



NEWS RELEASE

15 December 2011

CoRMSA Welcomes Ruling on Johannesburg Refugee Reception Office

CoRMSA celebrates the judgment handed down by the North Gauteng High Court on Wednesday 14th of December 2011 which has instructed the Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to reconsider his decision not to open a refugee reception office in Johannesburg. The decision came only two days after the Eastern Cape High Court in Port Elizabeth also ordered that an interim office at the regional immigration office must continue to provide asylum services to all holders of asylum seeker and refugee permits issued under the Refugee Act. These two cases are not just victories for CoRMSA and its members, but a step in the right direction towards the preservation of refugee and migrant rights in South Africa.

CoRMSA, represented by Lawyers for Human Rights was challenging the decision by DHA not to open a new refugee reception office in Johannesburg after the existing office was closed down at the end of May 2011 due to a court action taken by surrounding businesses. The Court found that DHA had taken the decision not to open a new refugee reception office in line with its apparent policy pronouncement to move all asylum services to border posts.

This pronouncement was made without consultations with stakeholders, or the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs as required by the law, and therefore overlooked the

implications which such a policy would have on the lives of the refugees and asylum seekers.

As the world prepares to commemorate the International Migrants Day on the 18th of December, the two High Court rulings are an encouragement as they illustrate that there is hope yet in the fight for the reinforcement of migrant and refugee rights in South Africa. As we commemorate International Migrants Day, let us remember that refugee and migrant rights are human rights and it is the obligation of every government which is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to uphold human dignity.

For more information please contact: Gwadamirai Majange, Communications Officer Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA); Office: +27 11 403 7560/2. Cell: +27 72-330-4036.