

A Statement from Behrouz Boochani on Manus Island

I'm talking with you from Manus Island after five years of living in harsh conditions and too much suffering. I would like to thank you for standing for humanity today. It's truly extraordinary and so valuable to see many people here who care about your human family and our shared moral values.

For years we have spoken to you about our experiences here in Manus Island. And now, in 2018, the cruel policy of 19 July 2013 is still damaging people. We have had many dark and difficult days, especially those days when we have lost our friends. So 19 July does not just commemorate the introduction of a policy. It is also a day of remembering those whose lives have been lost, those young men who were just seeking freedom, and instead found the cruelty and violence of the Australian state.

And those of us who remain continue to experience this suffering, wondering if we will ever be free to make our lives somewhere in peace and security, and free to see our families again.

But the government wants us to forget all this humanity, and instead believe their propaganda. Their 19 July policy is in fact a rejection of humanity and the compassion and understanding that exists between us. They want to replace human values with violence, immorality and humiliation. They are exploiting innocent people and damaging Australia's national character for their own political aims.

But we know that people like you won't let them. Today you are saying that this unlawfulness is enough, this violence is enough, this loss of life, of hope, of kindness and compassion is enough.

Each of you is a hero in this dark historical period. Your children and grandchildren should be proud of you, either now or in the future, for standing up for what's right, both for us here in Manus and Nauru and for a better, kinder, more compassionate Australia.

As you know, many innocent people on Manus and Nauru are still suffering. Too many Australians are still indifferent to this, or too unsure of what to do. But you make us stronger. We watch you raise your voices in the Australian streets and feel your presence here with us.

Our hope is with you. To raise your voices beyond these streets, to keep the campaign growing especially as Australia heads into an important election. To talk to your politicians and neighbours, and encourage them to act for kindness and compassion - if not for us, then for an Australia they can be proud of.

We must continue putting the government under pressure until the day when they officially announce the end to this cruel offshore processing policy.