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MEDIA RELEASE

Howard Government is Defending the Indefensible:
UN's Damning Judgement on Detention Centres: "Inhumane and Degrading"

The Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace Melbourne endorsed the judgement of a damning report on Australian detention centres, by Mary Robinson's special envoy, which confirms what Australian organisations and experts have been saying about a deeply flawed system.

Executive Officer Marc Purcell, said "The UN report's is a wake up call for Prime Minister Howard - reinforcing what hundreds of Australian organisations have been saying the past year ? Australian's don't want human rights violated in their back yard. The Prime Minister should intervene and instruct his government to begin cleaning up its act with treatment of asylum seekers. Australian's don't want to be tarred with the brush of human rights violations occurring in the Howard Government's detention centres."

"For too long Prime Minister Howard's government had been defending the indefensible with people in detention centres: imprisoning kids, breaking up families, avoiding permanent independent scrutiny of conditions, denying access to the media; arbitrarily detaining people for years for no crime. Australian expect better - we want a government policy bigger and better than this current cruel policy", he said.

"After the Government's Children Overboard lies and the manufacturing of the Tampa crisis for electoral gain, Australians will rightly be questioning of government denials of its abusive system. In particular, the Howard government's human rights abuse of asylum seekers kids unjust and un-Australian," he said.

The CCJDP, Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and the Islamic Council of Victoria (members of the Justice for Asylum Seekers Alliance) wrote to Mary Robinson at the height of Woomera hunger strike in January requesting she send an envoy to investigate.