



September 5, 2012

To the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees , Geneva Switzerland  
and to Whom It May Concern

Dear Sirs,

I am submitting this appeal in light of the ongoing humanitarian crisis that is presently unfolding in the Sinai desert, on the Egyptian border with Israel. A group of close to twenty migrants from the Horn of Africa are currently waiting on the Western side of the newly erected border fence, in the summer heat and with no food, to enter into the state of Israel without permission. As you are certainly aware, the state of Israel is dealing with a massive wave of migration originating in Africa and in the past decade has absorbed more African migrants than any other Western country compared to its size.

While the State of Israel fully complies with Article 33 of the 1951 refugee convention and has granted group protection to tens of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, it is clear that it cannot supply such refugee status to an endless number of people, a vast number of whom are not refugees, rather are in search of employment.

Thus the Israeli government has decided to build a barrier between its border and Egyptian territory in order to enforce its sovereignty, as it is both its right and duty according to international law. Any sovereign state has the fundamental right to decide who enters its borders and what should be the criteria for granting refugee status. Allowing these people to enter now would set a dangerous precedent and crush any effective attempt to handle this situation, greatly affecting the future and well-being of both the citizens of Israel and of the genuine refugees presently in Israel.

It is important to point out, that the migrants currently on the border are coming via Egyptian territory which is effectively a "safe country of asylum" with a large presence of UNHCR personnel with a well-known office in Cairo. According to publications on your organization's website, there is no threat of refoulement of refugees from Egypt to their countries of Origin<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, these people who are currently attempting to enter Israel face no imminent threat to their lives or well being.

Since these people are currently on the Egyptian side of the border we call on the UNHCR in Egypt to take quick and effective steps in order to assist these people and take them under your custody. It is both directly under your mandate and responsibility to contact Egyptian authorities in order to secure the safety and well being of these people as soon as possible.

Due to the severity of the situation, we respectfully await to hear from you as soon as possible, in the hope for a humane and just solution to this crisis.

Sincerely,  
Yonatan Jakubowicz,  
Head of Public Relations and Communications

Cc: UNHCR Office, Israel  
UNHCR Office, Egypt

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486356&submit=GO>