

PRESS RELEASE

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Immigration Directorate and UNHCR join to Commemorate Four Decades of Protecting Refugees in Indonesia

As part of a series of activities to commemorate World Refugee Day 2017, Indonesia's Directorate General of Immigration and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have joined together to hold a two-day event, being launched by a panel discussion today among key Government agencies and partners to further discuss implementation of national legislation enacted this year to take care of refugees. Presidential Regulation No.125/2016 on Refugees, as it is officially known, is the first ever comprehensive national law covering refugees in Indonesia.

As the Government moves forward in rolling out the new law, there are many aspects of coordination among the agencies and institutions that play a vital role in protecting and assisting refugees that need to be worked out. Other officials attending the panel discussion are representatives from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Services, the Indonesian National Police, and the Indonesian Military.

"In accordance with Presidential Regulation 125 (2016), immigration officials will conduct the handling of refugees in terms of reception, security, shelter, and supervision through coordination and cooperation with respective domestic respective agencies and international organizations linked with refugees and asylum-seekers," stated the Directorate General of Immigration, Ronny F. Sompie.

"The global refugee crisis needs to be addressed thoroughly by participating in problem solving while keeping Indonesia's national sovereignty and interest in mind," he continued.

Meanwhile, UNHCR's Representative in Indonesia Thomas Vargas commented, "We are very grateful to the Government of Indonesia for allowing refugees in and providing them with a safe place. This panel discussion today is another important step in continuing the implementation process for a refugee law that already provides a strong humanitarian example for other countries in the region to follow. UNHCR will work closely with the Directorate General of Immigration and other partners to ensure that the Presidential Regulation is implemented in a way that maximizes protection of refugees while also ensuring Indonesia's sovereignty and national security."

Vargas applauded the Directorate General of Immigration for taking an active role in the implementation of the Presidential Regulation, along with other government agencies given a role under the law. He welcomed UNHCR's role to help coordinate with the DGI on refugees. One important way UNHCR can help is to offer assistance to DGI in registering and providing documentation to refugees. UNHCR already has such a system in place, which could help support the government system.

In the course of the two days, an array of other events will follow today's panel discussion. UNHCR and the Directorate General of Immigration are facilitating a cultural exhibition titled "Celebrating Diversity #WithRefugees" in collaboration with refugees and partners, which will be held tomorrow, 25 July. Refugees from various countries will perform traditional songs and dances, followed by a skit performed by refugee youth. University of Indonesia students will perform traditional dances and songs with refugees who have been collaborating with the university on musical performances.

Also, a photography exhibition entitled “Four decades of protecting refugees”, will be launched, which highlights Indonesia’s rich tradition of providing safe haven to refugees over the years and ways UNHCR has contributed. This exhibition will continue until 28 July.

Other partners expected to join the events include the Indonesian Red Cross, , as well as Dompet Dhuafa, Church World Service, Tzu Chi Foundation, Jesuit Refugee Service, The Learning Farm, the Indonesian Civil Society Network for Refugee Rights Protection (Suaka), and UN agencies.

For nearly four decades, the Indonesian Government has helped alleviate the refugee crisis and demonstrated humanitarian action by welcoming and protecting refugees in the country. Indonesia currently hosts some 14,000 refugees in Indonesia, mostly from Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, and a number of others countries experiencing persecution, armed conflict or generalized violence. Since 1979, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has worked closely with the Government of Indonesia, including the Directorate General of Immigration under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Coordinating Ministry of Politics, Law and Security, to provide protection and assistance to refugees across the archipelago nation.

Indonesia’s generosity demonstrates the country’s commitment to sharing responsibility with other nations for the protection and well-being of refugees. According to UNHCR’s Global Trends Report 2016, an unprecedented 65.6 million people worldwide had been forcibly displaced from their homes by the end of 2016, equating to approximately 20 persons displaced every minute due to conflict or persecution. World Refugee Day aims to raise awareness of the global refugee crisis and mobilize communities around the world to take action. Every year on 20 June, World Refugee Day is celebrated in over 100 countries globally to raise awareness of and support for refugees. This year, UNHCR has collaborated with local partners to commemorate World Refugee Day through numerous events that began in early June.

UNHCR would like to thank all partners for the tremendous assistance they provide to refugees in Indonesia. UNHCR urges everyone to stand in solidarity with all forcibly displaced persons by signing the UNHCR #WithRefugees petition at <http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/us/petition/>.

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