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UNHCR welcomes Norwegian decision to halt deportations to Somalia

STOCKHOLM – The UN refugee agency on Friday appreciated the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board's decision to halt deportations of rejected Somali asylum seekers to any part of Somalia.

"We very much welcome this news. These Somalis would have faced a very difficult situation if they had to return home now," Ms. Machiko Kondo, Regional Representative for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said.

The security situation particularly in the Central and Southern parts of Somalia has deteriorated steadily over the past months, causing a new outflow of refugees into neighboring countries.

Thousands have also fled to the northern autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland, further destabilizing the situation there. The situation in Puntland also remains tense following the roundup and expulsion of approximately 1,500 Ethiopians and Somali from the South and Centre of the country, some of whom may have had international protection needs.

So far this year, over 32,000 Somalis have sought asylum in Kenya, bringing the total number of Somali refugees in three camps run by UNHCR to 160,000.

"Given the ongoing conflict, UNHCR advises not to return Somali asylum seekers in particular to Central and Southern Somalia until it is safe for them to go home again. They should be granted some form of complementary protection," Kondo pointed out.

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