



Thailand will consult with UN on Rohingya

The Thai government will discuss long-term solutions for Rohingya migrants with the Thai National Security Council and concerned international organizations, said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul as he stood in for Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra on her weekly televised programme. He also insisted that Thailand will not repatriate the detained Rohingya people for the time being and that the prime minister has instructed concerned agencies to provide help under humanitarian principles.

Last week Prime Minister Yingluck told the reporters that “First and foremost, we have to take care of them on humanitarian grounds,” and added that there were no plans at the moment to deport the Rohingya back to Myanmar or send them on to third countries.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have all contacted the Thai government to express concern and a desire to aid the Rohingya, said Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “We will proceed in line with laws and humanitarian principle,” he added. Thailand is providing UN agencies access to the Rohingya.

A total of 857 Rohingya who illegally entered Thailand were discovered and detained last week, the latest incident in a steady exodus of members of the minority Muslim group from its neighboring Myanmar, and possibly Bangladesh, which has been going on since at least 2005. Often traveling by sea, most Rohingya are attempting to reach Malaysia or Indonesia, but their boats sometimes drift into Thailand and Thai security officials estimate that thousands pass through the Kingdom every year.

Thailand had been criticized by human rights groups in the past for allegedly pushing boats carrying Rohingya back out to sea, but successive Thai governments have said that is not their policy, and Thai security agencies have denied taking such actions. Thailand has a long history of providing sanctuary to refugees, with over 150,000 people from Myanmar living in camps along the Kingdom’s western border. Estimated 2 million illegal migrant workers, many from Myanmar, are also working in the Kingdom