



Are western nations abandoning asylum seekers? - Today is **World Refugee Day and people who deal with refugees say a growing number of asylum seekers are turning to smugglers because**

Fri 20 Jun 2003 Time: 8:00 EDT

Network: CBC National Radio

JUDY MADDREN (NEWSCASTER):

- Are western nations abandoning asylum seekers? -

Today is **World Refugee Day** and people who deal with refugees say a growing number of asylum seekers are turning to smugglers because western governments are closing their borders. In a book published by the United Nations University Press, the authors argue the war on terrorism has resulted in more barriers to refugee claimants. They say the barriers place the institution of asylum under grave threat. Margo Kelly reports.

MARGO KELLY (REPORTER):

One of the authors of the book, Khalid Koser of University College London, calls the current situation facing asylum seekers 'lamentable'.

KHALID KOSER (CO-AUTHOR):

The industrialized nations are the cradle of asylum. We used to be proud of our asylum policy and now asylum seekers are someone we want to keep out.

MARGO KELLY (REPORTER):

Koser points to a growing number of barriers to refugee claimants that have been erected by western governments in recent years. More visa requirements, increased attention, fines against air carriers who let people board without proper documents and sending people back to so-called safe countries through which they've traveled. But Koser says the consequence has been an increase in human smuggling.

KHALID KOSER (CO-AUTHOR):

We are facing, I think, an increasing dilemma. On one hand, we want to stop smuggling because it's a bad process. It exposes people to insecurity. On the other hand, if we do that, then we're going to close down possibly the last route for asylum seekers to get into the industrialized nations.

MARGO KELLY (REPORTER):

Canada isn't specifically mentioned in the book. It's authors give it high praise for what they call one of the best refugee systems in the world. But they warn, the third safe country agreement with the United States could lead to an increase in smuggling when it comes into effect and thousand of asylum seekers are turned back at the border. A spokesperson for immigration Canada calls that prediction hypothetical. He says Ottawa is just trying to control the flow of refugees and avoid asylum shopping. Margo Kelly, CBC News, Toronto.

Length: 349 words



Refugee advocates are using today's designation as **World Refugee Day to speak out about what they say is a dangerous global trend: the rise in human smuggling. They say the**

Fri 20 Jun 2003 Time: 18:00 EDT

Network: CBC National Radio

BARBARA SMITH (HOST):

Refugee advocates are using today's designation as **World Refugee Day** to speak out about what they say is a dangerous global trend: the rise in human smuggling. They say the increase is a direct result of efforts by western governments to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to enter those countries. Governments say they are just trying to stop a growing tide of illegal immigrants, but as Margo Kelly reports, refugee experts warn the policy is backfiring.

MARGO KELLY (CBC REPORTER):

Immigration experts say human smuggling is one of the fastest growing criminal activities in the world -- one with deadly consequences. Recently, almost 60 Africans died when their boat sank off the coast of Italy. In Texas, 19 Mexicans suffocated in the back of a truck. Khalid Koser at University College London has interviewed hundreds of asylum seekers in Britain. Ninety percent tell him they used a smuggler.

KHALID KOSER (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON):

We only effectively speak to the lucky ones. We only know the people who have actually made it. We don't know how many people are stuck in a transit country or dead in ditches somewhere. You know, there are some very dramatic things going on, I think.

MARGO KELLY (CBC REPORTER):

Koser blames the rising tide of smuggling on a decision by western governments to erect more barriers to asylum seekers, a process that began in the 1990s and escalated rapidly after the attacks of September 11th.

KHALID KOSER (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON):

It's a variety of new rules and new policies, I think, that are making it increasingly hard for asylum seekers to arrive legally. There are little legal routes left for them.

MARGO KELLY (CBC REPORTER):

Those new rules include increased detention, more visa requirements and fines against air carriers who let people board without proper documents. Politicians say they are concerned about security and keeping out unwanted economic migrants, but refugee experts believe genuine refugees are being shut out in the process. The president of the Canadian Council for Refugees, Kemi Jacobs, says smuggling is most severe in Europe, but it's on the increase here as well.

KEMI JACOBS (PRESIDENT, CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES):

People don't know about the extent of the problem. People are trafficked for the sex trade; people are trafficked for labour, and they have been (...), which we know have been targeted by smugglers.

MARGO KELLY (CBC REPORTER):

Jacobs also warns that Canada's Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States will lead to more smuggling when it comes into effect and thousands of people are turned back at the border. A spokesperson for Immigration Canada rejects that prediction as hypothetical. Still, the parliamentary standing committee on immigration has asked the government to monitor smuggling levels and scrap the deal if they increase -- something Ottawa has refused to do. Margo Kelly, CBC News, Toronto.

Length: 480 words