

Kurds big element in refugee torrent

War and repression in the Middle East has forced millions to seek refuge, whether in neighbouring countries or further afield in Europe or even Australia.

Living mainly in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, the Kurdish people suffer in all four countries.

In Turkey, where Kurds make up over 25% of the population they are second-class citizens and have long fought for their rights against the racist central government. Many Kurds came from Turkey to Australia in the 1980s and 1990s as the Turkish regime waged a vicious war against the Kurdish people.

In Iraq there is the Kurdistan Regional Government but an economic crisis brought on by the corrupt neoliberal regime of Masoud Barzani has led tens of thousands to flee the country this year.

The Yazedi Kurdish minority around Sinjar in Iraq suffered a catastrophe at the hands of the Islamic State gangs. Thousands have died, tens of thousands have become refugees; others joined self-defence units to stay and fight.

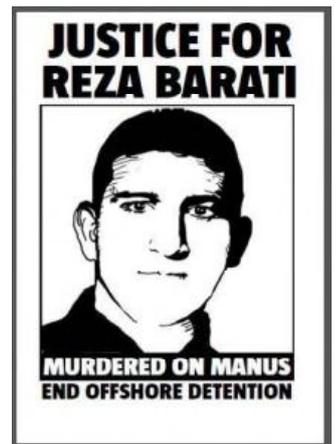
Kurds flee Iranian dictatorship

In the last few years most of the Kurdish asylum seekers coming to Australia have originated in Iran where a despotic theocratic regime persecutes Kurds and other ethnic and religious minorities. In 2015 the Iranian dictatorship executed over 750 people, a large number of them Kurds.

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian Kurdish writer imprisoned on Manus Island, explained that he had crossed the ocean fleeing a dictatorship that crushes the rights of the Kurdish people, only to face Australia's dictatorship over the Aboriginal people and refugees.

Reza Barati, the 23-year old refugee murdered on Manus Island in February 2014 was a Kurd from Iran. "He went to Australia to seek refuge from his land of dreams, where he could have a life and study but instead he was held in captivity and killed," said a relative.

Fazel Chengeni, who died on Christmas Island on November 2015, was Kurdish. Whether directly or indirectly, he was a victim of Australia's inhuman refugee regime; he should never have been in detention at all.



Abdullah Kurdi: 'support our self-organisation'

The family of Alan Kurdi, the three-year old toddler whose lifeless body was found on a Turkish beach in September, were Kurds from Syria. They had fled from Damascus to Aleppo and then to Kobani before seeking safety in Turkey. But Kurds don't fare well there and they eventually headed for Europe.

After the loss of his wife and children, Abdullah Kurdi returned to Kobani to bury Alan. He said: "I am grateful for your sympathy for my fate. This has given me the feeling that I am not alone. But an essential step in ending this tragedy and avoiding its recurrence, is support for our self-organization." In Rojava, the Kurdish-majority liberated territory in northern Syria, the people are trying to build a secular, pluralist, feminist, ecological, grassroots democracy in the teeth of opposition from the IS and Turkey.

Close Australia's island hellholes

The fundamental solution to the refugee crisis is to build a better world. In particular, the Western powers should stop waging their wars and propping up repressive client regimes. They should also take emergency action on climate change or the present refugee crisis will only be a prelude to something even more ghastly.

But right now Kurdish and other refugees are seeking safe havens. Australia and other Western countries should open their borders to those seeking asylum. Australia should stop demonising asylum seekers who risk all to get here by boat; the Manus, Nauru and Christmas Island hellholes should be closed down; mandatory detention should be abolished.

