



# UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

## MEDIA RELEASE

### UNHCR calls on students to tell the stories behind refugee statistics

UNHCR today invited high school students around Australia to help tell the stories behind refugee statistics, by entering a national writing competition.

Regional Representative Mr Michel Gabaudan launched the competition called *Refugees: telling their stories* as part of World Refugee Day celebrations at Parliament House in Canberra. The competition asks students to write a short article based on an interview with a refugee in their community.

Mr Gabaudan said that there were 20 million refugees and displaced people worldwide.

“But behind this dry statistic, there are 20 million individual human beings with their own personal stories to tell,” said Mr Gabaudan.

“Our writing project aims to encourage dialogue between young Australians and refugees who have come here, through the telling of personal stories. It’s also a chance for young Australians to find out more about refugees for themselves.”

The competition ties in well with the theme for this year’s World Refugee Day on 20 June – *A Place to Call Home – rebuilding lives in safety and dignity*.

“This theme draws attention to the challenges and hope that accompany refugees in their search for a new home through voluntary repatriation, local integration into country of first asylum, or resettlement in a third country.”

“Fleeing persecution and conflict, often with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, refugees are separated from all that is familiar – from family, friends, work, community and culture.”

“Yet, despite their suffering, refugees never give up their dream of “home” and all that it entails – family, acceptance, security, a sense of belonging and self-worth. The fact that they maintain that hope, sometimes against all odds, is an inspiration to us all.

“On this World Refugee Day, we ask that all of us that have homes lend their support to the millions of people under the care of UNHCR who have nowhere to call their own,” said Mr Gabaudan.”

Competition winners and finalists will have their stories published in a booklet by UNHCR.

Competition guidelines are available from UNHCR by email on [aulcain5@unhcr.ch](mailto:aulcain5@unhcr.ch), or phone 02 6290 7108. Entries close 27 August 2004.

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