

# The torture of Australia's offshore immigration detention system

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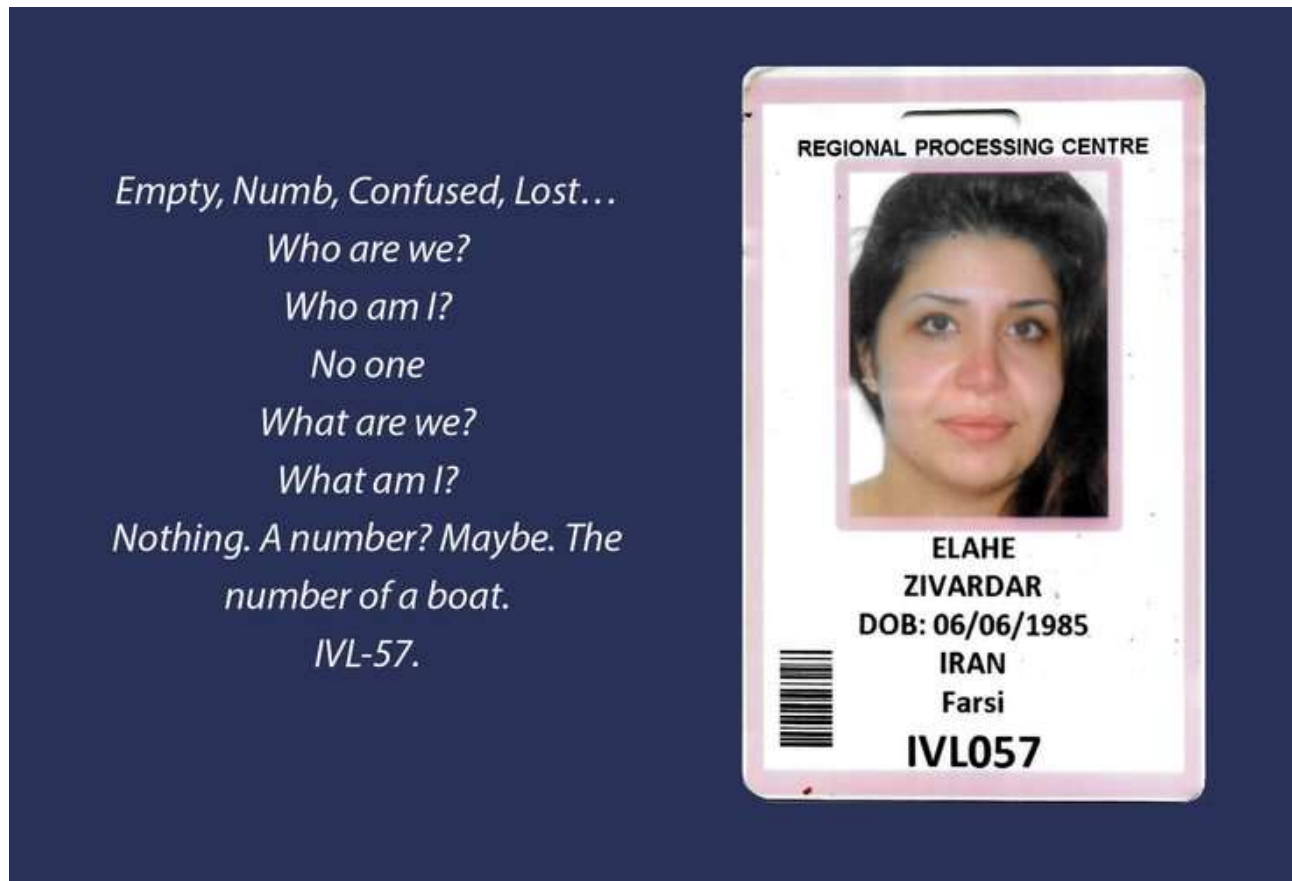


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5 I am often asked what it was like being locked up in an Australian-run detention centre in the Republic of Nauru for six years. I wonder if I can provide an answer to this question now, sitting in my home in Los Angeles over a year after being transferred as part of the Australia-United States resettlement agreement. I was traded by the Australian government after six years of incarceration. Who was I traded with? What was I traded for?

My name is Elahe Zivardar, also known as Ellie Shakiba. I honestly do not know how to introduce myself. I have been through a serious identity crisis and I am not sure who I am anymore. I am an Iranian woman; an engineering and architecture university graduate; an artist and a journalist. Then I was reduced to nothing but a number: IVL-057. [...]

10 Around 20,000 asylum seekers arrived in Australia by boat in 2013. Almost 5,000 of them arrived after 19 July 2013, the day the government announced that henceforth no refugee arriving by boat would be settled in Australia. About 2,500 people were randomly chosen to be exiled to

Nauru (for women, unaccompanied minors and families) and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea (men travelling alone). They were banished to prisons constructed by Australia in those places.

- 15 Australian immigration had a system that was oblivious to people's needs. They incited aggression, drove people to self-harm, and told many lies to manipulate people. They tried to erode kindness, positivity, health and honesty. The 2,500 chosen victims were quiet, honest, positive and cooperative people. They were selected with no regard for their age, gender or their underlying health conditions. They were exiled and incarcerated in a site that represented the opposite of  
20 everything they stood for.

## Why me?

- This was the first question everyone held in Nauru asked themselves. Why me? My friend Parry once told me, "We were 60 people in the boat that arrived at Christmas Island on the eighth of August, 2013. Only 10 of us were exiled to Nauru, three single men to Manus, and the rest of the  
25 people in that boat were kept in Australian onshore detention centres before receiving visas after a year and a half and moved into the Australian community. This is so unfair." [...]

- The Australian Department of Home Affairs gives their citizens the impression that people seeking asylum will cause trouble for them, when in reality it is the government that does everything in its power to incite violence. This violence is inflicted on the refugees, on their bodies and souls.  
30 Border violence also harms the Australian people; the lies, corruption and damage to vulnerable refugees also inflicts violence indirectly on Australians. The system is indiscriminate – it does not matter if people have diabetes, are pregnant, or even have cancer. What do you call a system that makes people hate themselves to the extent that they forego their feelings of compassion and positivity?

- 35 Unfortunately what the Australian government has done to us has become an example to other countries. Right wing conservatives in Europe and the UK have looked to Australia as a model, and President Trump praised Australia's policies as a great success and as an example of effective border protection policies. This influence is inspiring and it facilitates crimes against humanity on a global scale. [...]