

United Nations Chief Calls for Comprehensive Response to Refugee Crisis



United Nations, August 29 (RHC)-- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has urged governments across the world to formulate a "comprehensive" response to refugee issues following the discovery of asylum seekers' bodies in an abandoned truck in Austria.

"I appeal to all governments involved to provide comprehensive responses, expand safe and legal channels of migration and act with humanity, compassion and in accordance with their international obligations," Ban said in a Friday statement.

The UN chief also noted that he was "horrified and heartbroken" by the recent loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea and the Thursday discovery of over 70 bodies crammed inside an abandoned truck near the Austrian border with Hungary.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced this week that almost 300,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean this year to reach Europe, with most of them fleeing conflicts in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Semi-official estimates say more than 2,300 asylum seekers have died crossing the Mediterranean this year, up nearly by 300 from a year ago. Pointing to the fact that most of asylum seekers come from crisis-hit countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, Ban called on the international community to "show greater determination in resolving conflicts and other problems that leave people little choice but to flee."

He further announced plans to arrange a special meeting over migration and refugee concerns on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on September 30.

"This is a human tragedy that requires a determined collective political response," Ban stressed.

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