

## **G4S: Commercial Considerations Took Priority over Human Rights at Manus Island**

(Geneva, April 27, 2017): Private security company G4S allowed commercial consideration to take priority over human rights and corporate social responsibility commitments at the Manus Island Offshore Detention Centre, Patricia Feeney, RAID's outgoing Executive Director, said at the United Nations in Geneva today.

Feeney submitted RAID's findings about G4S to the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries and presented the [key points](#) to a panel discussing private military and security companies.

RAID's [submission](#) draws together lessons learned from a complaint RAID and the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) submitted under the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises against G4S Australia in September 2014. The complaint followed three days of rioting in February 2014 during a period of severe overcrowding at the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea (PNG). At least 69 detainees were injured, some of them seriously, and an Iranian asylum seeker, Reza Barati, was killed. The complaint alleged that G4S Australia was responsible for significant breaches of the OECD Guidelines in relation to conditions and alleged abuse of detainees.

The Manus Island detention centre is a remote facility in Papua New Guinea about 800km north of Port Moresby, Australia, sometimes holding over 1,000 asylum seekers. The centre was established with the agreement of the PNG government as part of a series of Australian government border control measures to deter asylum seekers from reaching Australia by boat.

Between October 2012 and March 2014, G4S was hired to oversee management and security at the centre, in a contract worth \$244 million Australian dollars (about \$200 million USD). G4S Australia Pty Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of the global security group, G4S plc. G4S denied involvement in human rights abuses and told a subsequent Australian Senate inquiry that it believed "it performed the services under the Manus contract well and that it met and exceeded the requirements of the contract."

G4S Global Risk Services is a founding member of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers' Association (ICoCA), the compliance and oversight body for private security contractors. The ICoCA counsels companies not to enter into contracts that may make them complicit in human rights violations and says they cannot evade responsibility for human rights abuses by arguing they had to meet contractual obligations. G4S Australia sought to duck its responsibilities by claiming that the code of conduct only applied to G4S Global Risk Services and not to the G4S group as a whole.

RAID and HRLC's complaint was rejected by the Australian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines because "aspects of the complaint could be interpreted as commentary on [Australian] government policy."

In December 2016 a class action was filed on behalf of 1,900 detainees at the Manus Island centre who suffered injury a result of conduct by the Australian Government, G4S and Transfield (now Broadspectrum). Many of issues raised in the OECD complaint were referenced in the claim.

"The G4S case at the Manus Island detention centre shows once again that voluntary commitments by companies to uphold human rights are insufficient and too often come secondary to profits, Feeney said.