

United Nations – hypocrisy, twisted priorities and ineffectiveness

By Chris Kenny, The Australian, 10 Mar 2015

CRITICISM of the United Nations always seems redundant because merely relaying the facts exposes the organisation's hypocrisy, twisted priorities and ineffectiveness.

The UN's Committee Against Torture has set its sights on Australia's border protection policies, likening mandatory immigration detention to torture and demanding its abolition.

This is insulting to Australia

This is insulting to Australia and counterproductive when it comes to the rights of refugees.

The ignorance on display is monumental — just seven years ago under the Rudd Labor government Australia effectively delivered what the UN say it wants, weakening our border protection regime by scrapping offshore processing and temporary protection visas.

We all know the result — it triggered the revival of an illegal, exploitative and deadly people-smuggling trade.

More than 51,000 asylum-seekers flooded into Australia on 801 boats while more than 1200 (that we know of) drowned at sea.

Elsewhere, in refugee camps in places such as Pakistan and Sudan, refugees who held out some small hope of a humanitarian visa for a new life in Australia were denied any opportunity because all the places were filled by the illegal trade.

It was a human rights disaster

Detention centres were opened and filled in every state. And, although, of course, asylum-seekers were treated humanely, it was a human rights disaster.

Now that many of these centres have been emptied and closed, the horrible trade in people has been halted, the drownings at sea have stopped and Australia's humanitarian immigration quota has been freed up to offer places to genuine refugees selected on the basis of need, the UN decides to criticise — and push for a return to the bad old days.

This is so wrongheaded as to be laughable. But of course it does enormous damage because such critiques are run unquestioningly by media around the world and by the ABC and others in Australia.

Progressives in the Australian media have been wrong

Progressives in the Australian media have been wrong on border protection policy consistently, through all the twists and turns of the past 20 years.

So they will latch on to nonsense like that preached by the UN Committee Against Torture in the vain hope it will justify their opposition to strong measures.

...lest this nation unleash the trauma yet again

The trouble is that the facts and recent history prove them wrong. So we have to keep reminding them, lest this nation unleash the trauma yet again.

Let's look at the UN committee making the criticism; included among its 10 members are China, Nepal, Morocco, Georgia and Chile.

So at least five of its members — 50 per cent of the committee — have recent human rights records that would horrify Australians and only serve to demonstrate this nation's standing as one where the rule of law, equality under the law and personal freedoms are highly valued and protected.

Don't take criticism from the UN too seriously

The idea that China or Georgia would lecture Australia on human rights is risible.

We shouldn't be surprised. The UN's Human Rights Committee, for instance, includes Egypt — the nation that just incarcerated Australian journalist Peter Grete for more than a year. Other members include Algeria, Georgia, Suriname, Montenegro and Uganda.

Still, the UN has Iran sitting on its Commission for the Status of Women and, despite its one child policy, China gets a spot as well ... Oh, and so does Pakistan, where girls have been killed just for going to school.

So, you can see, it is best not to take criticism from the UN too seriously. Better to look at the facts around a particular issue and make your own judgment.