



Australian Government  
Department of Immigration  
and Citizenship

# Refugee and Humanitarian Issues

Australia's Response



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June 2009

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### How to provide feedback on this publication

The department is committed to making sure this booklet is a useful resource. To help with this, we are undertaking a brief survey to find out what you thought.

If you would like to participate, please email [humanitarian.projects@immi.gov.au](mailto:humanitarian.projects@immi.gov.au) to request a copy of the survey.

### Cover photo credits

Front: A Karen refugee from Burma, in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border © Getty Images / Paula Bronstein

Back (clockwise from right): A young Burmese refugee in Mae Ra Ma Luang camp, Thailand © UNHCR / J. Redfern

An Iraqi girl waits in line with her mother for their share of aid © AFP / Ahmad Al-Rubaye

A family of Sudanese refugees heading towards a registration point at Wandalou on the Chad-Sudan border © UNHCR / H. Caux

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## Foreword



Australians can be proud of our long tradition of supporting those whose lives are in crisis, people from war-torn countries, people who face persecution and even death. This

is nowhere more evident than in our world class program to assist refugees and others in humanitarian need.

This year we celebrate the fact that it is 55 years since Australia signed the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugees Convention). We were the sixth country to ratify the Convention and since that time we have made a major contribution to the protection of refugees throughout the world.

In cooperation with our international partners, we have resettled around 700 000 refugees in Australia since the end of World War II. This is more than double the population of our national capital, Canberra.

This year we also welcomed the visit to Australia of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This was a great opportunity to strengthen the important relationship between UNHCR and Australia, to share our knowledge and expertise and to look at ways in which Australia can strengthen its engagement with UNHCR and the international protection system. The High Commissioner's praise for Australia's settlement services is a testament to the quality of the support we provide to refugees as they work to establish themselves in our community.

This booklet provides information about Australia's role in international protection, our Humanitarian Program and the initiatives that we have developed to help refugees. It includes personal accounts from some recent arrivals, their journeys and the grave difficulties they faced in their home countries.

You will also see how Australia works with organisations such as UNHCR to help resolve refugee crises.

The Humanitarian Program is one that is developed and refined in consultation with the broader community and with Australia's international partners. This ongoing process ensures that the program engages the support of the Australian community and is responsive to global needs.

Immigration is central to the nation's identity. How we develop and manage our immigration policies reflects what we value as a people and how we think of ourselves as a nation. How we welcome and support people on arrival—particularly those who have come to Australia as refugees—speaks to our humanity.

It is inspiring to hear about the journeys and to see the contributions that refugees are making to the Australian community.

I trust that you will find this edition of *Refugee and Humanitarian Issues: Australia's Response* an interesting read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Evans', written in a cursive style.

Senator Chris Evans  
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship