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Attn: News Desks, Picture Desks

For Immediate Release

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World Refugee Day Rally

Demonstration – Saturday, 20 June 2015, 2pm Central Ferry Piers

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, the [Refugee Union](#) will organize a rally to demand the respect of refugee rights that are generally ignored and often grossly violated in Hong Kong, despite the city's commitment to international treaties and domestic law.

Since Hong Kong acceded to the UN Convention against Torture (CAT) in December 1992, and a series of court rulings found previous screening mechanisms deficient and unlawful, only 28 refugees have been recognized by the Immigration Department out of over 20,000 claimants. This effective zero-percent recognition rate establishes a caustic asylum environment in which refugees continue to languish without justice or hope for the future. This situation brings shame to Hong Kong and is a matter of great public interest.

Currently, “Non-refoulement Claimants” seeking refuge in Hong Kong are assessed under the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM). The process claims to ensure high standards of fairness, for example, by ensuring expeditious releases from detention; by providing claimants with publicly funded lawyers and interpreters; and, by having an Appeal Board review first instance rejections.

However, what might appear satisfactory on paper, fails to offer the fairness it ought to guarantee. For instance, many new claimants are detained unlawfully for months; scores of refugees write their own appeals and attend oral hearings without the assistance of lawyers; mistakes appear to be made in interviews and translations, clouding judgments and undermining fair process. The zero-percent recognition rate consequently reinforces official and public opinion that refugees are bogus economic migrants, [branded 'collectively illegal immigrants' in government documents](#).

Further, endless waiting for interviews and decisions – frequently stretching into a decade – condemn refugees to a state of de facto destitution due to the combined impact of inadequate welfare and the denial of economic rights. The problem of squalid and dangerous living conditions, often in refugee slums, has frequently made headlines in the local and international media.

Consequently, refugees most often have no choice but to seek underground employment, thus breaching conditions of stay with criminal offenses. When arrested for working illegally, refugees are imprisoned for 15 to 22 months and then misleadingly labeled economic migrants. Hong Kong Government appears reluctant to improve the current policies and welfare for fear of attracting more asylum ‘abusers’, leaving 10,000 claimants to suffer without viable options.

The refugee community is arguably the most impoverished, marginalized and humiliated social group in “Asia’s World City” which claims to be fair, welcoming and respectful of human rights. The reality is that thousands of men, women and children have no choice but to live in appalling, [dangerous and unhygienic conditions](#) while privileged citizens often turn a blind eye.

The Refugee Union, a registered refugee-led society, promotes respect of human rights and adherence to refugee rights while countering propaganda that deceptively depicts asylum seekers as devious, underserving troublemakers bent on abusing asylum for personal gain.

On World Refugee Day, when the international community celebrates refugees and their remarkable perseverance and survival, the [Refugee Union will organize a rally](#) to respectfully demand justice, protection and adequate assistance from the Hong Kong Government.

The Refugee Union will issue a statement at the rally point on 20 June 2015 at 230pm

Ends

Notes to Editors:

What: Raise awareness of refugee rights on World Refugee Day

When: Saturday, 20 June 2015, 2pm

Why: To demand that HKSAR grant asylum and meet refugees’ basic needs

Who: 400 refugees mobilized by the Refugee Union

Where: gathering at Central Ferry Piers for a march to Immigration Tower in Wanchai.