



# since we last met...

No more boats have landed. Meanwhile, the government is intensifying its program of forcing people who have exhausted the appeals process to leave Australia voluntarily. People from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran are particularly under pressure. There are hundreds of people in detention who have not been given visas to stay, yet cannot be deported to their home countries, because these refuse to accept forced returners. People are literally indefinitely incarcerated in the desert camps.

The first Temporary Protection Visas expired in November. Fear is spreading amongst communities that new visas will not be granted. Letters from the government have been sent to every man, woman and child informing them, that unless they can show again why they deserve protection, they are no longer welcome here. Already, one man is dead from suicide.

Inside the detention centres the struggle for freedom is intensifying in response. Hunger strikes continue. Fires at Port Hedland, Villawood, Woomera and Baxter over the New Year are testimony to the strong will to resist by any means. Nauru detention centre has become, for

a short while, liberated space, with guards unwilling to enter in the face of resistance. Others have escaped detention. Six people escaped Woomera detention centre in early February, but were later recaptured. Yet many have also left, over 500 people coerced into returning to Afghanistan, their situation here so intolerable that to return is less horrific. This is the explicit goal of government policy.

People with Temporary Protection Visas are also organising. Hundreds of Iraqi TPV holders have self-organised to oppose the imposition of permanent semi-legality. Actions are being planned. Connections are being created.

Yet, with only few notable exceptions, Australian activists seem paralysed, fearful, frightened of losing. We are watching from the side lines, as the struggle between the government and those seeking legal status intensifies.

**It is time to again come together. To reclaim our own humanity from the silent despair.**