



Wednesday, August 11, 2010

To Whom it may concern,

As members of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers we write in support of the Tamil refugees and potential immigrants aboard the ship Sun Sea as it approaches Canadian waters.

We are aware of and proud of Canada's obligation to receive and protect such people as they flee post conflict zones in danger. We are aware and proud of the numbers of immigrants and refugees among our parents and relatives who have sought refuge from various parts of the world using these international commitments made in the name of Canadian citizens.

We are in particular concerned that among the ship's passengers may well be women and children in need of compassionate contact with NGO's like our own to protect their dignity, safety and security and privacy. Conflict zones, we note always carry the threat and trauma and loss but for women and children there are always the additional realities of rape, sexual harassment and child abuse. We are aware of the dangers of child trafficking and of the trafficking of women and children en route and once landed.

We therefore urge the government to assist by giving those aboard immediate access to reunification programs, NGO's and legal representation.

We are distressed at the news reports of jails being prepared for asylum seekers and urge the government to prepare housing and comforts more appropriate to the situation and to honor our international commitments to protect and welcome those in need.

We will be happy to respond with aid in the form of (counseling, contacts and for some housing) to women and children at any of our member centers and in particular at our Vancouver center. Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter. That work could be coordinated through this office

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