



**MEDIA RELEASE: Sunday, February 5, 2017**

## **Journalists, writers, actors and cartoonists call for their refugee colleagues to be resettled in Australia**

Dozens of journalists, actors, cartoonists and writers have written to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull urging him to resettle three of their colleagues from Manus Island to Australia.

In a letter co-ordinated by the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and backed by a range of international freedom of expression organisations, they are calling for journalist **Behrouz Boochani**, actor **Mehdi Savari**, and cartoonist '**Eaten Fish**', to be resettled in Australia after each has spent more than three years in the Manus Island regional processing centre.

All three men are originally from Iran and ventured to Australia to seek asylum. They were intercepted and then transferred to Manus Island in 2013.

MEAA is taking action on behalf of the three men as professional colleagues.

Boochani, a Kurdish journalist and editor who has been assessed as a refugee, has continued to work as a regular contributor to publications in Australia and overseas, often reporting on the situation and conditions on Manus Island.

Savari, an Ahwazi Arab performer, has also been found to be a refugee. He is a little person, and has met with severe discrimination over his life, which has been exacerbated by the conditions and his treatment on Manus Island over the last three years.

Eaten Fish is a cartoonist and artist who prefers to be known by his nom-de-plume whose refugee status is yet to be determined. Since he was detained at Manus Island, he has been diagnosed with mental illnesses which have been compounded by his incarceration.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said the long delays and ongoing uncertainty of any other resettlement deals had left the three men in limbo and they should be brought to Australia to continue their careers.

"We regard these three men, who each fled Iran separately and have sought asylum in Australia, as professional colleagues who can make a meaningful contribution if resettled in Australia.

"They each sought refuge from Iran so they could freely express themselves without fear of persecution or harm, but instead their freedom has been further suppressed in detention.

"All three have courageously continued to practice their vocations on Manus Island despite their incarceration.

"But as journalists, writers, performers and artists, we cannot stand by and allow our fellow professionals to be treated in this way."

Murphy said MEAA has been a long-term campaigner against the strict media blackouts, secrecy and harsh anti-whistleblower legislation that governs not only the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru, but asylum seeker policy in general.

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“We find these deliberate attempts to suppress reporting about the treatment of asylum seekers and the conditions of the centres to be an affront to press freedom,” he said.

The letter to the Prime Minister has also been signed by the international federations for journalists and actors, the writers’ human rights group PEN International, and other members of the global network of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange.

The public can add their name at [meaa.org/campaigns/bring-them-here/](http://meaa.org/campaigns/bring-them-here/)

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**The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain**