



20 February 2007

Letter to the Editor

Letters Editor
The Australian

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Contrary to suggestions made in Caroline Overington’s *Noble Experiment (The Australian, 20 February, p.13)*, UNHCR does not use integration criteria when deciding which refugees to refer for resettlement to Australia. Nor is the agency’s latest submission for the 2007/08 intake connected to recent publicity on the settlement record of Sudanese in this country whom, for the most part, have overcome tragic pasts and vast difficulties to rebuild their lives anew.

UNHCR makes a yearly submission on the composition of Australia’s refugee resettlement quota based on a number of factors: global needs, geographical considerations and indications we receive from Governments regarding which caseloads they are willing to accept. This year, our submission includes a larger number of refugees from Asia than previous years because Australia has indicated an interest in taking more from that region and the number of refugees in need there is also up.

For the record, UNHCR’s quota submission asked Australia to consider taking refugees from Asia, Africa, West Asia and the Middle East, and Europe. The number of cases submitted from Asia was only slightly higher than those submitted from Africa in general, not just Sudan [- as stated in the related news story ‘*Burmese refugees replace Sudanese*’, p.5 20/2/07].

Resettlement is only ever going to be an option for a tiny fraction of the world’s refugees. That’s why it’s reserved for those most vulnerable, for whom there is no foreseeable prospect of voluntary repatriation, and for those who face serious difficulties in their current place of asylum. Australia is an important resettlement partner of UNHCR, and the agency is very appreciative of the 6,000 refugees accepted each year.

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