

The game of cricket might not be what immediately comes to mind when you think about Manus Island or Nauru. However, there are many people there from cricket loving nations including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal. For many people sent to Manus and Nauru, playing cricket allows them a break. For that moment they don't have to think of themselves as refugees or inmates, just good cricketers.

Ab is one such person. This is part of his story. He excelled at cricket. His first innings was interrupted by terrorists in his hometown. Since being on Manus Island he has been granted refugee status. Which is a recognition of the fact he needs protection and faces death or persecution if returned home. Deprived of the ability to pursue his professional career, he would like the opportunity to play his second innings in the country that gives him freedom.

*Ab, can you tell us about leaving your homeland?*

Since childhood I lived a normal life like anyone else. I had dreams to be fulfilled and to have distinction among my other fellows but unfortunately, I couldn't get the chance to progress as the time and situation completely changed. The educational, economic and social systems completely collapsed and we were subject to war. Every single moment I had to face threats of being killed. There was complete anarchy and a lack of a proper system to survive.

We lost thousands of people who have been killed by the Taliban and other extremists.

The situation that forced me to leave was genocide. In the course of time we lost

students, doctors engineers and other high profile professionals. I lost a family member too.

*What did you know about Australia?*

I only knew of Australia as a world champion of cricket, and also a welcoming state for refugees. I had heard that Western countries, especially Australians, are people who always care about human rights and support the oppressed.

*What did you think when you saw the Australian Navy?*

After three days and nights at sea when we saw the Australian navy ship (which was going to rescue us) really, I thought that a miracle had happened and God is still kind to us and cares about us. I thought I was very near to starting a new life with peace. Then when we were brought here to Manus, and others in the same boat as me, were taken from Christmas Island to Australia, again I lost my hope and I thought still discrimination exists.

What is the difference between us and them? We've been here 4 and a half years and still we don't know when our detention will end. Sometimes I think people are being poisoned little by little by time.

*What's it like when you talk to family?*

It's tough being separated from my family, but I never complain to them, because I think, I don't need them to suffer like me.

My mother knows I'm in detention on Manus Island but not about the conditions. She said to me "Don't worry about your freedom son, what

is most important to us is that you are alive". The hardest part was knowing in order to survive I had to leave my parents and siblings behind. I didn't say farewell to my younger brother. I didn't want to face him as I left. I don't know why but whenever I speak to my family I can't stop the tears.

My family insisted I leave, if they didn't insist I would have been killed. From the day I left them until today, I am facing the same situation.

Sometimes I just wish I had stayed alongside my family and got killed.

I think I have the right to live my life being a free man as others do.

*What do you want to do when you get the opportunity to restart your life?*



Whenever I get the chance to get to Australia (or any other country that gives me freedom), I will try my best to represent Australia in the field of cricket. I will put all my energy in to make Australia proud of me.

The Adelaide Vigil is an informal group of ordinary Australians. All the people we speak with exiled to Manus and Nauru have the same desires, the same dreams, and the same care for their families as we do.

What our government's policies are doing, intentional or not, is leading to the destruction of dreams. The potential Ab had as a 20 year old has just been allowed to simply stagnate over almost five years.

People may consider that as a country we have two choices, either continue detaining people indefinitely on Manus and Nauru or completely abandon the concept of border security, i.e. we must be cruel to keep ourselves safe. Many people may think we don't take border security seriously. But we can have effective border security without abusing people. We don't have to rescue people from the sea, only to mistreat them, then abandon them on an island. We can have a policy that treats people the way we would want to be treated.

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell is a Special Representative to UNHCR. He is also a patron of A Just Australia, a group dedicated to the just treatment of refugees, in accordance with our human rights standards.

Ian Chappell first became involved during the Howard government's handling of the Tampa crisis. "I was yelling at the TV as the special forces boarded the Tampa," Chappell said. "After a while Barbara-Ann (his wife) said, 'Bad things happen when good people do nothing.' That made me think. Yes, Barb's right. I just can't rail at the television set and do nothing. I

am in a position where I have a public voice. Maybe I can do something here."



"Everyone in Australia should be worried about justice and a sense of fair play. If politicians are allowed to erode the parameters of justice and human rights for refugees or other under-privileged groups then it won't be long before these standards will be applied for all citizens. Remember – bad things happen when good people do nothing." Ian Chappell.

NZ have offered to take 150 people for the last 4 years. That would have meant resettlement for 600 men, women and children.

Please join us in leading the movement for change.

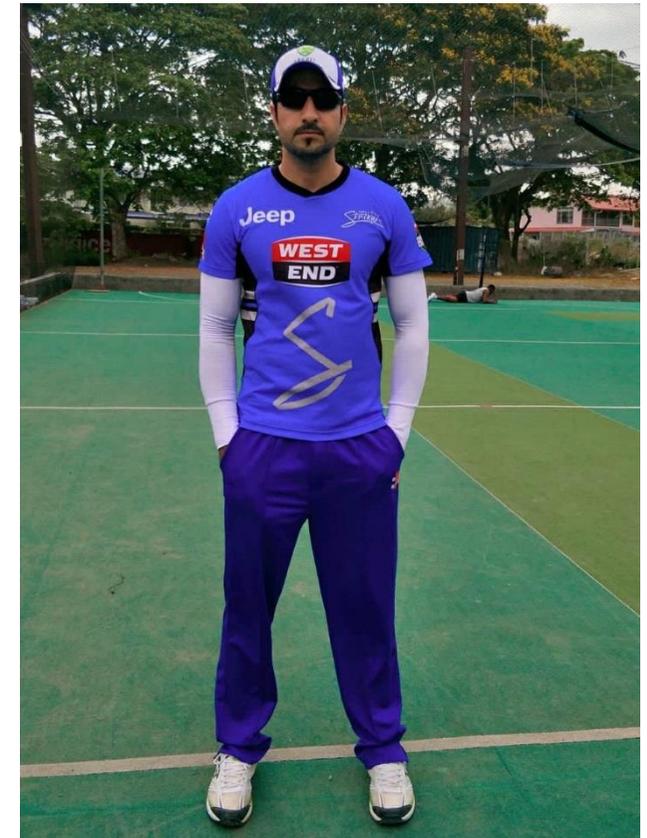
Call: Malcolm Turnbull: 02 9327 3988  
Bill Shorten: 02 6277 4022  
Stirling Griff: 08 8212 1409  
and your local MP.

For more ideas on how to help go to

[www.adelaidevigil.com](http://www.adelaidevigil.com)

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## A Cricketer's Dream of Freedom



Height: 196cm

Weight: 92kg

Bowling style: Right arm fast bowler

Batting style: Right handed

Role: All rounder

Bowling - best figures:

6 wickets for 18 runs in 8 overs.

Fastest fast ever bowled was 148kph

Batting – best figures:

121 runs in 51 balls