

Panarticon

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HELLO. I am human and I love humans. Do you think all of us are human?— I am from Afghanistan. I am here for one year. The DIMA [Australian Immigration] rejected me because of the current situation in Afghanistan—I like painting and making good landscapes by color. I like to be free in a good city of Australia and to make too many paintings—I am the saddest man in the world. Because I have lost all my family—I am looking everyday [at] suicides, hang themselves, cut themselves, even children, and take many tablets for calm and nervous, drink shampoo. Do you know who are responsible these acts? Is this human rights? –letters from detainees in Australian refugee prison-camps

Fleeing War

The problem with War, from the point-of-view of the Hawks, is that people don't want to hang around and get bombed and shot at, raped and tortured. People flee from War. Many refugees from the African continent and the Middle East try to make it to Australia, often in dangerous and leaky boats, facing not only diseases and drowning but the suspect actions of the Australian Navy.

Imprisoned in Australia

"Australia," you ask, "what could possibly be wrong with Down Under?" Quite a bit, if you are a refugee or asylum seeker. "What?," you might think, "a country *built by illegal immigrants?*" Indeed, a country where everyone save the Indigenous Peoples *are* boat people has a Government that *hates* boat people (the Indigenous Peoples also suffer from systematic discrimination). Described as "hard-line" by Reuters, all immigrants to Australia are "detained"—i.e., *imprisoned*—in privately-run, barbed-wire "detention camps" (prisons) in the middle of the desert. Out of the way of the public, stripped of *all* rights, including right to counsel and basic human rights, refugees are kept in prison for 1-4 years before obtaining a hearing or being summarily shipped back home—which often means death. Reports of beatings, strip-searches of women and children and drugged water supplies are common, and government monitoring of the camps, as well as press access, is kept to a bare minimum as the camps are completely private. (The video I saw of these camps was astounding: it's like something out of Auschwitz. An entire *private army*). The policy of detain-and-deport has drawn criticism from human rights groups, the Roman Catholic Church, and the United Nations. Attempts to give detainees clothes, blankets, and children's toys have resulted in confiscation, or, the items being *sold* to the detainees. Direct-action groups such as No One Is Illegal have staged several protests and "break-outs" of immigrants in an attempt to raise the subject before the public and to directly aid those imprisoned. The detainees themselves have coordinated cross-prison action, engaging in fasts, setting fires and, as a last resort, organising riots in an attempt to make their voices heard. For the Australian media, however, this is just one more reason to keep these "disease-ridden foreigners" locked up. The

Australian public voted in the Howard Gov't based upon the instalment of these very same policies (as well as policies against rights for Indigenous Peoples). Moreover, the Aussie gov't will not be perturbed! "If anybody thinks they can alter our policy by setting fire to detention centers," says PM John Howard, "then they are wrong. That won't alter our policy one iota."

There are two truly frightening aspects about prison-detainment beside the brutal treatment of humans both physically and psychologically. The first is that it's profitable. Most prison-camps are owned by a handful of multinationals who encourage Gov'ts to adopt the system. The primary MNC is Group 4 Falck, the world's second-largest provider of "security services," and which owns Wackenhut <www.wackenhut.com>, which was among Fortune's list of "America's Most Admired Companies" in 2001, and Forbes's most recent "Platinum 400" list of "America's Best Big Companies."

The second horrible aspect is that the detain-and-deport system might be coming to a "democracy" near you. Apparently the Ontario gov't has already shown interest in the model. Let there be no mistake: mandatory detention is blatantly racist, unhuman, and unbefitting of any government. The detainees are badly treated, separated from their families, and are *billed for the length of their stay*. So even if they do make it out—and aren't deported, killed, tortured, or commit suicide in the process—they face a bill of tens of thousands of dollars. As Aziz Choudry writes in "Lucky Country?" <antimedia.net/desertstorm>, "We can see similarities between the demonisation of detainees and the language used to justify the treatment of Indigenous Peoples [as well as racist] responses to Asians in 19th Century Australia." At a recent talk in Montréal, Choudry described that this racism is not new: Australia has a long history of attempting to build a "White Fortress." Sound familiar?

"Air Canada"

In Canada we pride ourselves on our supposedly open immigration policies, but since 9-11 even these problematic policies have been undermined. While it is true that we have not managed to top Australia in obliterating refugee rights and setting up prison-camps, in our own understated Canadian Way we are hoping to win kudos in the "War on Etc" hype. Over the past few months, refugees in Canada have been quietly deported without hearings, notably non-status Algerians who have been here for over 4 years. Despite the fact that a civil war still rages in Algeria, the Canadian gov't has seen it fit to remove asylum status for Algerian refugees. In many cases, the refugees are asked to come in for a hearing, only to be forcefully loaded onto a plane with a one-way ticket. See <www.tao.ca/~sans-statut>. Worldwide, see <noborder.org>.

war.time: net-artists against war

<<http://offline.area3.net/wartime/>>. The OFFLINE digital arts association has assembled an international coalition of net-artists against the War. Utilising a

world map, each net.art project is situated as a bomb-target, with more targets added daily. Spread the word.

Terre Thaemlitz: Lovebomb

Gender-bending experimental electronic artist Thaemlitz has released a timely album on *Mille Plateaux: Lovebomb*. In an extended booklet that accompanies the CD, Thaemlitz argues that for every War—the War on Terror, Drugs, etc.—there is a correlative: the Love for Freedom, Purity, etc. This "Love" is as much a part of the general problematic of violence as "War." Thaemlitz proceeds to deconstruct notions of "Love" by sonically altering revolutionary speeches from the Futurists to the ANC, from domestic violence sampled from COPS to piano-chords over machine-gun fire. Powerful, evocative, and intelligent, *Lovebomb* should be played at high volume in the heart of capitalism everywhere.

No more "untils"—