



Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission

promoting, protecting and preserving human rights

18 June 2018

Statement on World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day will be recognised around the world on 20 June 2018, and the Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission joins the United Nations (UN) and other countries in standing *#WithRefugees*. This year's theme indicates how the responsibility of supporting families forced to flee their homes due to war or persecution is a shared one.

In the Cayman Islands there are currently less than 20 migrants on island awaiting outcomes of asylum applications, or otherwise awaiting further processing by the Department of Immigration. However, in recent times the Cayman Islands has housed over a hundred migrants at one time.

The Commission has taken an active interest in the handling of migrants and asylum applicants over the years. This includes a report in 2013 and an ongoing series of correspondence between the Commission and other public officials from 2011 to 2017 (publically available on the Commission's website¹). Issues highlighted over the years, some of which have been addressed by the relevant public authorities, include:

- updating of the Memorandum of Understanding between CIG and Cuba to protect legitimate asylum claimants' rights,
- the need for improved management of interception procedures of migrants at sea by the marine unit,
- balancing the need to provide humane assistance for migrants with risk management of human trafficking and illegal migration under the law,
- improving overall policies and procedures for handling asylum applicants and the compliance of these policies with the Bill of Rights, and
- the need for improvements to facilities for housing migrants and relevant safety protocols.

Whilst improvements in some very significant areas have been made by the Government, the Commission continues to urge public authorities to work alongside non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross, churches, pro-bono legal services, etc. to continue to improve the treatment of refugees as a vulnerable population.

To learn more visit our website (www.humanrightscommission.ky) or the UN's World Refugee Day website (www.un.org/en/events/refugeeday).

Ends.

¹ <http://www.humanrightscommission.ky/practices>