in 150 refugees from the Manus detention camp.
- The Commission described the conditions for the 600 men in the camp as a violation of basic human dignity – theirs and ours.
- “New Zealand wants to hold out a hand to some of the people in Manus detention camp,” said Philip Cass
- Our question is simple, “Why should the Australian government be frightened if New Zealand chooses to act with compassion?”

### **For further information**

Don't be afraid! Pope starts campaign to promote migrants

<http://www.pressherald.com/2017/09/29/pope-launches-campaign-to-promote-migrants/>

Manus refugee who reached Canada last week says deaths are 'very likely'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/06/manus-refugee-who-reached-canada-last-week-says-deaths-are-very-likely>

Court rejects restoration of services to Manus detention centre (RNZ)

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/343279/court-rejects-restoration-of-services-to-manus-detention-centre>

Refugees in limbo as Manus detention centre shuts

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/refugees-limbo-manus-detention-centre-shuts-171030211900096.html>

Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull rejects Ardern's refugee offer - for now

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/98570650/Australian-PM-Malcolm-Turnbull-rejects-Arderns-refugee-offer-for-now>

### **For more information, contact:**

Philip Cass

cass.philip@gmail.com

Ph: 027 379 9033