



TRANSCRIPT

THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION MEMBER FOR CORIO

**E&EO TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS AM AGENDA
THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2015**

SUBJECT/S: Rohingya asylum seekers

KIERAN GILBERT: I'm going to cross live to Bangkok now and to Shadow Immigration Minister Richard Marles, Richard, Indonesia, Malaysia agreeing to temporarily take in thousands of those asylum seekers who have been stranded at sea for weeks what do you, picking up after your talks in Myanmar - are they serious about trying to work with the regional community on this?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION: Well I think that the decision that we saw yesterday from Malaysia, Indonesia in the meeting with Thailand is very welcome, it is a critical breakthrough in all of this and hopefully it is the key decision that will literally see thousands of lives saved, I think it's important that were not pointing fingers at countries specifically, ultimately there does need to be a regional solution to ending what is a particularly depraved journey of people smuggling from Rakhine State and Bangladesh down into the southern part of South East Asia and particularly Malaysia. We saw that with the cemeteries that were unearthed a month or so ago just how bad a journey this is and I think that's what people need to understand, essentially what's happened here is Thailand have broken up this people smuggling route we've then seen people stranded along the journey as it were, people smugglers have behaved utterly appallingly in respect of their victims and what we needed to get was a regional answer to the immediate humanitarian concern and I hope that what we've seen now with the meeting yesterday is a critical breakthrough in that.

GILBERT: You've been in Myanmar before arriving in Bangkok there now, should that government be required to do much more in protecting and not persecuting in the very least the Rohingya community within its population?

MARLES: Look there are obviously steps which the Myanmar Government would be good if they took in respect of that community and they obviously have a responsibility in this, there is no question about that. I think that we need to be looking at a regional solution here and I think that if what comes out of this is that everyone points the finger solely at Myanmar that's not going to end up with the kind of results the global community would want to see and that's not going to end up in a benefit for those people who have been stranded on this appalling route. That is not to say that there is not responsibilities that Myanmar have here, they clearly do and they need to be a part of the answer here and I think the question now is encouraging Myanmar in participating in the meeting here in Bangkok next week on the 29th of May but that's not going to happen if the global community simply point the finger solely at Myanmar because at the end of the day this is a regional problem and something like half, the estimates are rough, but maybe half the people involved in this trip have come from Bangladesh. A lot of the people who are most vulnerable now are off the coast of Malaysia and Indonesia, Thailand clearly are in the middle of this as well, it actually requires a solution from all of those countries.

GILBERT: Ok, we've only got a minute left but just quickly the US State Department has said the US will take a lead as part of any UN resettlement procedure should Australia also put its hand up to take a number of those affected in this crisis?

MARLES: That's a complicated question Kieran and one that we need to be working with the UNHCR on and one which comes further down the track, but what we need to be doing now is supporting the countries of the region to address the immediate humanitarian crisis and can I say that the comments of Tony Abbott in recent days have been utterly appalling and have been read very badly in my view in this part of the world. They have actually denied the political space which was needed yesterday and will be needed next week to get an answer to this and actually we need a Prime Minister who stops peddling his three word slogans in a domestic context in a way which causes significant difficulty for the countries of the region and in an international context.

There simply has to be a point at which Tony Abbott understands that he is not just a low rent domestic politician but is the Prime Minister of Australia. He enters the world stage as a statesman or at least he should and that's what we need to see and hear from him.

GILBERT: Shadow Immigration Minister Richard Marles live from Bangkok, thank you for your time this morning.

MARLES: Thanks Kieran.

ENDS