

## **The Need for Independent Mechanisms – Value of Monitoring and Investigation Based on Lived Experience**

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Thank you, esteemed panelists and colleagues, for the opportunity to address this crucial issue of human rights for migrants in transit.

1. As someone who has lived through the harsh realities of migration, I have witnessed firsthand how the absence of oversight and accountability can lead to severe human rights abuses. Migrants in transit often face extreme vulnerabilities, including exposure to dangerous conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, threats from traffickers and corrupt officials, as well as inadequate access to basic services such as food, water, sanitation, and healthcare. These conditions leave them at heightened risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, children, trafficking victims, torture survivors, and individuals with disabilities. I believe that **independent monitoring and investigation mechanisms** are strongly needed to protect migrants in these situations.
2. From my own experience, the value of monitoring lies in **transparency** and the ability to shine a light in places where few are able to see. Migrants are often hidden away in detention centers or stranded at borders, cut off from the world, with little or no recourse. This is exactly what happened to those of us who were detained in Australia's offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru. NGOs were not allowed to visit, journalists were refused entry, and UN human rights delegations blocked. The suffering of detainees in these places was extreme, leading many to attempt suicide. What was needed was an independent monitoring mechanism with the mandate to visit our detention cells and bring our plight to the attention of the world. This is a need that is also keenly felt by the tens of thousands of people who are locked up today in **detention centers, border zones, and transit areas** where migrants are most vulnerable. The presence of **independent monitors** acts as a deterrent to potential abuses, ensuring that officials and authorities are held to account.

3. Today states are increasingly focusing their energies on blocking and detaining migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in border regions, whether on land or at sea, or by pressuring “transit countries” to block migrants and refugees before they reach their destinations. This is precisely why Australia supported the detention of thousands of refugees on Manus Island. However, these are places that are inherently challenging to monitor and enforce accountability, as my organization, the Global Detention Project (GDP), has worked to document. According to data that we have developed, the world’s fastest-growing immigration detention regimes are located in transit states—like Mexico, Turkey, and Libya—where migrant rights are routinely violated with impunity. Investigations by independent monitors can expose systemic problems and foster a climate where reform becomes possible. Thus, it is critical that NGOs are supported in their efforts to document detention centers and that states provide data and information about how they treat all non-citizens in their custody.
4. But it’s not just about documenting violations—it’s about **prevention** and **reform**. For example, regular monitoring provides data and evidence that can be used to advocate for better policies and practices. It can force governments to take action where they otherwise might ignore or downplay the suffering of migrants. In my view, these mechanisms are not just tools for oversight—they are a lifeline for migrants, ensuring that their rights are protected, their voices are heard, and justice is pursued. Without independent monitoring and investigation, migrants remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, silenced in their suffering.
5. My experiences, both as a refugee and as a human rights advocate, lead me to support calls to establish an independent international monitoring mechanism mandated to visit all places where migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in transit are most vulnerable, including in detention centres, inside informal camps, in border areas and transit zones, and on interdiction boats. At the same time, we must call for broader adoption and implementation of existing protection and monitoring norms, including ratification of the UN Convention of the Human Rights of Migrant Workers as well as increased adoption and full implementation of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, establishing effective National Preventive Mechanisms to ensure that all countries have in place a system of regular, independent visits to all places of detention.