



**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, New Zealand received 336 asylum claims last year.

"Each of the figures in this report tells a human story of loss and tragedy. Despite its distance from places of such terrible suffering, New Zealand 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 these ways, New Zealand shows solidarity to the countries that bear the greater burden and responsibility of hosting millions of the world's refugees."

"We are very grateful to New Zealand for the fresh start it provides to some 750 refugees 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**

#### **Mangere Refugee Reception Centre, Auckland**

Sunday 20 June 2010

Immigration New Zealand will host a reception acknowledging the efforts of individuals and the community in resettling refugees in New Zealand. Activities include the launch of a commemorative booklet, kauri planting, and entertainment.

#### **Newtown Park, Wellington**

Sunday 20 June 2010

Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand will host an event featuring a cultural procession, football matches featuring former refugees, food stalls, entertainment, and a tree planting at Mt Albert Park.

#### **World Refugee Day Radio Project, National**

21 to 25 June 2010

The Voice Arts Trust will be broadcasting its World Refugee Day Radio Project, featuring unique stories and an authentic insight into the refugee experience, on Radio New Zealand National in the week following World Refugee Day.