



## **NZ Asylum Seeker Numbers Low Despite Global Increase**

New statistics released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees overnight show that the number of asylum seekers in New Zealand remains low, despite a worldwide increase in people seeking asylum in the past 12 months.

Provisional figures released today show 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.

In New Zealand, 250 people sought asylum in both 2008 and 2007.

The 250 applications for asylum made in New Zealand 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.

“That asylum claims in New Zealand remain very low despite the global increase reflect its distance from the main refugee producing regions and its increased border control measures,” UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle said today.

“However, insecurity, persecution and conflict are leading to greater numbers of people seeking asylum around the world.”

“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.”

“With the number of asylum seekers increasing around the globe, it is more important than ever for New Zealand to keep providing a fair and robust procedure for processing its relatively small number of claims, and to continue supporting international efforts to find durable solutions for refugees - including through its generous resettlement program.”

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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)