

Monday 20, June 2016

**STATEMENT BY UN HIGH COMMISSISONER FOR REFUGEES, FILIPPO GRANDI ON
WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2016**

UNHCR marks World Refugee Day each year on June 20, to shine a light on the courage and resilience of families forced to flee war or persecution. And each year UNHCR seeks to find a glimmer of hope in the global statistics we publish to show that the world is finding solutions to help heal the trauma refugees are living through on a daily basis. But this year the hopeful signs are hard to find.

Today the number, complexity and protracted nature of today's conflicts mean that forced displacement has now reached a level unprecedented since the founding of the UN itself; substantially over 60 million people are now uprooted around the world. Each day another refugee tragedy is played out in the media; of children, mothers and fathers losing their lives in a desperate bid to escape violence.

Against this tragic backdrop, divisive political rhetoric on asylum and migration issues, and disturbing levels of xenophobia, are together threatening the international agreements which protect those forced to flee war or persecution.

Instead of burden sharing, we see borders closing, instead of political will there is political paralysis. And humanitarian organisations like mine are left to deal with the consequences, while at the same time struggling to save lives on limited budgets.

Yet, there is cause for hope. In contrast to the toxic narrative repeatedly played out in the media we have often witnessed an outpouring of generosity; by host communities, by individuals, and by families opening their homes.

These ordinary people see refugees not as beggars, competitors for jobs, or terrorists -but as people like you or me whose lives have been disrupted by war. Their simple acts of solidarity are going on around the world, every day.

UNHCR sees 2016 as a watershed moment for the refugee cause. As wars spiral out of control we feel this must be a year to take collective responsibility and action to end the conflicts which force people to flee and also to help the millions of people whose lives have been destroyed by this violence.

World leaders can no longer watch passively as so many lives are needlessly lost. We must be smart about finding solutions to help refugees. We must find humane and dignified means to ensure refugees don't risk their lives and those of their families by resorting to ruthless traffickers or by boarding flimsy boats in a bid to reach safety.

An historic United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants on the 19th of September will put us all to the test. Will governments rise to the occasion and make new commitments to share responsibility for refugees in a spirit of global solidarity, in line with the fundamental principles of international refugee law? And furthermore, commit to doing our fair share to deliver for people forced to flee their homes, and have lost everything through no fault of their own?

UNHCR stands together #WithRefugees, on World Refugee Day and every day - and on 19 September we want the world to stand with us. By doing so we can send a message to world leaders they must act.