



UNHCR Calls for Immediate Movement of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers to Humane Conditions

UNHCR is deeply saddened by the tragic death of the refugee who sustained fatal burns during the incident at the Nauru refugee settlement last week. UNHCR had been on Nauru undertaking a monitoring mission in relation to arrangements in place for the asylum-seekers and refugees transferred from Australia, and three staff were present at the site of the incident, though the man had not been interviewed by UNHCR or doctors accompanying the mission. UNHCR is continuing to seek further information regarding an incident on Nauru today in which a Somali woman is reported to have also sustained serious burns.

UNHCR undertakes regular visits to offshore processing sites to monitor the situation of refugees and asylum seekers, including on seven separate occasions to Nauru since 2012.

There is no doubt that the current policy of offshore processing and prolonged detention is immensely harmful. There are approximately 2000 very vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers on Manus Island and Nauru. These people have already been through a great deal, many have fled war and persecution, some have already suffered trauma. Despite efforts by the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru, arrangements in both countries have proved completely untenable.

The situation of these people has deteriorated progressively over time, as UNHCR has witnessed firsthand over numerous visits since the opening of the centres. The consensus among medical experts is that conditions of detention and offshore processing do immense damage to physical and mental health. UNHCR's principal concern today is that these refugees and asylum-seekers are immediately moved to humane conditions with adequate support and services.

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STATEMENT