



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**World Refugee Day to be marked on 20 June  
New figures show more people displaced, fewer able to return home**

As UNHCR prepares to mark World Refugee Day on 20 June, a new report has found the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2009 had risen by 1.3 million to some 43.3 million - the highest level since the mid-1990s - while the number of refugees able to return voluntarily to their home countries has fallen to its lowest level in 20 years.

The figures, in UNHCR's *2009 Global Trends Report*, include 15.2 million refugees (10.4 million in the care of UNHCR and 4.8 million under UNWRA's care in Palestine), 27.1 million internally displaced people, 6.6 million stateless people, and 983,000 asylum-seekers.

The report shows that one out of four refugees in the world is from Afghanistan, with 2.9 million - 96 per cent of whom are hosted in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The other largest source countries for refugees included Iraq (1.8 million), Somalia (678,000), Democratic Republic of the Congo (456,000), and Myanmar (407,000). As in previous years, around four fifths of refugees are hosted in developing countries.

Ongoing conflict and instability, in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, the DRC, and southern Sudan, mean that UNHCR has only been able to help 251,500 refugees return to their home countries in 2009 - the lowest number in 20 years.

All of these figures mean that, unfortunately, almost half (5.5 million) of the refugees under UNHCR's care are in protracted situations, with the majority living as refugees for five years or more.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR's is using the theme, *Home*, to mark World Refugee Day this year. Regional Representative, Richard Towle, said today: "It is sobering that persistent conflict and insecurity mean so many people are still being forced to leave their countries, so few refugees are able to return home, and so many are spending so long in protracted situations."

"With these figures showing that durable solutions for refugees are ever more difficult to achieve, it shouldn't be surprising that people are looking to move further from their regions of origin in search of protection."

The number of new asylum-seekers making individual claims worldwide rose for the third year in a row - to 922,500. The main destinations for asylum-seekers were South Africa (222,000 claims), the United States (47,900), France (42,100), Malaysia (40,000), and Ecuador (35,500).

In comparison, Australia received 6,206 asylum claims last year.

"Each of the figures in this report tells a human story of loss and tragedy. Despite its distance from these places of terrible suffering, Australia shares the responsibility to protect refugees. It can do this under the Refugee Convention by helping asylum-seekers

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who come to its shores and, also, through the generosity of its annual resettlement programme. In this way, Australia shows solidarity to those countries that bear the greater burden and responsibility of hosting millions of the world's refugees."

"We are very grateful to Australia for the fresh start it provides to some 13,750 humanitarian entrants each year but we also remember the 42 million people displaced by conflict and persecution who are unable to go back to their homes," Towle said.

The *2009 Global Trends Report* is attached.

Selected World Refugee Day events are listed below. For more details visit [www.unhcr.org.au](http://www.unhcr.org.au).

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### **Selected World Refugee Day 2010 Events**

#### **Flag Flying & Lighting of National Icons, Canberra**

14-27 June 2010

UNHCR and the ACT Government will fly World Refugee Day flags on the approaches to Kings and Commonwealth Avenue Bridges in the week leading up to World Refugee Day. For two weeks Canberrans will also get the chance to see the nation's capital in a different light as some of Australia's most iconic buildings in Canberra will be lit up in 'United Nations Blue' each night. Participating buildings include Old Parliament House, the National Library of Australia, the National Archives, and Questacon.

#### **Refugee Scholarship Presentations, Canberra**

Tuesday 15 June 2010

Each year Canberra Refugee Support provides educational scholarships to refugee students, and this year Richard Towle, Regional Representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees, will present the scholarships at a special ceremony in Canberra.

#### **Canberra University World Refugee Day Breakfast, Canberra**

Thursday 17 June 2010

UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle will speak at Canberra University's World Refugee Day Breakfast where the community will show its support for refugees in our local community and around the globe.

#### **Australia for UNHCR World Refugee Day Breakfast, Sydney**

Friday 18 June 2010

UNHCR's national fundraising association, Australia for UNHCR, is hosting a World Refugee Day breakfast to raise funds for UNHCR's vital work around the world. With Special guest speakers Governor General Quentin Bryce, Rugby Union great, Phil Kearns, and Regional Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Richard Towle.

World Refugee Day Soccer Tournament, Canberra

19 June 2010

Companion House will host the sixth annual World Refugee Day Soccer Tournament, featuring teams of former refugees from the Sudan and Sierra Leone, Liberian, Chin, Karen and Mon communities.

**Refugee Realities, Canberra**

20 June 2010

UNHCR is supporting the Oxfam 'Refugee Realities' simulation in Canberra from 7-20 June, which is a combined exhibition and simulation exercise that allows people to walk in the shoes of a refugee, and experience the realities of a refugee's journey. The event will culminate in a day of entertainment and celebration in Commonwealth Park on 20 June 2010.