

Media Update

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UNHCR

PRESS RELEASE

Whoever. Wherever. Whenever. Everyone has the Right to Seek Safety

Pakistan and UNHCR mark World Refugee Day

ISLAMABAD, 20 June 2022 – World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees around the globe. It falls each year on June 20 and celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

Reflecting the global 2022 theme, “Whoever. Wherever. Whenever. Everyone has the Right to Seek Safety,” an event was held in Islamabad to express solidarity with refugees and appreciation for the enduring generosity of the communities hosting them, attended by representatives of the Government of Pakistan, international community and partners as well as refugees.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Noriko Yoshida, UNHCR’s Representative in Pakistan said that amid its own challenges, Pakistan has remained a steadfast host of those in need of international protection.

“This is also a day when we thank those who have welcomed newcomers into their communities. Pakistan has been a generous host to millions of refugees for more than 40 years,” she said. “The international community must mobilize more support to assist refugees and their host communities in this country.”

Pakistan now has some 1.3 million registered refugees and estimated 1.5 million Afghans of other status, which includes some 250,000 Afghans who have arrived since August 2021 according to the government.

Chief Guest, the Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood, drew attention to the plight of refugees and called for support to host communities. “The financial challenges of Pakistan in hosting more than three million Afghans in the country, including some 1.3 million Afghan refugees, requires sustainable, dedicated and generous support of the international community,” he noted.

Highlighting the need for sustainable durable solutions, the Minister further underscored that the international community must come forward to play their role under international responsibility and burden sharing, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. “Voluntary return of Afghans in safety and dignity is the preferred solution for Pakistan,” he added.

Inspiring attendees in Islamabad, Dr. Saleem Rehman, regional winner of the 2021 Nansen Award, reminded those present, including refugees, to never give up and continue to pursue their dreams.

Numerous events related to World Refugee Day have taken place in other cities including Peshawar and Quetta, bringing together refugees and host communities and ensuring their voice is heard.

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For news editors

UNHCR 2021 Global Trends Report – key data:

- By May 2022, more than 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.
- At end 2021, the figure was 89.3 million comprising:
 - 27.1 million refugees
 - 21.3 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate

- 5.8 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate
- 53.2 million internally displaced people
- 4.6 million asylum seekers
- 4.4 million Venezuelans displaced abroad
- Among refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad in 2021:
 - Low- and middle-income countries hosted 83 per cent
 - Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 27 per cent of the total.
 - 72 per cent lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.
 - Turkey hosted nearly 3.8 million refugees, the largest population worldwide, followed by Uganda (1.5 million), Pakistan (1.5 million) and Germany (1.3 million). Colombia had 1.8 million Venezuelans displaced abroad.
 - Relative to their national populations, the island of Aruba hosted the largest number of Venezuelans displaced abroad (1 in 6) followed Curaçao (1 in 10). Meanwhile Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees (1 in 8), followed by Jordan (1 in 14) and Turkey (1 in 23).
 - More than two thirds (69 per cent) came from just five countries: Syria (6.8 million), Venezuela (4.6 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.4 million) and Myanmar (1.2 million).
- Globally, there were 6.1 million Venezuelan refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in 2021 (reported through the Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela).
- Asylum seekers submitted 1.4 million new claims. The United States of America was the world's largest recipient of new individual applications (188,900), followed by Germany (148,200), Mexico (132,700), Costa Rica (108,500) and France (90,200).
- Solutions:

4.1 million displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin in 2021, including 3.7 million internally displaced people and 429,000 refugees.