FACT SHEET

Refugee Status Determination Process

PNG has a robust refugee status determination process incorporated in legislation. It has been developed with the assistance and inputs of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Previously the UNHCR used to conduct refugee status determination in PNG. It has now ceased to do this in recognition of the robustness of PNG’s own process and the competence of PNG Immigration’s officers. The UNHCR has also provided training to PNG ICSA on refugee status determination. The Refugee Division of PNG ICSA is responsible for the assessment of refugees and managing the operations of PNG’s refugee relocation centres, including the Manus Regional Processing Centre for asylum seekers.

As per Government’s policy, refugees are provided multiple layers of natural justice. They may be provided with interpreters and assistance to prepare their applications by refugee law experts. Their claims are initially assessed by PNG Immigration officers. If they are initially assessed not to be a refugee, they may have these claims reviewed by an independent panel of eminent Papua New Guinean and international lawyers. Under PNG law, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration makes the final determination of a refugee’s status. If they are determined to be a refugee, they are eligible to apply for a refugee visa and Certificate of Identity. A refugee visa is permanent and provides freedom of movement and work rights.

PNG ICSA is expected to finish refugee status assessments for the remaining 641 asylum seekers by the end of March 2016. Those who receive a negative assessment will be entitled to apply for independent review. Those who are determined as non-refugees will be required to leave Papua New Guinea.