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Iranian Refugee Faces Uncertain Future in Australia

August 1, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



An Iranian refugee, Lana, who built a new life in Australia after years in offshore detention on Nauru, now faces the prospect of returning to the country she once fled. Despite Australia’s stated policy against deporting individuals to places where they may face persecution, many in similar situations remain trapped in a legal limbo, caught between temporary protections and a lack of permanent status.

Lana arrived in Australia under the government's offshore processing regime and spent years detained in Nauru before eventually being transferred to the mainland. Over time, she integrated into her local community, secured employment, and began contributing to society. However, as a "transitory person," a term used by the Department of Home Affairs for individuals brought to Australia for medical treatment under earlier policies, she remains ineligible for permanent residency. Her choices are limited: return to Iran or remain indefinitely without legal status.



Advocacy organisations, including the Refugee Council of Australia, have long criticised this category of indefinite temporariness, which leaves individuals in a state of prolonged uncertainty. "These people have already suffered through years of detention, isolation, and bureaucracy. Now, they are left without a pathway forward," said a spokesperson for the council. While the government maintains that individuals are not forced to return to countries where they face credible threats, the absence of permanent solutions forces many to consider voluntary return under distressing circumstances.

Lana's situation has raised broader questions about Australia's obligations under international refugee conventions. The current framework has been described by advocacy groups as creating a paradox where protection is offered but not fully delivered. As Lana herself put it, "What choice have I got?" Her words echo the sentiments of many who are willing to contribute, abide by the law, and embrace Australian values, but remain without permanent legal status. Advocacy groups argue that resolving the fate of transitory persons like Lana is both a legal and ethical responsibility for the government.