☺

**A Blind Refugee With Schizophrenia Was In Detention For The Entire 2010s. He Just Won A Huge Court Case.**

A 36-year-old Tamil refugee and torture survivor who is legally blind, and has schizophrenia and dementia, has been held in immigration detention for an entire decade by Australia.

And he remains locked up, despite a judge deciding on Christmas Eve that his situation was so absurd it could be likened to Joseph Heller’s famous novel Catch-22.

The Dec. 24 decision could also have huge ramifications for thousands of other refugees in Australia who have been denied visas and indefinitely detained under the controversial “character” test.

Deva (a pseudonym) arrived by boat on Australia’s Christmas Island in March 2010, after fleeing persecution in Sri Lanka, where he had been tortured by the army. He feared further torture or a forced disappearance.

January 10, 2020

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/hannahryan/tamil-refugee-australia-indefinite-detention-mental-illness?fbclid=IwAR1dmr-7Cc5-IV2FkhoywbtSaW0n0nYsU9daGqA-GP_WHMMDEoankOEOasI>

**'I'm helping the bushfire appeal because I know what it's like to lose everything'**

When Arif Nabizada finishes work at five o’clock, he doesn’t go straight home to his family. Instead he, and a group of his friends, pound the pavement and door knock local Hazara businesses in Western Sydney to collect money for the Rural Fire Service (RFS). Nabizada belongs to the ethnic minority Hazara group, native to the Hazarajat region in central Afghanistan. He fled the country when the Taliban invaded his village and gave everyone an ultimatum – leave or be killed. Nabizada, who eventually made his way to Australia in 2005, knows what it’s like to endure hardship. “We came from a fire zone country; that fire was in terms of bullets and guns and suicide attacks, here it’s a physical fire, but we know the pain of the people who lose their properties.”

January 10, 2020

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/i-m-helping-the-bushfire-appeal-because-i-know-what-it-s-like-to-lose-everything?fbclid=IwAR3USvgo_ZKZ-Q5En6jZYo4HXxD_oVtc4YGYBp0wOn1fq-s4_ERa10Hwixo>

**Beautiful gestures: the good news stories coming out of Australia's bushfires**

A musician, Kathy Mikkelsen, told Guardian Australia that she and her family had been in Mallacoota where she was supposed to be performing with her band at the golf club on New Year’s Eve. They evacuated on 30 December to Tathra, only to find themselves evacuating again when a warning of approaching fire came through at 3.30am.

Six adults, six children and three dogs – her family as well as her friends’ families – then made their way to Bega, where they got stuck. Concerned about protecting their children from embers falling, they started to erect a camp in the underground car park of the local Safeway, when the trolley attendant, a Sudanese refugee named Ibrahim, stopped them and offered his home for the night – a tiny flat above the shops.

Stories of resilience are emerging from inside bushfire-affected communities too, such as that of a Malua Bay pharmacist, Raj Gupta, [who has kept his pharmacy open](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/amid-the-ruins-of-the-nsw-bushfires-this-pharmacist-is-keeping-his-doors-open) despite the area having no power or mobile phone service – and despite the fact that his own home burnt down in the fires this week. Refugee and migrant communities have also been organising support. On Thursday the Australian Islamic Centre in Hobsons Bay, Victoria, issued a callout for donations of funds and essential food and supplies through social media and its community networks. It also held a sausage sizzle on Friday that raised $1,500 for bushfire relief.

 4 Jan 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/04/beautiful-gestures-the-good-news-stories-coming-out-of-australias-bushfires>

**Proud to be an Aussie: Meet the Syrian refugees working 14 hours a day mowing lawns and cleaning gutters to make a living in their new home**

Refugees from the Middle East are working 14-hour days mowing lawns and cleaning gutters to make a living, because their qualifications aren't recognised in Australia.

David Youaneh Ghaterchi came to Australia in 2012 after fleeing [Iran](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/iran/index.html) to escape religious persecution for his Christian beliefs.

But Mr Ghaterchi's skills as an accountant can't get him work in Australia, so he was forced to start over.

The father-of-two now works long days doing menial labour work to provide for his family.

Mr Ghaterchi works for popular lawn care company Jim's Mowing clearing out gutters and mowing lawns to make ends meet.

 '[The] hardest thing is to find a job,' Mr Ghaterchi told [Nine News.](https://www.9news.com.au/good-news/national-news-thrive-refugee-enterprise-gives-leg-up-to-new-arrivals/1e7fc16b-c59e-4795-86a9-255a83f1a22a)

'But first of all is [learning] the language.'

Kinan Al Halabi, who fled war-torn Syria, became a driving instructor because his teaching qualifications aren't recognised in Australia.

He now owns his own business and works 12-14 hours a day, seven days a week, in Greenacre in western Sydney.

19 January 2020

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7902977/Syrian-refugees-working-14-hours-day-mowing-lawns-make-living-new-home.html>

**'We owe Australia a lot': Refugee community donates $160,000 to bushfire relief, offers up tradies**

Victoria’s Hazara community has donated almost $160,000 to the state’s bushfire relief efforts and offered up its members who have tradie skills to help rebuild communities hit by the devastating fires. Community members told SBS Dari that they felt very close to the stories of bushfire survival, that they couldn’t sit back and watch the affected communities suffer. They said they “owed Australian society a lot” as they presented the money to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF). 20 January 2020

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/we-owe-australia-alot-refugee-community-donates-160-000-to-bushfire-relief-offers-up-tradies?fbclid=IwAR3XP9itKmeLSMbX4ZSm61S9HnaA8880CvKLKOI7L7YMbi5f1jdAONuaucg>

**From Gaza to Sydney: the quest for Palestine’s first surf life-saving club**

Saleh’s family are Palestinian refugees who fled to Gaza when they were forced from their ancestral home in 1948. For 10 of Saleh’s formative childhood years his father was in an Israeli jail; his extended family has lost dozens of members to the violence of the occupation over decades. His mother’s over-protectiveness, he says, was a response to the precariousness of his family’s existence. Hasan Alhabil, also a refugee, was taught to swim by an older brother, and as a teenager became one of a handful of lifeguards employed by the municipality to patrol Gaza beach.

Saleh and Alhabil are in the middle of a month of intensive training at North Steyne club, on Sydney’s Manly Beach. They will be assessed for their bronze medallion, the fundamental Australian lifesaving qualification, in late January.

19 Jan 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/jan/19/from-gaza-to-sydney-the-quest-for-palestines-first-surf-lifesaving-club?fbclid=IwAR1S1JQle_8tb9_vHpDadvRVcR0YTgfSllACpD-TaKv6z1dSIG0595gv4aQ>

**The Sri Lankan restaurant giving refugees and asylum seekers their first jobs**

Sydney restaurant Colombo Social hires refugees and asylum seekers helping to kickstart their careers in Australia, and it’s run by two friends who met in high school. Jency Antony fled Sri Lanka in the aftermath of civil war and has struggled to find work in Australia. Now he’s among workers offered a fresh start at a new Sri Lankan restaurant. Jency fears returning to his homeland.

“I cannot live there [in Sri Lanka] because the army [would] arrest me,” he said.

“If they catch me I am finished, I go to jail,” he said.

Since arriving in Sydney Jency has struggled to find work. Now Colombo Social is giving him a chance to earn a regular income.

10 January 2020

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/small-business-secrets/article/2020/01/10/sri-lankan-restaurant-giving-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-their-first-jobs?fbclid=IwAR0GQjRSN0VnHZYKys_yBo0HpqEK37w7_LDpaQ_NiF22g7uePvAkAzYTle4>