



This is a transcript from *The Messenger* – a podcast series produced by Behind the Wire and the Wheeler Centre. *The Messenger* brings you into the Australian immigration detention centre on Manus Island – and reveals, in intimate detail, one man's experience of what it's really like to flee tragedy and seek asylum by boat.

Warning: This episode of *The Messenger* contains graphic content and mentions self-harm. If you or someone you know needs help, you can contact one of Australia's national 24/7 crisis services such as Lifeline on 13 11 14 or at lifeline.org.au, or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

Episode 4: Today I'm Really Smiling

Michael Green: From Behind the Wire and the Wheeler Centre, this is *The Messenger*.

NBC Nightly News: 'Rescuers from a Spanish aid organisation pluck over 200 migrants from their dinghies in the Mediterranean.'

Al Jazeera: '... Destination: Germany. Another train carrying refugees pulls into Munich's central station. Men, women and children tumble out. Many have escaped the civil war in Syria. Even the youngest gets a warm welcome from a volunteer ...'

NBC Nightly News: '... Europe is a continent in crisis. A warning: this disturbing image shows how bad it has become. The body of one small boy cradled in a Turkish police officer's arms. He was from Kobani in Syria. His boat sank last night on the way to Greece ...'

MG: By April 2016, Europe was closing its borders to the asylum seekers coming by boat and over land. Hungary had just declared a national state of emergency. Everywhere, people were talking about a 'refugee crisis'.

BBC World News: '[The agreement between the EU and Turkey] to try and deal with the continent's biggest migration crisis since the Second World War is now formally in effect. Under the deal, people arriving in Greece will be sent back to Turkey if their asylum claims are rejected ...'

MG: Meanwhile, I'd been reading about a case in the PNG Supreme Court concerning the guys in detention on Manus.

MG: Hey, so I've been meaning to ask you about the PNG court case. I read little bits about it but I haven't read too much.

MG: I wasn't kidding. I really didn't know anything about the case, except that it was being argued that the centre should be shut down.

MG: Have you been following it, do you know much about it, could you explain what it is to me? And do you feel like it might make a difference?

Aziz: Yeah, I was really following the process of the court case in PNG, but guess what? I stopped following it and I stopped reading about it and I stopped everything about it because ... guess how many times they put a date for the court to finalise the case, and every time whenever they come to the final decision, they used to extend it for an extra three months?

So now, you know, like, there are not many people here they have a hope with the court case in the PNG, you know, we just have a hope with one thing, that ... we have been brought here by the policy, because a new policy had been introduced to Australia's immigrant law and they brought us here, and we believe that one day there will be—this law will be changed. That is all. But we don't believe in the court case and we don't believe in any other things, because we know that they—everyone is scared about what is happening right now in Europe.

MG: The men on Manus Island had been following news about the chaos in Europe from inside an immigration detention centre, so it wasn't surprising that Aziz didn't have faith in the system.

But Aziz and the other men on Manus did actually have two options to get out of detention. Officials were always reminding them that they could just go home, or they could agree to be resettled in Papua New Guinea.

We've already talked about why it's too dangerous for Aziz to go home, but many others had decided to take that option. And as for living in PNG, only about twenty people had chosen to do that. In this episode, we'll hear more about what that means, and why Aziz hasn't made that choice.

MG: You're listening to *The Messenger*. This podcast is about Abdul Aziz Muhamat, and his life inside the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Manus Island. My name is Michael Green.

A couple of weeks after Aziz told me he didn't care about the court case any more, I saw a news story about Manus Island. It was the 26th of April, and that news seemed to change everything.

euronews: 'Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court has ruled that Australia's practice of detaining asylum seekers on Manus Island is illegal, and must stop.'

A: Now when we heard this news, like, I don't know how to describe the happiness of everyone and when I see, I walked in and I've seen like everyone is smiling and I was just astonished ... So this is really good news for us and I feel really happy that we did it.

I can say from what I heard or from what I see right now and I've seen like young men, everyone here is like, shouting and clapping and whistling. And their voice is really over the sky and they were really happy by this news.

I'm really proud. I'm really proud that because we have been fighting for this, you know, for this ... all men, day and night and day and night, and thanks that finally we did it. We never expected to hear something like that, but thanks we did it.

MG: I hope you're all ... I can kind of imagine everyone shouting and cheering in there. So I hope, yeah ... I hope whatever comes next, um, turns out to be a good step.

MG: While the men were celebrating, though, Aziz said the security guards had closed the gates and were trying to evacuate staff.

A: They don't want to let like any one of the case managers to walk in for the time being.

MG: What are people saying they think is going to happen?

A: To me I don't know, but at the end of the day we know that now ... that this place is really illegal. It's really illegal. So we don't care about whatever, any kind of manipulation that they want to do, let them do. But their plan now, it's really not going to succeed anymore.

I haven't been excited like this since I came to Manus, and today is my first day that I'm really smiling. And it's really smile – like it's not I'm pretending, but I'm really smiling from my heart.

And I've seen every man is just smiling from his heart you know, and like, like as if someone— people like, you know, thirsty, and you gave them water.

I hope if I will record, I will record the voice of every man in here and to send you but unfortunately the guards are everywhere so I cannot record them. We have got [CCTV] cameras everywhere, so I cannot even hang out with my phone.

To be honest, this is the first step ... from now on, we can tell what we always hoping to tell to other people, because before we can't say anything ... once the PNG talk to us or the Australian immigration talk to us or whoever the guard or whatever. But now we have got plenty of evidence that once they ask or when they talk to us, we can say: 'Look, stop there – stop there. This place is illegal and you've been holding us here for three years and this is enough. You've been like, you know, you know, fucking us here for long time, so you have to stop now.'

I'm sorry for my language but this is the point of view of everyone. Everyone is just astonished by this news. You laugh but really it's not enough, and you want, like, do anything ... people are just hugging each other and just cheering and walking around and spreading the news and just laughing, but we don't know what next. But this is really one of the first good news that we ever heard.

MG: It was just a week after Aziz had left me the distressing messages we heard last episode – about hearing from his grandma, and feeling like his room was closing in on him, and questioning why he was even alive.

So I listened to these new messages over and over. I love the way Aziz says he's smiling a real smile. And the particular way he says the word 'heart'. And the anger and determination in his voice when he swears, and then apologises for it in the next message.

But the joy of the Supreme Court decision was followed by uncertainty. Despite the ruling, the situation on Manus was as unclear as ever.

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MG: In the next three days, Aziz sent me some confusing messages. He said the internal gates had been opened so that the guys could visit other compounds, and phones were now allowed – and then the gates were closed, and phones were banned again.

Omid Masoumali, an Iranian refugee held at the Nauru detention centre, had died after setting himself alight in front of officials from the UN.

ABC Newsradio: 'His wife Nana says doctors weren't on hand for another two hours, and Omid was left in agony without morphine for ten hours.'

A: I heard now the sad news that Omid who set himself on fire on Nauru, he passed away. So maybe due to that reason they locked up all the gate, and they move all the people who came from other compound to visit – they move them back to their compound and they told them they just want to calm the situation. So they were thinking that people really, like, they will be outraged, and we don't know, so we have to wait and see what will happen next.

MG: Right after Omid died, another refugee on Nauru – a young Somali woman named Hodan Yasin – also set herself alight.

euronews: 'Australia has vowed no change to its refugee policy after a Somali woman seeking asylum set fire to herself in protest over her detention.'

MG: Hey Aziz, Michael here. Ah ... bad news from Nauru again. Yeah ... I hope you're doing okay, and that it doesn't get you down too much. I'm around today if you're free to chat, and I'd like to hear from you. Speak soon. Bye.

A: I couldn't sleep last night.

I don't know what to say, but it's really sad for all of us, you know, like, bunch of guys last night – we were really, you know, under the cloud. And like, they were really sad and they don't know even what to say. Some of them they can't even express themselves.

To be honest, we were excited last week when we heard the news. And we were really, you know, anxious and curious to know what's going to happen next. And then suddenly also we heard another news which just came out about the Nauru girl and the other man who set himself on fire, so we don't know what's going to happen next, because the Supreme Court has already ruled that we are illegal in here, so ... when are we going to leave this place and why?

That's the main question everyone has in his mind, and like, I'm really ... I don't know what to say, but every corner I go ... like more than one thousand questions every day, everyone will

ask me. What do you think? And when are we going to leave? What do you think and what's going to happen?

MG: It seemed like the whole policy of offshore detention was unravelling.

CNN: 'But this is very alarming now: two people have set themselves on fire in less than a week, and it's prompted a quite unusual response from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which has just come out with a statement saying, "There is no doubt the current policy of offshore processing and prolonged detention is immensely harmful. Despite efforts by the governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru, arrangements in both countries have proved completely untenable," the UNHCR now calling for the immediate relocation, removal of some 2000 residents from these two Australian offshore centres ...'

MG: A lot had changed in just a week. At first, Aziz described the men as 'over the sky'. Then came news about Omid and Hodan, and they were 'under the cloud'.

Two weeks after the Supreme Court decision, Aziz sent me a link to an article which made a surprising suggestion.

MG: Oh hey, I'm just looking at that article. Um, yeah ... I, ah ... the headline says that, um, yeah, 'PNG authorities say asylum seekers and refugees are no longer in detention'. Ah, it must be news to you guys.

A: This kind of situation, it's really driven everyone crazy and we don't understand. We've been here for three years. And then someone who come out of the media and he will say like, 'oh, refugee and asylum seeker, they are no ... no longer in detention centre,' and what do you mean? It's really something devastating, you know, and when I wake up today and I went to the lunch, I see like, everyone, like he is really upset about this news.

Trying to explain to you is that ... ah yeah, it is still detention centre and the rules are still the same. If you want to go anywhere, for example, like Foxtrot or Mike compound, you must submit a request form. If you need anything, you must submit a request. The security were everywhere – they were watching at you, they were scanning you, they were asking you where are you going, where is your ID card. So what does that mean? It still means detention centre.

MG: At the same time, Aziz was sending me messages that seemed more poetic.

A: Mikey, good afternoon! How's it going? I just wanted to let you know that about our atmosphere here on Manus. Ah, at the moment it's really raining and I was inside my room, but I came out of the room just to enjoy the breeze outside here, and... I'm sitting under the roof of my room, but outside, and just by seeing with the view of the ocean in front of me and the trees as well, and even including the coconut tree. And I can see some of the local kids – they are just walking around and they are waving their hands at me, and I am waving my hands at them.

MG: One thing *had* changed. The men were now allowed to take a bus to a second facility for the refugees, about 40 minutes away in the main town on Manus, Lorengau. This second facility is called a 'transition centre' for refugees who decide to live in Papua New Guinea.

It's still fenced and guarded, but the men there can come and go freely, as long as they have their detention ID card. But again, they had to sign a form – and Aziz was suspicious that if you signed the form, it would mean you accepted resettlement in PNG. And Aziz said hundreds of men had refused to go at all.

A: It's still a detention centre, because somebody like me and some of my friends and other nationality, we never took the bus trip, so it means that it's still a detention centre.

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[ringing]

Ben Lomai: Michael!

MG: G'day Ben! How are you?

BL: Hello. How are you doing?

MG: This is Ben Lomai. He's in Port Moresby.

BL: Ah, I'm actually parked at the gas station.

MG: Ah, right. Aha.

BL: ...I'm actually parked here and, ah, waiting for your call.

MG: Ben's a lawyer. He's been practicing for more than two decades and he's originally from Manus. I spoke to him a few weeks ago about the Supreme Court decision.

BL: Well, the um, the case basically revolves around the breach of constitutional rights ... I think it's a six breaches of constitutional rights which we claim, but section 42 is the main one.

MG: Section 42 of the PNG Constitution guarantees the right to personal liberty.

MG: So, when you found out about this ruling in April 2016, what did you think was going to happen?

BL: Well, first of all, there were declaratory orders that declared that the, um, rights of the asylum seekers were breached. The Court intended that they should have, um, return the asylum seekers back to Australia – that was the implications from the orders. But it never happened because ... the PNG government lawyers got an advice that, look, you just go and just opened the, uh, opened the gate. So in that way we will comply with the orders. But in actual fact, in a substantial way, they have not complied.

MG: And how is that?

BL: Well, because part of the orders say that the actual detention itself on Manus Island is unconstitutional – therefore you can't have the asylum seekers on Manus Island. They have to be removed elsewhere.

MG: The case which sparked these orders was brought by PNG's opposition leader at the time, Belden Namah. The ruling had been delayed repeatedly. Ben was running a similar case, and after that major ruling in April, the two cases were rolled into one.

BL: In a nutshell, there is two, ah, substantive orders that we are seeking: one is to return the asylum seekers back to Australia or to a third country, and secondly is to pay for the compensation.

MG: Today, they're still waiting for those orders to be made.

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MG: In July, Aziz, along with four other men, made a statement for the PNG Supreme Court about why he wouldn't accept resettlement there. Here's what he wrote.

A: So I arrived in Australia on 17 October 2013, I had no intention of seeking asylum in PNG. I did not wish, and do not wish, to resettle in PNG. I believe that Australia has a responsibility to resettle me. I was taken by force to Christmas Island to Manus Island by Australian guards. I was humiliated and treated like a criminal.

MG: In the statement, Aziz talks about the living conditions at the detention centre.

A: It is unsanitised and unhygienic, and there is not even enough clothes. Many times, there was no water, no electricity. We could not get proper medical attention. And there was no concern for our welfare.

Hamid Kehazaei died because he did not get proper medical treatment.

MG: He refers there to the death of Hamid Kehazaei, which is now the subject of a coronial inquest in Queensland.

Ten Eyewitness News: 'The asylum seeker was being held on Manus Island when he presented with a leg abscess at the processing facility's medical centre in August 2014. Within days his health declined ...'

'... Doctors recommended Hamid be flown urgently to Port Moresby, but it took until the next day for that request to be approved by Canberra. By then, Hamid's body was wracked by sepsis.'

A: That made me fear what would happen in PNG where there is medical neglect, and no facility to care for people.

I am fearful of the situation on Manus Island and do not believe PNG is a safe place for myself or any other asylum seeker to be resettled.

MG: Some of Aziz's other concerns about living in PNG are mirrored in the Australian government's official travel advice – which is to 'exercise a high degree of caution'. It contains several passages warning about high rates of serious and violent crimes, and recommends avoiding public gatherings and travelling at night – unless it's essential.

PNG's national refugee policy emphasises self-sufficiency. It states:

In order for refugees to be accepted ... they must not be perceived to be provided special treatment or distinct advantages over local people.

In his statement, Aziz says he's worried that PNG doesn't have the resources to care for refugees who resettle there, and his concerns are backed up in economic assessments of the country.

EMTV: 'The United Nations Development Programs or UNDP estimates that 37 per cent of the country's population lives below the poverty line, and PNG is one of the poorest countries in Asia despite its vast natural and mineral wealth.'

MG: That means it's going to be hard to provide financial support, or housing, or mental health care – some of the most basic things needed to rebuild a life – without local residents feeling resentful.

And there's something else to consider, too. A recent report from the UN counts over 500 refugees and asylum seekers from PNG, seeking safety elsewhere.

Ben Lomai, the lawyer we heard from earlier, got particularly animated when I asked him about resettlement for the men in PNG.

MG: You're from Manus, and you're living in Port Moresby. Is it strange to have people arguing that it's not safe for them to live there?

BL: Oh, you know Michael, it is very unsafe. You know? Even if I'm from PNG, I feel unsafe in my own country. Especially in Port Moresby ... Even though Manus is safe, I can tell you that. But look at the other aspects like the job, security, all those things that's not there, so how can you keep them in Manus?

Michael, I'm from PNG and I can tell you the truth. Look, this place is not safe.

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MG: Something else Aziz feared really took me by surprise: something he says an Australian immigration officer told him when she was announcing that they would be taken from Christmas Island to Manus.

A: She told us that Papua New Guinea, it's a very, very dangerous place and it's a place where it's consisting of many, many, many dangerous things like the disease and including the people there – people eat human – and she said many, many negative things about Papua New Guinea. She scared us.

And we were thinking like, oh shit, how we going to go there if there is, in a place where people they eat human being, and place where there is no safety, and why are we going there? And it's kind of like oh, shit, I don't know how to explain, but I was really terrified.

MG: I've asked some of the other men on Manus Island about it, and they say they were told the same thing, about diseases and cannibalism in PNG. According to Aziz, and the other men, it was an attempt to persuade people to go home, rather than wait it out in the hope of finally reaching Australia.

A: Many guys they came there, and then when they heard the negative things from her and they just changed their mind. From Christmas Island they went back to their own countries.

MG: People from Manus had concerns about the detainees too – and they wanted to be better compensated for the deal. In two-thousand-and-twelve, when the detention centre was being reopened, local landowners shut down the airport runway and blocked roads. A mobile police squad was brought to the island to break their protest.

ABC 7.30: 'The lack of facilities is just one of numerous issues troubling Manus Islanders. Their concerns range from a growing mountain of rubbish to fears of violence and riots.'

MG: Aziz has managed to get to know some people from Manus during his time there, but this distrust and fear between detainees and locals always crept into our conversations. He'd begun to hear reports from the men who'd decided to accept resettlement in PNG.

A: And the worst things happening is we're getting receiving messages from the people outside every single day. They're explaining to us what's happening to them. Their situation is shittier than our situation, worse than our situation. You have to work, but there is no job that you can do in PNG here to feed yourself. The food that they're supplying to them, it's not really sufficient.

A: When you sign out you are out of their responsibility, so no more they can take your responsibility and if anything happen so, you, you help yourself, you help yourself, no one gonna help you.

A: They told us that do not come outside. So everyone who now sign and he went outside, he was really regretting and he wants to come back inside the detention centre but they told him no way you can go back to the detention centre, because you already signed by yourself.

MG: The men Aziz had been speaking to had been resettled in Lae, PNG's second largest city. And as the months went by, there were more men who were living in the transition centre, in Lorengau.

Their situation was unclear, and informal – but they were able to move freely around town. I heard about some men who were in relationships with women on the island. But there were also reports of robberies and assaults by locals, and complaints that some asylum seekers and refugees were getting drunk or high. In January, an asylum seeker was charged with raping a local woman.

EMTV: 'Concerns of the actions by refugees in Manus have again hit the floor of parliament for the second time this week. Today the Manus governor told parliament Manus people are fed up with what refugees are doing outside the camp.'

MG: So back at the time the gates were opened, Aziz didn't want to leave the centre, even for the day.

A: At the end of the day, here is like a cage where we are right now, but outside you have got a freedom, but ... it's not the real freedom that we are looking for, because you put yourself in danger.

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MG: There was another cause for Aziz's fears, and it was something he saw for himself inside the centre.

A: The police start shooting. First thing what they did is they just, tear gas ... they shot the tear gas in, inside the centre, where in Foxtrot and also in Mike Compound. That tear gas did not stop people. Some of the guys they put, like, the kind of mask ... across their face, and then when that tear gas it doesn't work, they start just shooting.

ABC News: 'What we can see here is several dozen detainees, some of them with their faces covered, throwing stones at the guards and also at some of the houses nearby. At one point, one of them throws a plastic chair over the fence. They're shouting, they are clearly quite upset and angry. In some of the footage, you can see guards holding sticks or poles ...'

MG: In January 2014, many of the detainees began daily protests, seeking answers about when their refugee claims would be processed, and when they would be free. By mid-February, the protests escalated into a series of violent confrontations. Here's Scott Morrison, Australia's immigration minister at the time.

Scott Morrison: 'I can confirm that there was a more serious incident at the Manus island Processing Centre last night which involved further perimeter breaches. That incident involved persons at around just after 11 ...'

ABC News: 'We've had very strong suggestions from refugee advocates that this was an attack from outside, that detainees were attacked by PNG police is the assertion, and also angry locals with machetes and other weapons, and that maybe even someone was shot.'

MG: Aziz described what he saw, in great detail.

A: And I don't know the police whether they did it, that things in a purpose or they were just trying to stop the fight. The first thing what they did they shoot inside the canteen, inside Mike compound – they shoot one bullet inside the canteen and then the second bullet went straight away to the room, it's like a container and ... it went through the container and bang, you know, the bullet got ... one of the detainees on his right leg.

And then the rest of the bullets were just on the earth – around 30 bullets, like *bang bang bang bang bang bang bang bang* from all the side. Some police, they were shooting from the side of the ah, of the ocean; some of them, they were shooting from behind Mike, and some of them were shooting on this side, and it was totally chaos.

So when we heard that shooting, the ex-pat told us that to lay down on the ground. They said, they were shouting louder: 'Everybody lay on the ground! Everybody lay on the ground, these guys are not controlling themselves, they can kill you, lay on the ground!' We and the staff and everyone, even the G4S staff, we just lay on the ground and you know, until those guys they stop shooting ...

MG: This was the night of the seventeenth of February. A report by G4S said that about 300 of the nearly 1400 detainees were involved in the protest.

Late in the night, the guards were evacuated, and the PNG mobile police squad entered the detention centre – along with a number of local men, and a few ex-pat Australian staff members. And that’s when the situation got out of control.

A: Because there is a shortage of the staff at that time, and then they were trying to flew in some staff from Australia but they couldn’t do it ... so the locals again, the police were trying to stop them, but the police couldn’t stop the locals. From the bush they came and jump inside Mike compound with their bush knife and with their stakes and stuff like, so they start beating the shit out of everyone in the centre in Mike compound. They start from Mike compound, and then they want to come to Foxtrot and from Foxtrot they want to go to Oscar compound.

The guard cannot able to control them while the police even didn’t able to control them, how the guard will control them? And then, you know, when they beat a lot of guys in ah, Mike Compound, and they beating them one by one inside the rooms, like they don’t care what nationality you are from but they beat them, seriously – that was one of the rough things, tough and rough things that I never saw in my life actually.

I saw a lot of tragedy in my life when I was actually back in Darfur and all those tragedy, you know ... Because, because I've seen like, I feel, you know, I find myself in the middle of the war zone.

That time, all of us we were just ah, begging the guard and the bosses, *just please, take us to the safer place. Please take us to a safer place. We know this place is not really safe, please take us to the safer place.*

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MG: By the end of the riots, over seventy detainees had been injured. One had lost an eye and one had been shot, and one man – a 23-year-old from Iran, Reza Berati – had been beaten to death.

The Australian government's internal report into the incident said several people were involved in Reza’s death. Two Papua New Guinean men were eventually convicted of his

murder. They were sentenced to ten years imprisonment, half of which was suspended. No government officials have been punished or sanctioned for those events.

After the riot, and Reza's death, Transfield took over the contract for running the detention centre, from G4S. They built bigger fences – to prevent both detainees getting out and locals getting in.

A: Fence that now you're seeing, this fence has been built after the riot of 2014, and the Parliament did kind of a, inquiry and they say, look, this is our mistake, because we took people to a remote island where even there is no ah, enough security, and that we need to put like a very, very strong fence and higher fence so no one could jump from outside or no one could jump from inside to outside. But back then we don't have this kind of fence actually, we just do have kind of like a fragile fence. If I wanna go outside, easy for me, I step on that fence, and I go outside.

MG: Those fences, which are tall and imposing, made the centre look even more like a prison. But now, Aziz and the other men also feel like it's those same fences that keep them safe.

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MG: So Aziz had made his statement for the Supreme Court about why he didn't want to be resettled in PNG. That was in July 2016. But as we heard from Ben Lomai, there's still been no resolution. In some ways, the case has been a microcosm of the detention experience. Brief spikes of hope, followed by lengthy delays, and endless, interminable waiting.

MG: Is there anything coming up with the court case soon?

A: ... They're trying to delay everything ...

A: ... It's going to be the end of July ...

A: ...I've been waiting to hear from the lawyer...

A: ... Within the 16th of this month...

MG: ... I can't believe the court case has been delayed again ...

A: ... Whenever they keep delaying the case, like for 3 months or 4 months every time ...

A: ... They keep pushing the dates ahead and ahead and ahead ...

A: ... They want to delay the process, they want to delay the court ...

A: ... They keep delaying the court, for months and next month and next month ...

MG: The latest estimate from Ben is that the cases will be heard next month, in March – some 11 months after the original Supreme Court decision, and the messages from the start of this episode.

A: It's really something weird, it's really something weird. They drove us, all of us, crazy, because we don't understand how come the court, how come the Immigration and the Government are manipulating with the law system on PNG? Because, um, this place is really illegal and everyone should be out of this place within like, you know within right now.

MG: One of the justifications for indefinitely detaining boat arrivals is the claim that they've acted illegally. But under international law, people have a right to seek asylum, and countries aren't allowed to punish someone for their method of arrival.

And now, after a court decision has ruled that detaining Aziz and the other men is illegal, the Australian and PNG governments are operating in a legal black hole. Ever since their transfer to Manus, the men have been beyond the reach of Australian law. But now it's unclear whether even PNG law applies.

Meanwhile, Aziz keeps working. For every message where he's lost hope, when he's given up on the system, there's another message about the latest thing he's been doing to work on the cases – like collecting affidavits, or gathering signatures for a new motion.

A: I'm kind of helping more than hundred or two hundred guys to fill out their affidavits and, which is really good enough. And I feel like, oh, I'm just happy that I did that, you know, this job ...

You know, I was very busy with the form, collecting the signatures of everyone. And I really did good that I – so far I have got to 820 guys they have signed the form and I have sent the form on Wednesday to Ben ...

I'm proud that, you know, they're now, you know, they're, now they're many cases in a, in a court, like in PNG and Australia. And even now, like, I realise that there is, ahh, many people in Australia, they are just protesting everyday and they are writing some activism in the media, and they are doing a lot of things, as much as they can, you know, about us here.

MG: Maybe it's not that Aziz has a great deal of faith in the law to get him out of the detention centre. Of course, that's what he's hoping for. But there's one other thing he really wants – something that's easy for me, an outsider, to forget about.

A: I do not wish to resettle in Papua New Guinea. I believe that Australia has a responsibility to resettle me. I was taken by force from Christmas Island to Manus Island by Australian guards. I was humiliated and treated like a criminal.

MG: It's right there, at the beginning of his statement for the Supreme Court – the other reason he won't accept resettlement in PNG. He's after justice.

A: To me, I don't know, but actually, doesn't matter whether they come out with anything else, good or bad things, but at the end of the day we knew that now the real thing is PNG rule out that this place is really illegal. It's really illegal.

MG: So, on the question of why he won't resettle in PNG: maybe that's the wrong question. Perhaps I should be asking: why should he have to?

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Coming up on *The Messenger* ...

A: I thought about it several time and then I called my parents, I called my uncle and I said: I want to do something very stupid.

So the only option we have at the moment is we have to try. And I say, *what do you mean by try*; he say, *We have to try and risk our life. We have to get on a boat.*

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To find out more about The Messenger, and to subscribe, visit wheelercentre.com/themessenger. The Messenger is a co-production of Behind the Wire and the Wheeler Centre. It's produced by Michael Green, André Dao, Hannah Reich, Bec Fary, with Jon Tjhia and Sophie Black and the team at the Wheeler Centre. Theme music by Raya Slavin. Thanks to

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Behind the Wire is a volunteer-run oral history project that helps people who've experienced immigration detention in Australia tell their stories. To find out more and to support their work, head to behindthewire.org.au.