



**REPORT & MEDIA RELEASE STRICTLY EMBARGOED  
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**New asylum report: 377,200 people seek refuge in industrialized countries in 2009,  
mainly in Europe and North America**

UNHCR tonight released a new report showing that an estimated 377,200 people fled persecution in their homelands to seek asylum in industrialized countries during 2009.

While the total number of asylum claims made in 44 industrialized countries remained stable compared to 2008, regional disparities were highlighted by the report. The number of asylum-seekers in Australia and New Zealand increased by 30 per cent during 2009 (6,500 claims) compared to the previous year (5,000).

Of these, Australia received 6,170 applications for protection visas in 2009, up 29 per cent from 2008. However, despite this recent increase, the report ranks Australia 16<sup>th</sup> of the industrialized countries receiving asylum applications, and Australia received less than 2 per cent of all applications for asylum in the industrialized world.

Globally, Afghans topped the list of asylum applicants, with 26,800 submissions, representing a 45 per cent increase over 2008. Afghan asylum-seekers are now, for the first time since 2001, the largest group seeking asylum in industrialized countries.

“The new figures clearly show that conflict and human insecurity in places of origin are the key reasons why people flee their homes to seek protection further afield”, said UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle today, “and this is borne out by recent arrivals in Australia.”

“In 2009, Afghans replaced Sri Lankans as the second largest group of asylum-seekers arriving in Australia, with the largest group remaining the Chinese, most of whom arrive by air.”

Overall, the countries receiving the largest number of asylum claims were the United States with 49,000, France (42,000), Canada (33,300), the United Kingdom (29,800), and Germany (27,600), demonstrating that the vast majority of asylum-seekers continue to seek protection in Europe and North America.

“These figures place recent arrivals in the global context, and show that Australia and New Zealand receive only a very small percentage of the world’s asylum seekers”, said Mr. Towle.

“UNHCR hopes that the report will serve to increase awareness of regional and global trends, and as a timely reminder of the need to maintain a balanced perspective on the numbers of people in need of international protection,” concluded Mr. Towle.

**“Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries, 2009” is attached, and will be available at [www.unhcr.org.au](http://www.unhcr.org.au)**

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