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FOCUS ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES

'The Boat People—Ending In Sight?'

The memories of the 'boat people' exodus have been fading away and world attention has turned to other victims of war and famine as in Bosnia and Somalia. While countries like Canada, the USA and Australia continue to select fewer and fewer from a dwindling pool of 'eligible and qualified refugees' for resettlement, as of September 1992, close to 100,000 asylum seekers were still languishing in camps and detention centres in countries of first asylum in the region: Philippines—5,984; Indonesia—15,642; Hong Kong—49,538; Malaysia—10,632; Thailand—10,172. However unpalatable it is to these asylum seekers, they no longer wield the influence they once did on the conscience of the world. Concerted efforts have been taken by governments of these countries of first asylum and UNHCR to run the final play of this long running drama.

In spite of the numerous demonstrated flaws in the screening process under the auspices of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), the screened-out asylum seekers are under increasingly high-handed pressures to return to Vietnam. Based

on the assumption that employment opportunities in camps for the asylum seekers—earning C\$30 a month, equivalent to a prisoner incarcerated in Hong Kong jails—has become a factor in their reluctance to return to Vietnam, the Hong Kong government has decided to terminate the employment of about 14,000 boat people who help

in the detention centres (*South China Morning Post*, March 23, 1993). The Indonesian government has taken steps to make life in the camps more difficult for the remaining population as a means of pressuring repatriation. It was reported that in Galang Camp, fences had been built to restrict movements within the camp, private busi-

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