

**UNHCR commends Indonesia for allowing urgent disembarkation of boat with Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children**

**JAKARTA, 26 June 2020** - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, commends the Indonesian Government for allowing the disembarkation of almost 100 people who had for days been stranded on a boat in Indonesian waters.

Of the 99 people rescued off the coast of Lhoksemauwe, North Aceh, by local residents, there are 48 women, 34 children and 17 men. The large majority are presumed to be Rohingya refugees and had been at sea in dangerous conditions for months.

“Saving lives must always be the top priority. We applaud the Indonesian authorities for allowing these vulnerable women, children and men to reach safety,” said Ann Maymann, UNHCR Representative in Indonesia.

“Indonesia has several times been a country that has set an example to others in the region, having also provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to Rohingya boat people in Aceh in 2015 and in 2018. We are grateful to see that same humanitarian spirit today.”

It is a humanitarian imperative to facilitate the speedy disembarkation of vessels in distress and to prevent the loss of life. Equally, it is crucial to ensure safe and humane reception conditions coupled with access to international protection, including asylum procedures.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, states have limited cross-border movements as part of public health efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. However, through mitigation measures such as quarantine and health checks, border restrictions can be managed in a manner which respects international human rights and refugee protection standards, including the principle of non-refoulement.

UNHCR stands ready to support the Government of Indonesia in providing any necessary humanitarian assistance and quarantine measures in the coming days, in line with international standards and public health protocols.

The fact that vulnerable women, men and children continue to undertake these risky journeys in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea emphasizes the urgent need for states to work together towards a regional solution to irregular maritime movements.

UNHCR reiterates its call for states in the region to come together on the principles of solidarity and responsibility sharing to address the protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and asylum-seekers at sea.

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