

## **Obama Commends Malaysia Over Support For Refugees**

**Bernama**

**Nov 21, 2015**

**By S. Chandravathani**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- United States President Barack Obama has commended Malaysia for opening its doors and supporting refugees and asylum seekers from the world's various troubled spots.

Obama, who is in town for ASEAN-related meetings, noted that Malaysia was currently home to some 150,000 refugees and asylum seekers.

"I want to acknowledge the Malaysian government's efforts in welcoming and supporting refugees from around the world," he said.

Obama said this during a discussion with a group of young adult refugees who have completed the process to resettle in the United States. The meeting was organised in conjunction with US leader's visit to the Dignity for Children Foundation in Sentul here Saturday.

Speaking at the last United Nations General Assembly session, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak indicated Kuala Lumpur's intention to take in some 3,000 Syrian refugees fleeing the troubled Middle-Eastern country.

Earlier this year, Malaysia and Indonesia had to deal with the issue of illegal migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh, agreeing to offer temporary shelter to 7,000 of them, provided that the resettlement and repatriation process would be done in one year by the international community.

During the visit to the foundation - a charity-based educational institution for refugee and urban poor children - Obama interacted with some refugee children, mainly from Myanmar.

At the session with the United States-bound individuals from Sudan, Somalia and Myanmar, Obama called on the global community to continue to open their arms and offer safe haven to millions of refugees worldwide.

In calling for more compassion in response to a global migrant crisis, he said some 60 million people had been forcibly displaced around the world.

Facing discrimination and hardship, they deserved the world's support and protection, he said.

Obama said: "The good news is more and more countries are recognising that they need to do more to ensure these refugees and displaced people are protected."

On the visit to the foundation, he said, it had been a privilege to do so and thanked those running the facility with the support of private donors and the United Nations.

"One of the reasons I wanted to come and visit this place is because globally we're seeing an unprecedented number of refugees. Today I had a chance to visit with some incredible young people, these children, many of whom have gone through some incredible, extraordinary hardships," he said.

The president vowed that "as long as I'm the president, the United States will remain a place to welcome millions fleeing violence around the world".

The young people he met at the event today represented the opposite of terror and despicable violence seen in Mali and Paris, he said, referencing Friday's deadly attack on a hotel in Mali's capital of Bamako, and attacks against several Parisian targets that killed hundreds on Nov 13.

Citing the example of a 16-year-old girl from Myanmar who was seated next to him, Obama said the young lady had fled her country when she was eight and became a victim of human trafficking.

"The United Nations has agreed to help her resettle. She is now 16 and intends to be an advocate for fellow refugees, getting an education in the United States. This is who we want," he said as the yellow-bloused teenager gave him a hug.

Obama flew into Malaysia yesterday for the 3rd ASEAN-US Summit as well as the 10th East Asia Summit in conjunction with the 27th ASEAN Summit which opened today.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2015 BERNAMA

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1192173>