

# Alyawarra people ask UN to declare them refugees

People from the Alyawarra nation north-east of Alice Springs have asked the United Nations to have them declared refugees because they are facing a path of destruction through the denial of their basic human rights under the Federal Government's intervention.

The move follows the walk-off of Alyawarra people from the Ampilatwatja community in July in protest against the intervention.

A spokesman for the protesters, Richard Downs, said the walk-off aimed to remove them from the Ampilatwatja community, which is a prescribed area under the Northern Territory Emergency Response or intervention.

He said the intervention excludes Aboriginal people from the protection of the Racial Discrimination Act, subjects them to substantial and persistent racial discrimination and multiple violations of international human rights conventions.

"We believe we're standing up for our values and shouldn't be living under these controls," Mr Downs said. "It's got to the stage where enough's enough."

"What we're saying is we've seen nothing in the last two-and-a-half years of the intervention. What we see is them taking all our rights away, force feeding us."

"The current status of Aboriginal people is that we are refugees in a country we have called our own since time immemorial."

Mr Downs said the Alyawarra people handed the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights Pro-

fessor James Anaya the hand written request to register the Alyawarra nation as refugees during his recent visit to the Northern Territory.

They want to be registered under the International Refugee Convention as internally displaced persons, thereby according them the international protections that status brings.

They've also asked that the UN ensures that the Australian Government is aware of and fulfils its obligations under the International Refugee Convention, the UN Charter for Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other human rights covenants Australia is signed up to.

Mr Downs said the Alyawarra people want the Australian and Northern Territory Governments to work with Aboriginal people on a plan that will put measures in place for the next 20 to 30 years.

"The intervention has got to be abolished, they've got to come back to the table," Mr Downs said.

"We need to take ownership and be accountable for ourselves. We've made mistakes and the governments have made mistakes."

"We've got to start coming together. They're dividing us."

"We've got to come together," he said.

# UN Rapporteur on desert tour



**The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People has said the federal intervention into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities is discriminatory.**

Professor James Anaya spent several days in Central Australia recently and will make a full report to the UN on what he saw.

He met with individuals and Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs before spending a day at Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert.

More than 50 people turned out to welcome Professor Anaya to the community. They took him on an 'Intervention' tour of Yuendumu featuring sites locals say breach articles of the UN Declaration of Human

Rights. The first site was the universally loathed large blue sign announcing the rules of the 'prescribed area' under which all communities in the NT became subject to after the intervention.

The Rapporteur was then shown the GBM's office which had been built by bulldozing a family's camp under a tree before visiting a men's 'cooling off' room, a bleak and barred demountable surrounded by high wire. The locals said the facility, which cost more than \$100,000 is never used and nobody knows who has the key to the gate.

Both buildings were highlighted as the only buildings built in Yuendumu since the intervention.

A tour of the school made the point that bilingual education had been

stopped and a visit to the shire office illustrated the loss of local governance.

A notice at the courthouse declared it a symbol of over representation of Indigenous people in jail.

Before leaving Australia Professor Anaya said the intervention's discriminatory measures such as suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 'stigmatised the stigmatised' and should be repealed.

**Above: the people of Yuendumu welcome Professor Anaya**  
**Below: Yuendumu residents Harry Nelson, Valerie Martin and Frank Baarda show the Rapporteur the never used men's 'cooling off' compound.**  
**Below left: the notice at the court house. All the sites had an explanatory notice attached to them detailing which article they breached.**

