



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UPDATE OF 12 JANUARY 2005

INFORMATION NOTE

REQUEST FOR THE SUSPENSION OF FORCED RETURNS TO AREAS AFFECTED BY THE TSUNAMI

The tsunami has left behind large-scale destruction and a serious risk of widespread epidemics. Access to many areas remains difficult, hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and many of the regions affected lack any infrastructure.

Involuntary returns to the affected regions would put additional pressures on the local population, scarce resources and logistical channels, and would further complicate the efforts of humanitarian agencies. Forced returns would further hamper the restoration of public order and reconstruction efforts.

In view of these considerations, on 6 January 2005, UNHCR recommended that all States suspend, initially for a period of three months, all involuntary returns to a number of affected areas, even in the case of persons found not to be in need of international protection. Following further assessment of the situation, the list of areas to which this recommendation applies has now been revised as follows:

- Sri Lanka – the coastal areas in the North, East and South of the country
- Indonesia - Aceh
- The Maldives – affected islands
- India - the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, as well as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Somalia - the coastal areas (Note: This is in addition to UNHCR's current position on returns to Somalia¹ which remains valid.)

UNHCR will continue to review this position as conditions evolve.

¹ UNHCR Position on Return of Rejected Asylum-Seekers to Somalia of 10 January 2004.