

Boat People are Queue Jumpers

One of the great qualities that Australians hold is our sense of justice. We believe that every person deserves a 'fair go'. No one should get special treatment. That's why many Australia's are asking questions like: ***Why should we accept those refugees who come by boat and jump the queue?***

In order to understand why people jump the queue, we need to understand the queue.

The Queue¹

Who is in the queue?

Only 2% of displaced people in the world are in any queue.

While there are millions of displaced people around the world, few have the opportunity to be resettled. Many are displaced within their own countries. Millions of others are protected by third world countries and are waiting there until it is safe to go home. They may be unable to leave and get to a country where the queue exists.

Those refugees who flee persecution and then find themselves in a country where their rights are not protected are the ones in the queue. Last year, 747,000 refugees found themselves in this situation.

Where is the queue?

There is no centrally administered queue where asylum seekers can line up. Instead, the queue is where any refugee ends up after fleeing their home country but where their rights are not protected. The majority of refugees are in developing countries.

How do you join the queue?

The queue only exists in countries that refuse to accept refugees, like Indonesia and Malaysia, or countries that are unable or unwilling to protect your rights. That means, to join a queue, you have to go to a country that you know will not treat you humanely.

What's it like to live in the queue?

Living conditions in the queue can mean waiting in overcrowded detention centres or refugee camps. It could mean living in the shadows on the streets, hoping to evade the authorities who are likely to abuse you or take advantage of you. For example, in Malaysia, refugees are denied the right to work and are subjected to detention in appalling conditions, caning, extortion, human trafficking and deportation back to the persecution that they fled. This is what it's like to live in the queue.²

How long is the queue?

While there are millions of refugees in the world, only 80,000 places are available for those needing resettlement. That means that if every refugee joined today each one would find:

The queue takes 135 years

¹ Figures taken from following sources; Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), Media Release: 23 June 2010, http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/100623_UNHCR_stats.pdf; UNHCR, "UNHCR urges more countries to establish refugee resettlement programmes," 5 July 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/4c31cd236.html>

² Amnesty International, "Malaysia: Refugees arrested, abused and denied the right to work," June 2010, http://www.amnesty.org.au/images/uploads/ref/abused_and_abandoned-refugees_denied_rights_in_malaysia.pdf