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Ben Doherty

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Liberty Victoria has awarded its **2021 Empty Chair Award to all refugees and asylum seekers in on and off-shore detention.**

Established in 2016, the award is presented to a person deemed worthy of the Voltaire or Young Voltaire Human Rights Award, but who is unable to receive the award because of the consequences of their exercise of or advocacy for human rights, free speech, or civil liberties.

Former recipients include Canberra lawyer **Bernard Collaery**, and refugees formerly held by Australia on Manus Island, journalist **Behrouz Boochani**, and cartoonist **Ali Dorani, known as Eaten Fish.**

Liberty Victoria said: “Australian immigration detention policies and practices meant that refugees and asylum seekers who have fled persecution and torture in their own countries continue to be dehumanised and detained, having to wait years to have their claims determined.

“Ongoing and indefinite immigration detention is a fundamental breach of refugee and asylum seekers’ human rights.”

Several individual refugees and asylum seekers were nominated for the 2021 Empty Chair award. Liberty Victoria chose to give the award collectively.

“They have shown moral leadership and political resistance, working together in protests from remote islands, hotel prisons, immigration detention facilities, and more recently for those who have been released, by taking the extraordinarily brave act of speaking out from in front of the buildings in which they were formerly detained.”

The president of Liberty Victoria, **Julia Kretzenbacher**, said there was “a real bravery in people speaking out from on- and offshore detention or locked up in hotel rooms”.

“There are so many people speaking out about the difficult circumstances they are in and the human rights abuses they are suffering from, we wanted to recognise the cohort as a whole rather

On behalf of refugees and asylum seekers in on- and offshore detention, the award will be accepted by **Mostafar ‘Moz’ Azimitibar** - previously held on Manus Island and in detention in Australia - and former Socceroo and refugee advocate **Craig Foster.**



Updated at 1:48pm AEST