



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UN Refugee Agency Calls for Lao Hmong to be released from Nong Khai

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Bangkok – The UN refugee agency today called for the release of 149 Lao Hmong refugees held in Thailand’s Nong Khai Immigration Detention Center since December, 2006.

“As of today, the group – including many children – have now spent 400 nights in detention when they have not committed any crime,” said Erika Feller, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

The refugees were rounded up for deportation in Bangkok on 17 November 2006. They were transferred on 8 December 2006 to the Nong Khai detention centre on the border with Laos, where they have been held since.

“There is no basis for the detention of these 149 people,” she said. “They have been recognized as in need of international protection, and they should be allowed to take up the offer already made to them to leave Thailand and start to live productive lives and have a future in other countries.”

UNHCR recognizes that efforts have been made by Thailand to improve somewhat the conditions in the center; the people are now allowed out of their two cells for three hours a day. However, these do not go far enough and overall conditions still fall well short of international standards and no one should be detained for an indefinite period.

“We are particularly concerned that 90 children, including 5 born in detention, are being held in these sub-standard conditions,” Feller said. “They should not be locked up and should be getting a proper education.”

UNHCR is also concerned for other asylum seekers and refugees – including many more children – held in Bangkok’s Immigration Detention Centre.

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