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JRS World Refugee Day press statement

Government policies cost refugee lives

remove obstacles to international protection

“Increasingly governments are closing their borders, intensifying sea patrols and sending immigration officials to other countries to carry out pre-boarding inspections. Air and sea companies are fined if they transport undocumented migrants. Unable to obtain valid visas and documentation, refugees become victims of border-control policies”, JRS International Director, Lluís Magriñà SJ said.

On World Refugee Day, 20 June, JRS urges governments worldwide to ensure refugees are granted access to and protection in their territories. What is happening now is not only illegal, it is wrong. The message from governments is clear. There is no room for refugees.

Since 1993, at least 8,000 refugees and migrants have died trying to enter fortress Europe. Indiscriminate and inhumane border controls force desperate people to take even greater risks to flee extreme poverty, persecution and war.

“Governments are investing millions to keep undocumented migrants out. Some governments – such as the Indian, US and Spanish governments - are even building physical barriers to impede the arrival of migrants. But nothing has been done to provide refugees with alternatives to using unscrupulous traffickers and smugglers to reach safety. Unfortunately, the consequences are often tragic.” added Fr Magriñà.

Very often states do not distinguish between those posing security threat, migrants and those in need of international protection. In December 2006, following an escalation in conflict in Somalia, the Kenyan authorities closed the border with its neighbour.

“This single action forced thousands of conflict-displaced Somalis, particularly women and children, to live in unsanitary, harsh, and even, life threatening, circumstances”, warned JRS Kenya Director Anne Wangari.

There is a serious imbalance between border management and international human rights obligations to assist to those in need.

"Constant naval patrols off the Australian coast prevent boats carrying potential asylum seekers from entering national waters. Those few who do enter are transferred to offshore processing centres where their access to legal and community support is severely limited," remarked Georgina Pike, JRS Australia Advocacy Officer.

Global refugee protection is a finely balanced system based on the concept of states sharing responsibility. To make this system work fairly and efficiently JRS calls on all nations to afford refugees access to and protection within their territories. In particular, richer Industrialised states need to provide technical and

financial resources to poorer nations hosting refugees, and to resettle much greater numbers of vulnerable refugees unable to find protection elsewhere.

For further information contact

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Notes to the editor:

JRS works in over 50 countries around the world. It employs more than 1,000 staff: lay, Jesuits and other religious to meet the education, health, social and other needs of more than 450,000 refugees and IDPs, more than half of whom are women. Its services are provided to refugees regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs.