

**Australian Asylum Seeker Numbers Reflect Worldwide Trend**

New statistics released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees overnight show that an increase in people seeking asylum in Australia reflects a worldwide trend over the last 12 months.

Provisional figures show that the number of asylum seekers in industrialized countries increased by 12 per cent in 2008 to 383,000. In 2007 the figure was 341,000.

4,750 people sought asylum in Australia in 2008, compared to 3,980 people in 2007.

The 4,750 applications for asylum made in Australia compares with 49,000 in the United States, 36,900 in Canada, 35,200 in France, 31,200 in Italy, and 30,500 in the United Kingdom.

“Insecurity, persecution and conflict around the world are leading to greater numbers of people seeking asylum in industrialized nations including Australia,” UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle said today.

“For instance, conflicts in Afghanistan and Somalia have led to increases in asylum seekers from those countries, while Iraq still remains the country that produces the largest number of asylum seekers.”

“The new figures have again highlighted the large and increasing number of people worldwide needing international protection through asylum, and the need for countries like Australia to keep providing help to those who need it most.”

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The *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries, 2008* report is available at [www.unhcr.org/statistics](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics)