

**UNHCR wants swift action on boatpeople after Malaysia, Indonesia agree to help**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**May 20, 2015**

With Malaysia and Indonesia now agreeing to rescue thousands more starving boatpeople, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said the migrants must be brought to shore urgently and given immediate aid.

It also said it was ready to work with governments in the region to assist the migrants and find a solution, including returning them to their home countries if they agreed and when suitable.

Welcoming the announcement by the foreign ministers of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand after talks today, UNHCR said the three countries' commitment to taking steps to resolve the issue was an important "initial step" that was vital for saving lives.

"It is now urgent for people to be brought ashore without delay, and that immediate first aid and other care is provided for all who are in need. We look forward to seeing this happen without delay," the UNHCR said in a statement today.

"UNHCR itself is ready to work with countries in the region to find solutions to the plight of these people. These ultimately may include returning people to their home countries voluntarily and once conditions allow."

It also supported the ministers' call for further action, adding that this included addressing root causes and urged Southeast Asian countries to address these reasons meaningfully.

Malaysia and Indonesia said today they would no longer turn away boatpeople, marking a major breakthrough for a crisis that is running into its second week with thousands of refugees and migrants stranded in boats in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

The three countries drew international outrage for pushing back overloaded boats crammed with starving Rohingya refugees and migrants from Bangladesh, some of whom died on the journey and whose bodies were thrown overboard.

The Rohingya, an ethnic minority in Myanmar, is considered one of the most persecuted ethnic minorities in the world.

Malaysia's foreign minister Tan Sri Anifah Aman said today that Malaysia would no longer tow away or push back the boats.

"We also agreed to offer them temporary shelter provided that the resettlement and repatriation process will be done in one year by the international community," he had said after the talks with Indonesian and Thai counterparts in Putrajaya today.

According to him, Malaysia estimated the number of people still stranded at sea to be about 7,000.

Meanwhile, Myanmar has come under growing pressure over its policies towards the Rohingya, who flee by the thousands annually to escape years of violence and discrimination at the hands of the Buddhist majority. – May 20, 2015.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/unhcr-wants-swift-action-on-boatpeople-after-malaysia-indonesia-agree-to-he>