

Saudi woman seeking asylum in Thailand 'now in a secure place' says UNHCR

The UN refugee agency, [UNHCR](#), said on Monday that 18-year-old Saudi national Rahaf Mohammed Al-qunun, who had been stranded at Bangkok airport after fleeing her family in Kuwait, saying that she would be killed if forced to return, was “now in a secure place”.

In a [statement](#) earlier in the day, UNHCR said it had been following developments over the past 48 hours closely and immediately sought access from the Thai authorities to meet with her.

The young Saudi told human rights groups and the media over the weekend that she had been stopped at Bangkok airport in transit from Kuwait, where her passport was taken from her. She claims she was fleeing her family and was planning to head to Australia and seek asylum there.

On Sunday, Ms. Mohammed Al-qunun had barricaded herself in a hotel room to prevent the Thai authorities from deporting her back to Kuwait. According to news reports, the Thai authorities agreed to give UNHCR access to her on Monday, in order to assess her claim to asylum.

UNHCR consistently advocates for the principle of non-refoulement, which states that anyone confirmed or claiming to be in need of international protection cannot be returned to a territory where their life or freedom are threatened. This principle is recognized as customary international law and is also enshrined in Thailand's other treaty obligations, according to UNHCR.

Thailand is not a party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol defining the status of refugees.

For reasons of confidentiality and protection, UNHCR has not released any information on the details of the meeting that took place at the Bangkok hotel with the Saudi woman.

“She's now in a secure place, out of the hotel,” said Cécile Pouilly, Senior Communications Officer for UNHCR, in an interview with *UN News*. “She's now in a state of emotional distress after all she's gone through and she needs to be given a bit of breathing space, but in the coming days, we will keep on meeting with her to try to assess her protection needs,” she explained.