CRY FREEDOM:
mental health and human rights

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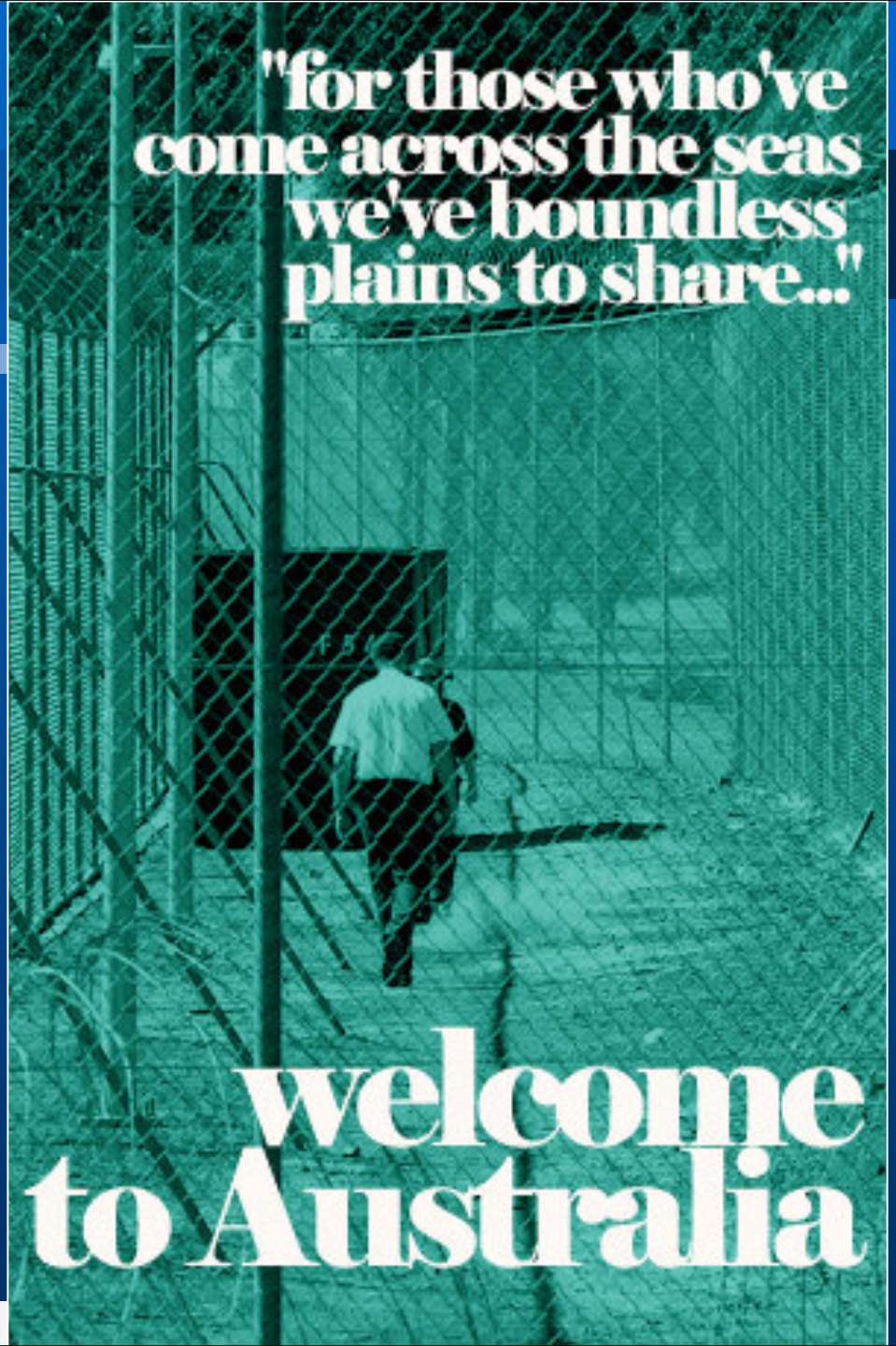
REZA BERATI

Died 17th February 2014

Manus Island

UN CONVENTION 1951

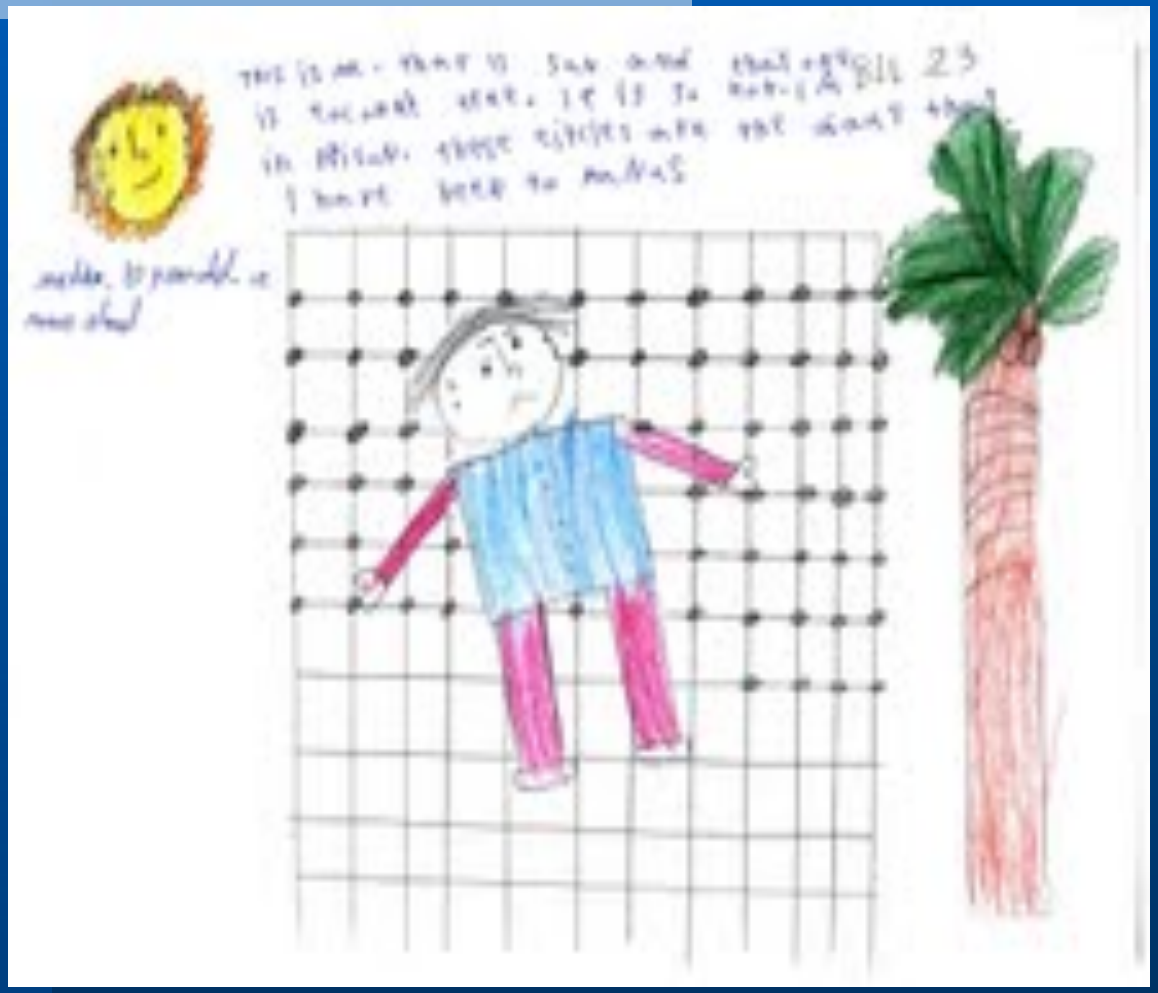
- “ A well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality…political opinion, outside the country of his nationality…”


"for those who've
come across the seas
we've boundless
plains to share..."
welcome
to Australia

THE ASYLUM DEBATE

- Response to unauthorised arrivals
- Issues of control and regulation
- Cultural and historical anxiety
- Global vs local and regional issues
- Politicisation of the dispossessed
- Discussion of values and humanitarian response

CHILDREN IN DETENTION



AUSTRALIA where this baby is
a political prisoner

Children in Detention Dec 2013

- 1170 in secure detention including 500 on CI, 70 on Nauru
- 1637 in community detention including unaccompanied minors
- 1765 in families on Bridging Visa with no rights to work or resettlement

CHILD ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 50% are unaccompanied minors
- Majority of these are from Afghanistan and Iran
- Older adolescent and young adults from Sri Lanka

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SEEKING ASYLUM

- Flight from massive trauma
- Search for a secure base and safety
- Need to process trauma and put in a narrative form
- Transgenerational repair and need to protect children and sustain culture and memory

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Trauma and Recovery

- Vulnerability of refugee populations
- 30%depresion and trauma related symptoms
- Little known about diverse models of psychological trauma and recovery
- Little evidence about effective interventions and cultural applicability

Government Response

- Policies of deterrence
- Remote processing
- Detention of families and children
- Removal of permanent resettlement
- Mandatory and indefinite detention
- Criminalisation of protest
- Detention of mentally ill

ROLE OF HEALTH /WELFARE PROFESSIONS

- Commitment to human rights/values
- Role of advocacy for vulnerable groups
- Ethical responsibility to oppose harmful policies regardless of political party
- Research and policy development
- Reflective practice

DEATH IN SRILANKA
JAIL IN INDONESIA
SHAME ON AUSTRALIA

RESEARCH CONTEXT

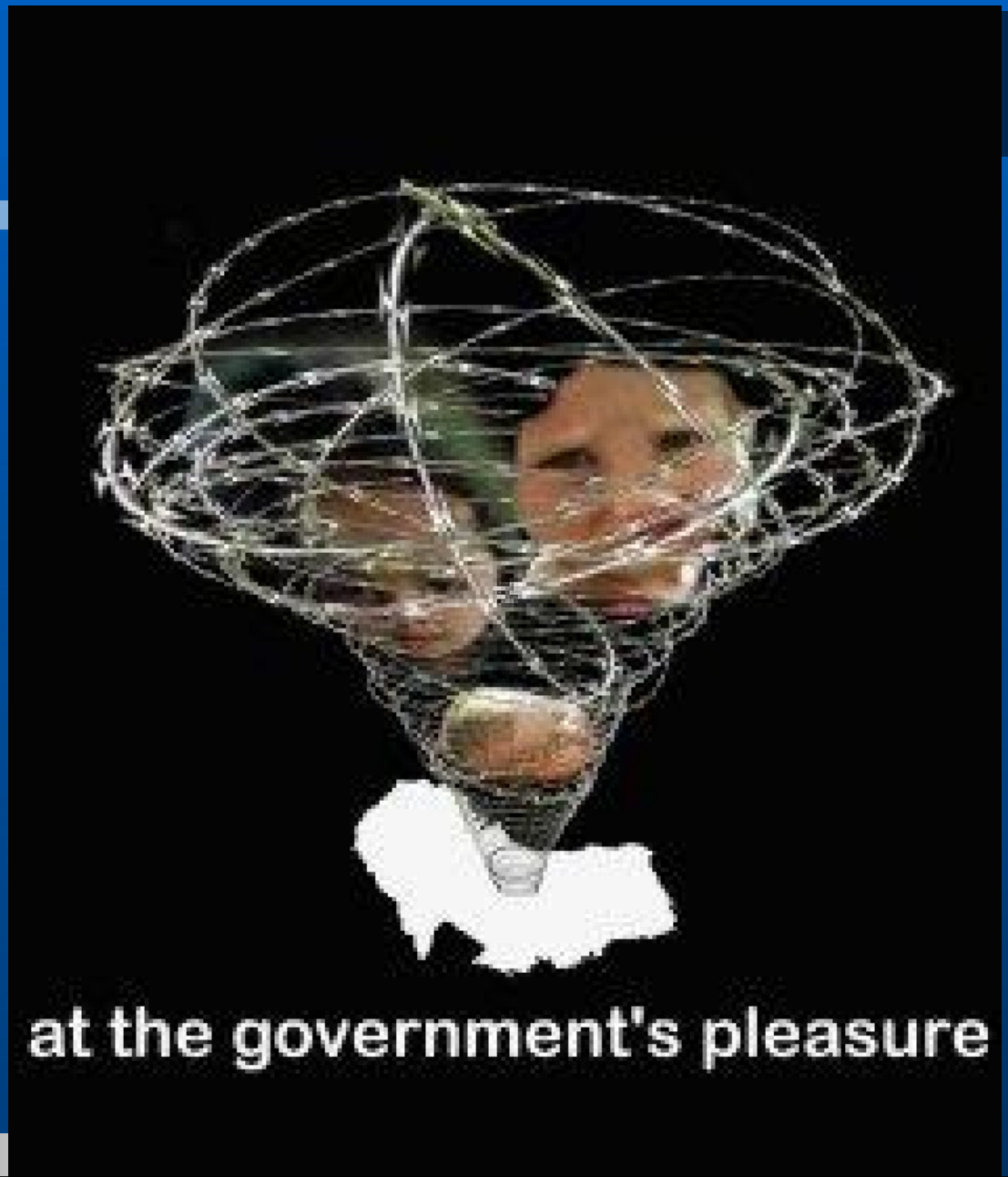
- Issues in IDC research and data – suicide and self harm
- Issues in following former detainees
- Issues in tracking impact of negative outcome and removal pathway
- Impact of temporary arrangements/ bridging visa

PRIORITY ISSUES

- Impact of mandatory detention on mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Impact of remote processing and lack of permanent protection
- Concepts of adaptation, recovery and social inclusion
- Impact on children and young people including UAMS

PRIORITY ISSUES

- Identification of mental health and trauma related issues
- Understanding premigration, migration and settlement factors and mental health
- Intervention approaches for children and young people with trauma related issues


at the government's pleasure

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

- Attack on attachment – loss of hearing other; loss of integrative function of narrative
- Breakdown of capacity to mourn
- Identification with destruction – new reality
- Breakdown of symbolic function – concrete reexperiencing
- Persistent symptoms

MASSIVE TRAUMA

- Fundamental alterations in identity, experience of reduction to a non-human life form
- Efforts at repair and mastery
- Shattered self is not reconstituted as the same – knowledge that Horror exists

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CHILDREN IN DETENTION

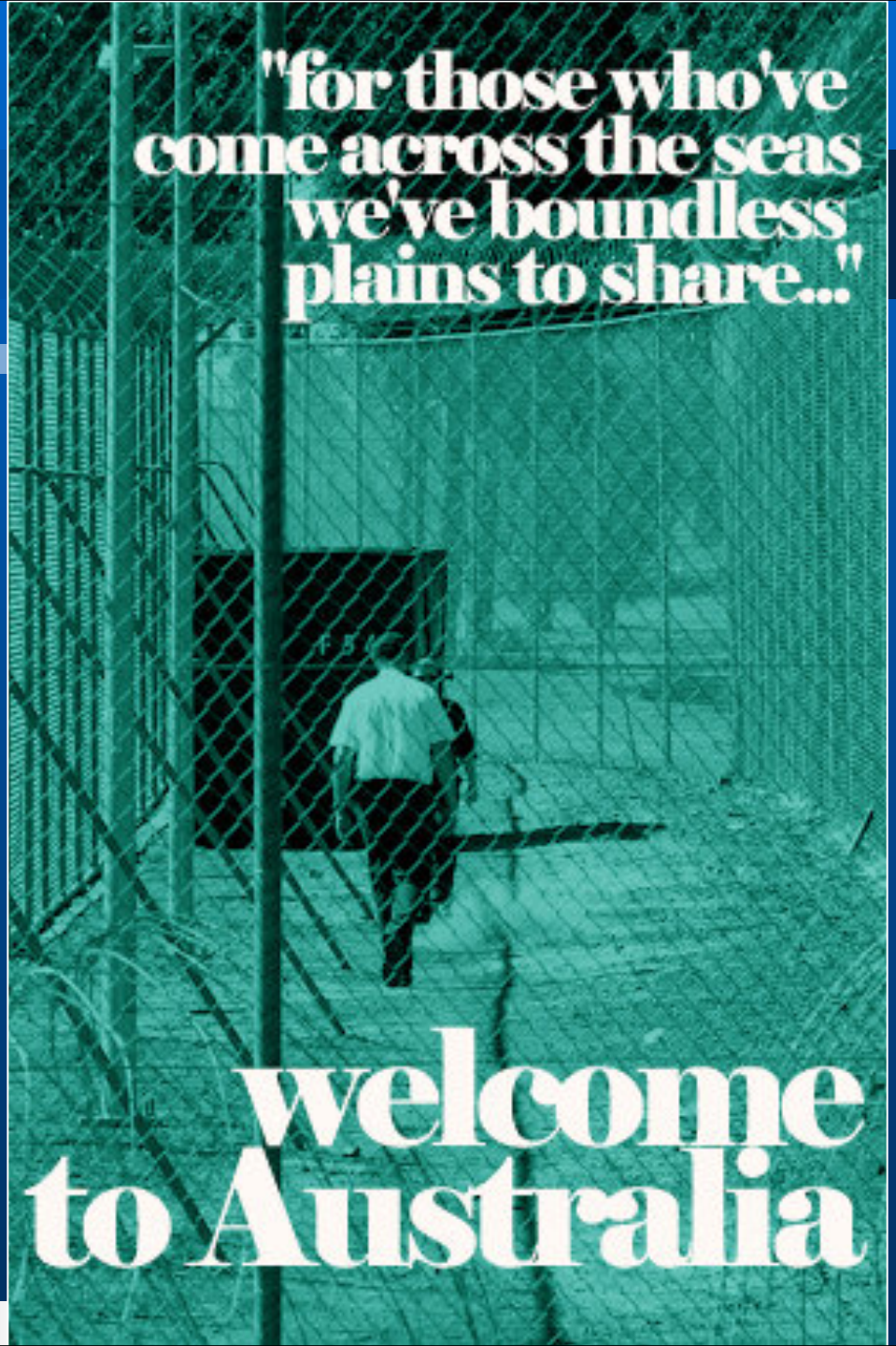
- Alternate temporary detention includes justice facilities, hotels, motels, hospitals and health facilities
- Children are under guard, restricted movement. Limited access to recreation and education or psychological support

0Z25
children by numbers

OFFSHORE PROCESSING

- Capacity and cost issues on Xmas Island
- Issues in provision of health and mental health services; Lack of community detention options
- Politics of the hard line and border protection vs international obligations

Equator
Sumatra
Borneo
Java
CHRISTMAS ISLAND
12°S
COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS
2600 km
AUSTRALIA
30°S
Perth
90°E
105°E
120°E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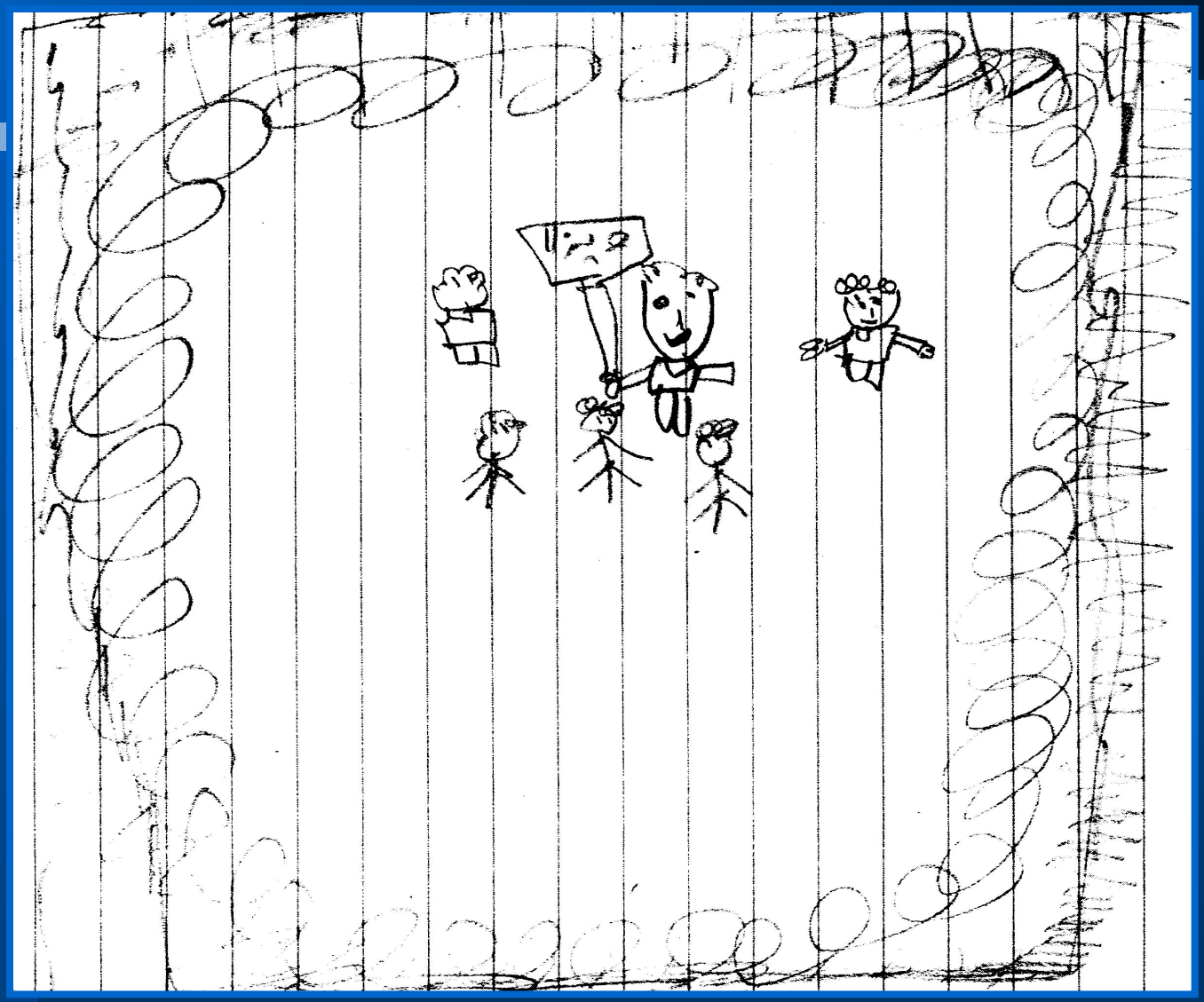
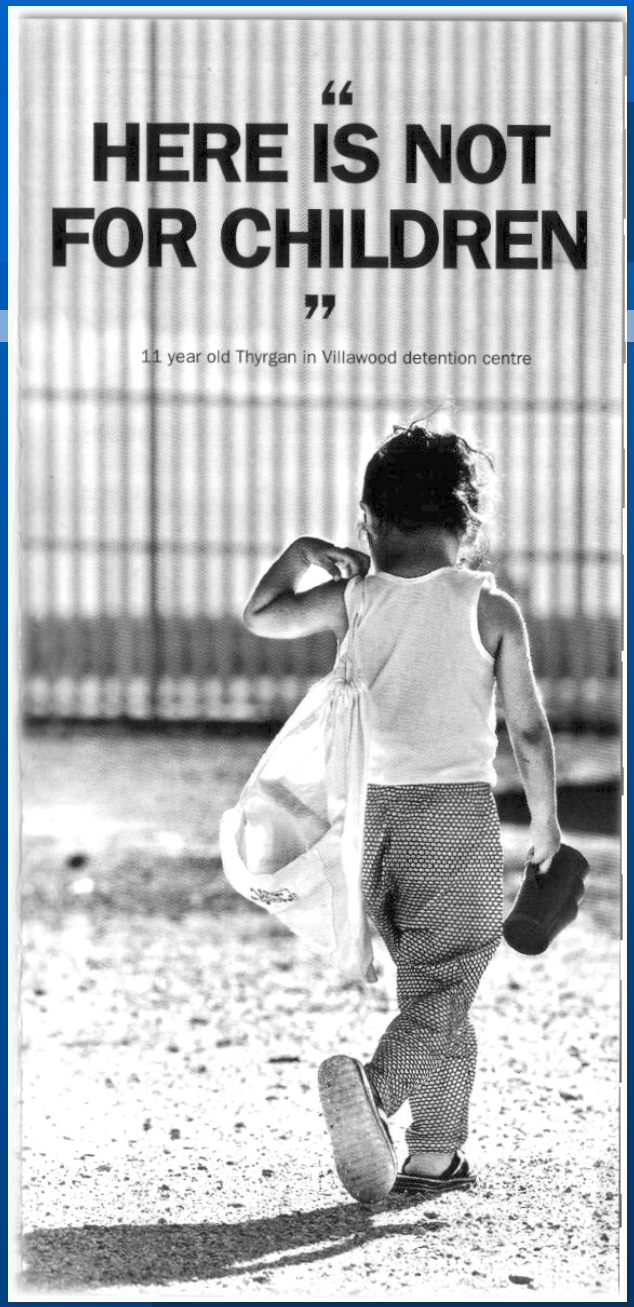
ISOLATION





- 3360 children held under mandatory detention
- Several for more than three years
- Group born in detention

GATE
24
ZONE
7

MENTAL DISORDER AND DETENTION

- PTSD and Depression 60-85%
- Physical Symptoms common
- Conversion Disorders
- Progressive deterioration related to length of detention
- Paranoia and psychotic symptoms
- Anger, self-harm and interpersonal conflict

EFFECTS OF DETENTION

1. **Non Symptomatic Stage** - ***SHOCK***

2. **Primary Depressive Stage** - ***DEPRESSION***
   - ***PTSD***

3. **Secondary depressive Stage – Major Depression and melancholia**

4. **Tertiary Depressive Stage - psychosis**

REMOTE CENTRE STUDY
Steel, Silove, Newman et al, 2007

- **Study of 11 families of single ethnic group in a remote facility – 22 children**
- **SCID-IV, K-SADS-PL**
- **All children symptomatic following traumatic exposure**
- **21 children major depression, 50%PTSD, 50% Separation Anxiety**

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REMOTE CENTRE STUDY

- All adults and children met diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder
- Children had a 10 fold increase in disorder subsequent to detention
- All adults and most children experienced traumatic symptoms related to detention experiences

MENTAL DISORDER IN DETAINEE CHILDREN

- High rates of depression, anxiety and PTSD
- Attachment disorders, withdrawal,developmental delay in young children
- Effects of exposure to riots, self-harm and adult distress
- Unmediated experiences of trauma

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LONG TERM IMPACT OF DETENTION CENTRES

- **Neurodevelopmental effects of trauma and neglect**
- **Attachment disorder and relationship disturbance**
- **Risk of chronic depression**
- **Ongoing anger and alienation**

POLITICAL APPLICATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

- Human rights commitment
- Commitment to rehabilitation
- Creation of containing structures, services
- Validation of experiences and survival

THERAPIST EXPERIENCE

- Reflection on own political position, culture, relationship to refugee experience
- Shame regarding host nation. Government policy, racism
- Risk of over identification, over responsibility or denial

THERAPIST EXPERIENCE

- Overwhelming grief, anger, outrage
- Sense of meaninglessness of anything other than trauma
- Managing the haunted – the terrible knowledge the refugee has about the human condition and the banality of evil
- Contagion of horror

EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THERAPEUTIC ACTION

- **The therapeutic exists in a sociopolitical context and is shaped by and reflects predetermined values**
- **Individualism of therapeutic models is problematised by massive traumas**
- **Therapeutic neutrality is not possible in the context of human rights violations**

CLINICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN IDC

- **Is treatment possible in this environment?**
- **Compromising of clinical standards and control of clinical decision making**
- **Human rights violations and responsibility of clinicians**

STATE SPONSORED CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT

- **Professional responsibility to oppose any policy which is traumatising, harmful and renders clinicians powerless in terms of healing role**
- **Lessons form history that medicine/ psychiatry can be misused or coopted by political agendas in an unethical manner; collaboration may become collusion**

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BUILDING ON EVIDENCE

- Attempts to minimise impact of psychological evidence
- Attribution of all disorder to pre-migration trauma
- Need for adequate services for high-risk populations
- Comparison of community based asylum seekers and detainee groups

CONCLUSION:
DETENTION AND TRAUMA

- **Suicidality and mass self-harm in IDCs represents a convergence of health, advocacy and human rights concerns**
- **These problems are directly related to the extremity of the detention environment and to the politics of detention**