

Singapore can't accept refugees: MHA

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As Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand plan for talks on the Rohingya migrant crisis, Singapore said it is unable to accept any refugees or those seeking political asylum.

"As a small country with limited land, Singapore is not in a position to accept any persons seeking political asylum or refugee status, regardless of their ethnicity or place of origin," said a spokesman for the Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday, in response to questions from The Straits Times.

The position appears unchanged from that outlined in Parliament in 2009, when then Nominated MP Eunice Olsen asked for the Government's response if the Rohingya tried to enter Singapore waters.

Replying, the late Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Balaji Sadasivan said that because of Singapore's limited land and natural resources, the Government had for decades been against accepting refugees. He said Singapore would assist such people by providing humanitarian assistance, so that they can depart for a third country.

Between 1975 and 1996, Singapore hosted some 32,000 Vietnamese refugees. They were allowed into Singapore only if a third country gave written guarantees of their removal within three months. The last 99 returned to Vietnam voluntarily in 1996.

Source: <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/singapore-cant-accept-refugees-mfa-20150519>