



## **UNHCR welcomes the safe disembarkation of Rohingya refugees in east Aceh, Indonesia**

*This news comment is attributable Indrika Ratwatte, Director of the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.*

BANGKOK, Thailand – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomed yesterday's disembarkation of 81 Rohingya refugees in east Aceh, Indonesia. After several months at sea in perilous conditions, these women, children and men have now found safety ashore.

UNHCR commends the Government of Indonesia for allowing their disembarkation, as well as the members of the local community who initially provided food provisions to the refugees.

The Rohingya refugees are currently being sheltered in Pulau Idaman near Simpang Ulim and are receiving food and medical assistance from the Indonesian authorities. UNHCR and humanitarian partners are onsite to provide additional support and coordination to ensure that the refugees' needs are met.

The 81 refugees are believed to have departed from Bangladesh in a boat with 90 passengers on 11 February. Within days, the boat's engine had broken down and the refugees' lives were at risk, with many suffering from severe dehydration. By the time that the boat was eventually assisted in the Andaman Sea by the Indian authorities, nine passengers had reportedly passed away. After they again set sail, UNHCR and partner organizations lost contact with the refugees.

It is both a humanitarian imperative and an international obligation to provide vessels in distress with life-saving assistance and disembarkation to a place of safety. While we commend the Government and people of Indonesia once more for their humanitarian gesture, UNHCR reiterates the urgent need for states in the region to come together to forge a collective regional response to search, rescue and disembarkation. Vulnerable women, children and men should not be left to the mercy of the high seas.

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