

**2020 World Refugee Day Statement by
UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi**
Everyone Can Make a Difference, Every Action Counts

EMBARGOED until 19 June 5am GMT

We are marking this year's World Refugee Day against a backdrop of a dramatic global crisis. Not only are record numbers of people forced to flee their homes - but the world is grappling with COVID-19; a disease that is still very much affecting us all. What started as a health crisis has expanded, and today many of the most vulnerable – refugees and the displaced amongst them – face a pandemic of poverty.

Yet, throughout this challenging time, we have also seen a connectedness that transcends borders. Ordinary people have stepped up to help. Host communities – especially those in low- and middle-income countries where nearly 90 percent of the world's refugees live - have continued to demonstrate a remarkable welcome.

And refugees themselves are also contributing in significant ways, despite often living in extremely vulnerable conditions. They are, for example, volunteering as front line health workers in Colombia and the United Kingdom; making soap for distribution in Lebanon and Niger; sewing masks and protective gear in Iran; helping construct isolation centers in Bangladesh; and elsewhere around the world, they are contributing time to help the needy in their host communities.

As we battle COVID-19, I draw inspiration from the resilience refugees have shown in overcoming their own crisis of displacement and dispossession; their separation from home and family; and their determination to improve their own and others' lives, despite these and other hardships.

On World Refugee Day, I salute and celebrate the fortitude of refugees and displaced people around the world. I also pay tribute to the communities that shelter them and that have demonstrated the universally shared values and principles of compassion and humanity. They have sometimes hosted and protected refugees for years or even generations, and continuing to uphold these values in a time of pandemic is a powerful message of hope and solidarity.

UNHCR is no stranger to challenges. For over 70 years we have been on the frontlines of countless emergencies. Yet this global pandemic is of an entirely new magnitude. Our priority has been and will be, to stay and deliver for the refugees, internally displaced and stateless people we are mandated to protect. But we can't do it alone.

Mobilizing help and support to prepare and respond to the pandemic has been vital in the past months. And we have seen how countries and communities around the world have included refugees in their own national health responses. It is now equally critical to secure refugees' and displaced persons' inclusion in the much-needed socio-economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Global Compact on Refugees has laid a strong foundation for this response. We have already seen it in action as bilateral donors, international financial institutions, and the private sector have responded to this crisis with unprecedented levels to support refugees through host governments. Such support must continue and be redoubled so that they have the resources necessary to include refugees and displaced people and ensure that economic and social disparities do not lead to rifts within and between communities. More must also be invested in countries of origin to make the return of refugees a viable option.

On this World Refugee Day, I call for greater global solidarity and action to include and support refugees, internally displaced and stateless people as well as their hosts.

Whoever you are. No matter where you come from. Every one of us can make a difference.

Every action truly counts.

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➤ **World Refugee Day and UNHCR’s Every Action Counts campaign**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent anti-racism protests have shown us how desperately we need to fight for a more inclusive and equal world. A world where **no one is left behind**. It has never been clearer that all of us have a role to play in order to bring about change.

Everyone can make a difference. This is at the heart of UNHCR’s World Refugee Day campaign. This year, we aim to remind the world that everyone, including refugees, can contribute to society, and **Every Action Counts** in the effort to create a more just, inclusive, and equal world.

➤ **About UNHCR**

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, leads international action to protect people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We deliver life-saving assistance like shelter, food and water, help safeguard fundamental human rights, and develop solutions that ensure people have a safe place to call home where they can build a better future. We also work to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality.

UNHCR is taking measures to help respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and prevent further spread. Working together with governments, UNHCR ensures refugees are included in national health response plans and are well-informed on how to prevent the spread of COVID 19, have access to soap and clean water, and continue to receive the life-saving aid and assistance they need.

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