



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



“Increase humanitarian intake to prevent future asylum tragedies” says Catholic Migrant office
Media Release
19 December, 2011

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) today expressed sorrow over the tragedy which has resulted in the deaths of a possible 160 people, mostly thought to be asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Iran.

This time last year, a similar tragedy occurred when just short of safety, a boat carrying 50 Middle Eastern asylum seekers crashed off the rocks of Christmas Island.

Director of the ACMRO Fr Maurizio Pettenà CS expressed his sadness that a repeat is being seen of such tragedies, and urged people to consider carefully the reasons why these events occur.

“This is a time to reflect on what we can all do better together to protect people in need. There is a great need for Australia to increase its humanitarian intake. It is important to understand that people who risk their lives at sea do so because more secure avenues are denied to them”, he said.

The boatload of asylum seekers crashed off the coast of Indonesia yesterday and there are varying estimates of how many people perished in the disaster, some as high as 200.

Just a week from Christmas, Fr Pettenà highlighted that the most important focus should be on the humanity of people who flee persecution, rather than on politics.

“Various solutions are being proposed and all should be examined on their merits. The main thing I would say is that in our failure to find ways of sharing the numerous resources that we have in Australia points out the failure of our own political and social systems to fully embrace the extent of human suffering”, he said.

At the Geneva meeting marking the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention and the 50th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Holy See’s permanent observer to the United Nations Archbishop Silvano Tomasi CS encouraged reflection on the reality of asylum.

“The world’s 33 million plus refugees are the flashing red light of alarm pointing out deep social and political failures and an urgent call to remedy their suffering”, he said.

Archbishop Tomasi highlighted that poorer countries host the majority of the world’s refugees and richer nations should at least accept refugees in similar proportion to poorer states”, he said.

The ACMRO particularly calls upon Christians at this time to contemplate the mystery of the Holy Family in search of a place for Jesus to be born.

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