

For Immediate Release

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World Refugee Day 2016

Give us back our rights

Start: Central Ferry Piers, Hong Kong

End: Immigration Tower, Wanchai

Date: Monday, 20 June 2016, 2 pm

We are the Refugee Union, the only refugee-led society in Hong Kong comprising a community of ethnically and religiously diverse refugees struggling for justice. Our main objective is to safeguard the rights and interests of people claiming asylum in Hong Kong. We demand to enjoy our rights while our claims are being assessed and determined by the Hong Kong Government.

The Refugee Union is dissatisfied with the present government approach to non-refoulement protection. Instead of extending a supporting hand to those fleeing torture and overwhelming danger including death, the Hong Kong Government and the political class of its ruling elite deploy a strategy of vicious propaganda full of hatred and mudslinging. Refugees have been branded economic migrants, illegal immigrants, called wicked names and associated with the most frightening and atrocious crimes in Hong Kong. This is nothing but a desperate attempt to destroy and malign our character in a bid to draw a wedge between us and the local community.

The Refugee Union calls the present Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) a **fake**. Our views are vindicated by the fact that the system fails miserably to protect genuine claimants. An astonishing 99.5% of all claims were rejected by the Hong Kong Immigration Department on the basis that they are not substantiated. Isn't there something disturbingly sinister in a process that identified just [52 cases out of 8465 torture/non-refoulement claims since late 2009?](#)

We refugees come from a variety of countries around the world. We experienced and survived the most horrendous conditions of torture, cruelty, persecution, as well as physical threats to ours and our families' lives. How is it possible that we are all "fake" refugees? Or is it more likely that the Hong Kong Government is manipulating the USM as a migration control tool to discourage and expel an undesirable minority group discriminated against along immigration lines?

The Refugee Union argues that if the USM genuinely aims to offer protection to those fleeing torture and persecution, then the acceptance rate ought to be significantly higher than the current laughable 0.5%. In other developed countries the acceptance rate ranges between 25% and 45%. How can the Hong Kong Government justify a rate of less than 1% year after year?

As we mark the World Refugee Day, the Refugee Union duly demands:-

- Respect for the personal liberties of all refugees regardless of status;
- A realistic acceptance rate that prioritizes and promotes protection;

- An end to a smear campaigns aimed at discrediting refugee and our rights;
- Conditional work rights for all refugees;

The Refugee Union urges the Hong Kong Government to return our dignity arbitrarily stolen by condemning us to live in legal limbo for years. We also urge the Hong Kong Government to desist from engaging in divisive policies and practices that promote disharmony and discrimination that manifestly amount to racial segregation.

These actions have pushed the refugee community to live in fear of xenophobia which has become more than palpable in recent days. We thus unite to request an end to opportunistic and egotistic politics which will draw no benefit to this great city.

Give us back our human rights!

Notes to Editors:

What: Rally in support of World Refugee Day 2016

When: Monday, 20 June 2016, 2pm

Why: To demand timely, fair and credible USM screening results

Who: 200 refugees mobilized by the Refugee Union

www.refugeeunion.org