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**International Solidarity for Stranded Yemenis and other refugee
populations in South Korea**

As a network committed to the advancement of refugee rights, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) urges the Korean Government to protect the more than 500 Yemeni individuals currently seeking asylum on Jeju Island, South Korea. In addition, APRRN is alarmed by several reports coming out of South Korea regarding a national xenophobic backlash, expressed with bitter hostility through an online campaign that calls for the expulsion of refugees.

We are also deeply concerned that several extremists are stimulating public fear against refugees via the dissemination of fake news, provoking racial discrimination, and organising a protest against refugees – the first time in Korean history. The number of online endorsements against refugees on the *Cheong Wa Dae* website, the President's Office of South Korea, has exceeded 500,000 in two weeks. It seems that many Korean citizens who have not experienced coexistence with refugees from different cultural backgrounds are being manipulated through a fear campaign that expresses groundless anxieties. According to human rights activists in Korea, the current level of refugee hatred is deeply concerning.

Should the Korean government yield to the voices of the right wing – a group that is pushing for the abolition of the *Refugee Act* – then State systems will be severely weakened and many people left in vulnerable situations. In addition, the capitulation to short-term xenophobic pressure will only seek to legitimize concerns and feed the current negative discourse. There is no need to revise the *Refugee Act* to introduce restrictions, and any attempt to do so would only exacerbate the current situation.

For the 500 Yemenis that have arrived on Jeju Island, they must be granted immediate protection and safeguards must be put in place to ensure they are not returned to their country of origin. In fact, South Korea's Representative to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an institution which has historically been cautious to publicly intervene in domestic issues, released a statement on 18 June urging that "no Yemeni national should be forcibly returned to his or her country at this time."

APRRN stands in solidarity with all refugees in Korea. We also support civil society, the Korean Government, and the majority of the Korean society who embrace human rights and humanitarian values. As such, APRRN makes the following calls for action to the Korean Government:

1. Extreme racial discrimination, refugee-phobia, and Islamophobia must be addressed by sensitizing the general public and strengthening protection systems.
2. Transparently provide information on the situation of Yemeni refugees (and refugees generally) and the benefits of refugee protection and integration for Korea locally and internationally.
3. Stop all attempts to revise the Refugee Act in concession to an uninformed, sudden, and loud xenophobic minority. Reacting to fear and hostility will only result in poor public policy.

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