

Illegal Immigrant Entry Into Sabah: Policy Statements And Practices

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Abstract

This study is conducted to analyze policy statements and actual practices of the government in dealing with illegal immigrants in Sabah. It is done by reviewing press statements and reports in major state newspapers beginning from the early 1960s to 2003. Although certain categories of immigrants such as foreign workers and refugees were welcomed by the government, illegal immigrants were largely considered to be a threat. The initial acceptance of Filipino immigrants resulted in the influx of illegal immigrants in the state. Furthermore, inconsistencies on the part of policy makers contributed to further deterioration of the problem. Based on policy statements, the government appeared unwilling to tolerate the presence of illegal immigrants. However, in terms of implementation, the government tended to accommodate illegal immigrants by carrying out regular amnesty programs and registration exercises to legalize illegal immigrants. In other words, implementation seldom reflects policy statements. As a consequence, the effort to rid the state from illegal immigrants had not succeeded. The conflicting signals by the government may indicate a lack of political will to solve the illegal immigrant problem.

Keywords: *illegal immigrants, amnesty program, policy statement, foreign workers, government*