

# FREUDIAN/SLIT RECORDS

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**New Release: XIL - @ManusAlert**

**Genre: Outsider Electro**

**Download Links:**

*archive.org:* <https://archive.org/download/xilmanusalert/XIL-ManusAlert.mp3> (free)

*bandcamp:* <https://x7i7l.bandcamp.com/track/manusalert> (donation to Manus Island and Nauru detainees)



@ManusAlert is an outsider electro track. It features text from migrants who are held in camps on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Australian government.

@ManusAlert will be released under a Creative Commons non-commercial licence. It will also be for sale on Bandcamp. All the money received from Bandcamp sales will be donated to buy mobile phone credit for migrants imprisoned on Manus Island and Nauru (<https://giftsformanusandnauru.org.au/mobile-phone-credit/>)

### Artist Statement:

## **The liberation of the Manus Island detainees is not a moral issue. It's a question of my own liberation, and yours.**

In November 2017 I learned of the existence of a group on the Telegram messenger app called @ManusAlert. Here, to a crowd of around 600 followers, detainees in the Manus Regional Processing Center in Papua New Guinea documented their suffering, the violence they experienced, their hope and despair. Their detention was a consequence of the Australian government's decision to exile migrants arriving by sea to distant islands, so as an Australian passport holder, I felt uniquely responsible.

The Manus Regional Processing Center had already officially closed by the time I discovered @ManusAlert and in late November, "Operation Helping Friends" was implemented by PNG immigration and police. @ManusAlert was full of reports of violence and humiliation in the forced relocation of around 600 men to alternative camps.

The sense of helplessness was magnified by the medium with which these men shared their stories: a world away, my phone glowed in the grey murk of late Autumn, my fingers slid across the screen to witness yet more abuse and dehumanisation. To close this distance, and so that these days in November would not be banalised by the passing of time. I copied @ManusAlert into a text-to-speech synthesiser, and it became the backbone of an outsider-electro protest song.

Early in 2018, I returned to Australia. Over time, I have become convinced that only through dismantling borders can the cruelty practised on Manus Island and in other migrant prison camps be stopped. No-one that I spoke to in Australia argued against the notion of open borders, but many looked away without answering. Almost all felt that conditions on Manus Island are appalling, but they could only contemplate allowing this particular group of migrants entry into Australia, and not necessarily the next, or any that followed.

The reasons this shift is hard to contemplate has to do with fear. There is a fear that systems will collapse - social security, democracy, the environment - under the weight of so many human beings. There is the fear that cultural values like democracy, women's rights and the rights of LGBTQ+ people will not be respected by incoming migrants.

Although these fears rest on racist stereotypes about people who choose to travel from the lands of their birth without the requisite passport, income or skin colour, it is true that open borders will bring about immense upheaval. Yet the rise of the far right within fortress Europe shows that these rights are not given even without open borders. I do not feel especially secure as a trans person when my rights are siloed within the borders of a paranoid nation-state.

So long as people desire to move from one land to another, there can be no avoiding the question of open or closed borders. A country can have a very “tolerant” policy towards people termed “refugees”, but so long as a border exists, the will to enforce this border will trump tolerance whenever growing numbers of people are willing to circumvent that border. In this situation, a society has to harshen its enforcement of the border to counteract the desire to cross that border, or else make life unliveable within the nation-state for people who migrated without permission. Examples can be seen in Europe from Italy all the way to Sweden. No matter how humane a society is, any border that it erects implies a potential no man’s land, clad in barbed wire. Or it manifests in an island prison camp in Papua New Guinea, a Centre for Identification and Expulsion in Rome, or a velodrome in Paris filled up with “foreign” Jews. Though it is not the only factor in totalitarianism, a national community determined by a territorial border always has the potential to metamorphose into something authoritarian, violent and racist when it encounters large numbers of non-citizens, refugees, or stateless people. Volume II of Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* shows how the response of European nations to refugee flows, and the denial of rights to the stateless prepared the ground for the denial of rights to all that would come in the form of Nazism and fascism. As such, confronting the 1930s mood in this second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century demands a commitment towards open borders. This will be challenging on the scale of tackling climate change and dismantling neoliberal economics, two seemingly intractable problems interlaced with the question of open borders. It will take decades of work on a grassroots level and will require the expansion of human empathy. Above all, it will demand a massive act of dreaming to determine what kinds of political communities are possible after the nation-state has finally been discarded. The liberation of the Manus Island detainees is not a moral issue. It’s a question of my own liberation, and yours, and the survival of civilisation.

## **Contact**

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