

Migrant Situation in the Andaman Sea

Priority is to save lives at sea, find lasting solution with international community

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Key Points

- 1. Thailand is already providing necessary humanitarian assistance to those in need as a matter of priority.**
- 2. Thailand recognizes the necessity of temporary holding areas where health care and sanitation services would be provided pending investigation and other necessary procedures.**
- 3. Thailand is hosting the international meeting on 29 May 2015. It is expected to mobilize international cooperation in order to find a long-term and sustainable solution to this transnational problem.**
- 4. U.S., UN and IOM have important role to play.**

Saving lives is Thailand's top priority

- The Thai Prime Minister has given a clear instruction to relevant agencies that saving lives is the top priority.
- The Royal Thai Navy is undertaking maritime surveillance and provide humanitarian assistance to those in need and are still at sea. For those who already landed in Thailand, local agencies have been providing them with humanitarian assistance, such as food, drinking water and basic sanitation services.
- Temporary holding areas option is being explored within which basic humanitarian assistance, healthcare and sanitation services would be provided pending investigation into smuggling networks and other necessary procedures.
- Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand spoke on the phone with the Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday, during which he informed Secretary Kerry that the Thai Government will provide humanitarian assistance to those in need and will not push them back if they want to disembark. They discussed ways to address both the immediate needs and the need to find a sustainable, international solution in the longer term. Secretary appreciated the position of the Thai Government and the initiative to convene the international meeting on this matter in Bangkok on 29 May 2015. Secretary Kerry said the United States will send a representative to this meeting.
- Thailand is working closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to ensure that humanitarian needs of these people are met. The spokesman of the IOM today made the following comments to the CNN:

"The Thais agreed to allow them to disembark, they said no," said Jeff Labovitz, Bangkok-based spokesman for the International Organization Migration (IOM), which is monitoring the unfolding crisis on Southeast Asian waters.

"That's really important -- the Thais did the right thing here."

Asked why those on board would have turned down the offer to leave the vessel, he said: "I have to assume they don't really understand what's going on."

Malaysia was the migrants' desired destination, he said, and it was also possible that trafficking brokers on board, concerned about avoiding Thai authorities, were calling the shots.

"Thailand is cracking down -- if you're a broker you're going to be interviewed and detained," he said.



Rohingya migrants swim to collect food supplies dropped by a Thai army helicopter after they jumped from a boat (right) drifting in Thai waters off the southern island of Koh Lipe in the Andaman Sea on May 14. (AFP photo)

A sustainable solution is needed

- Thailand will host the Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean on 29 May 2015 in Bangkok. Senior officials from origin, transit and destination countries, partner countries including the U.S. and UNHCR, UNODC and IOM have been invited to participate.

- The Meeting will provide a forum to exchange information and intelligence on the current situation of irregular migration at sea.
- Long-term solution is needed to address root causes in Myanmar and Bangladesh, and stop future flows. Thailand looks forward to engaging with all stakeholders to address the problem in a sustainable manner.

Step Up Prosecution and Conviction

- Thai law enforcement officials are going after smuggling/trafficking networks and bring the culprits to justice.
- Anyone who has been found to be involved or complicit will be punished without exception. For state officials, both disciplinary and criminal actions will be taken against them.
- 61 arrest warrants have been issued, including against local politicians and local state officials. 27 people are already in police custody, with many of them arrested and some have turned themselves in.
- The Anti-Money Laundering Office has also been investigating assets that were seized from those in police custody.

Royal Thai Embassy

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