


With you

The Road to Recovery and Refuge

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A CHANCE TO DREAM AGAIN

The complexity and protracted nature of today’s conflicts mean that forced displacement has now reached a level unprecedented since the founding of the United Nations. Substantially, over 65 million people are now uprooted around the world that includes the thousands of families within the borders of southern Philippines. Each day, families torn apart by wars are played out in media – these are children, mothers and fathers risking their lives in a desperate bid to escape violence.

Yet, there is cause for hope. In contrast to the toxic narrative repeatedly hogging the headlines, 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.

This is why we are deeply grateful that since we launched our giving program two years ago, you are one of the more than 5800 Filipino donors who have committed to support our mandate to provide life-saving aid and durable solutions to families torn apart by war and violence.

For standing with us, I extend to you my warmest gratitude. Donors like you give us hope, because what we do is anchored on your generosity and continued support.

Every peso you have donated creates tremendous impact on the lives of forcibly displaced families. You restore hope that life holds more than fear and violence.

As I take on my new role as head of UNHCR’s office in the Philippines, it is my commitment to you that we will tirelessly work to restore hopes of families forced to leave everything behind because of war and conflict. More than ever, we at UNHCR are committed to help them rebuild their lives, dream again, and secure a better future.

Yours sincerely,



Yasser Saad
Head, UNHCR National Office in the Philippines



Yasser Saad is currently the Head of the UNHCR National Office in the Philippines, having served with UNHCR for 19 years. He has both Egyptian and French nationalities and holds a Master’s degree in Public International Law from the University of Paris (II). Following a short stint as a lecturer for law students, he started his career as a humanitarian worker in Mauritania in 1997. Since then, Mr. Saad has worked in various countries throughout Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. He covered emergencies involving refugees and internally displaced persons in Yemen, Iraq, and Tunisia during the recent war in Libya, worked as a Protection Officer in Africa and the Middle East, and acted as a legal adviser at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva. He spent four years as UNHCR’s Senior Regional Training Officer for Asia, based in Bangkok, before taking up his previous position as Senior Protection Officer in Algeria.

FILIPINOS JOIN GLOBAL COMMEMORATION OF WORLD REFUGEE DAY

During World Refugee Day last June 20, Filipinos helped shine a light on the strength, courage, and perseverance of millions of refugees and families displaced by war and conflict.

Held annually, World Refugee Day is a key moment for showing support for millions of families uprooted by violence and persecution. Today, there are about 65.3 million displaced individuals – marking the first time the 60-million mark has been breached.

Generous individuals visited UNHCR's booths in the Philippines and lent their voice to the [#WithRefugees](#) campaign. "I donated because I'm a development worker myself. I work in an NGO, so my heart has really been for development. I've always been supportive of the UN, but this is my first time donating to the refugee cause. Helping the disadvantaged has



always been something close to my heart." said donor Soledad Nubla-Lee, who signed up at UNHCR's booth in Power Plant Mal in Rockwell that day.

At the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, UNHCR also held a forum to educate students and young professionals about the Philippines' history of opening its doors to refugees fleeing conflict. Since the 1920s, there have been nine waves of



refugees who have found safer haven in the country.

Capping off activities was an evening reception led by then UNHCR Philippines Country Rep. Bernard Kerblat, who announced the organization's continued presence in Mindanao. Joining the reception were UNHCR's development partners and representatives from universities, embassies, and government agencies.

#TeamRefugees COMPETES AT THE 2016 RIO OLYMPICS



War may have uprooted them from their countries, but it did not stop them from pursuing their dream. At the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, ten refugees competed against 200 national teams, marking the first time a team of refugee athletes competed under the Olympic flag. They include refugees who came from different countries that all fled violence and persecution and sought refuge in places like Germany, Luxembourg, and Brazil. The initiative to send a refugee team to the Rio Games is unprecedented and sends a strong

message of support and hope for refugees worldwide. It also comes at a time when more people than ever are being forced by conflict and persecution into fleeing their homes.

"We are very inspired by the Refugee Olympic Athletes team – having had their sporting careers interrupted, these high-level refugee athletes will finally have the chance to pursue their dreams," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. "Their participation in the Olympics is a tribute to the courage and perseverance of

all refugees in overcoming adversity and building a better future for themselves and their families. UNHCR stands with them and with all refugees."

The participation of a refugee team in the Olympics represented a major milestone in our long-standing partnership with the International Olympic Committee. We have supported youth programmes and sporting activities, rehabilitated sporting fields in several refugee camps, and provided sports kits to refugee youth.

ZAMBOANGA'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

Three years ago, conflict broke out in Zamboanga between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and non-state actors. The clashes, which lasted for 20 days, forced more than 119,700 people to flee their homes.

As of July 2016, there remain more than 14,000 displaced persons living in 12 temporary shelter communities in the city. In addition, there is an estimated 7,600 individuals who live among host communities. Much remains to be done as Zamboanga City's displaced families rebuild their lives three years after the conflict.

Scores of families have yet to be moved to permanent shelters, while many are hard pressed just to make ends meet.

"With thousands still in need of durable solutions to help them recover from the 2013 conflict, UNHCR and our partners have been monitoring displacement and protection issues to ensure targeted assistance to our populations-of-concern," says Yasser Saad, the Head of Office for UNHCR Philippines. "Our goal is to enable affected communities to cope with displacement and resume their lives in safety and dignity."

Mothers Dream Again for their Families



Nurhaida, 46, and her daughter Nashpaida, 21, had a stable source of income in Sta. Catalina village. Out of fear that they will be caught in the crossfire when conflict broke out three years ago, they were forced to flee home – carrying nothing except the clothes on their back. Today, the entire family lives in a transitory site in Kasanyangan village. Their husbands work as laborers in the city and are working tirelessly to provide for the family. Before she sleeps at night, Nashpaida whispers a prayer to Allah: "The only thing that I want is for my children to live happy and healthy lives. We are all working hard so that they will be able to finish school and have a better future."

The torrential rains of June herald fear in the village of Rio Hondo, where more than 700 individuals reside in temporary shelter communities or transitory sites. The village easily gets flooded, and water quickly seeps into the homes of displaced families, including that of 58-year-old Panalak Amel-hajad. "Our old home was completely burned when the fighting reached our village. Nothing was left. We have been living in the transitory site for a year. Whenever it rains, the water reaches our beddings and belongings. The children get sick. We long for the day we will get a permanent and safer home," says Panalak. She eagerly waits for the day when rains will bring in hope, and not fear.

"When the conflict broke out in 2013 here in Zamboanga, we were traumatized. We could hear the exchange of fire, and we feared for our lives," recalls Nurhuda, 41. Together with her sister's family, Nurhuda left their home in Sta. Barbara village and headed to the city grandstand where they stayed for a year. They later moved to Kasanyangan transitory site. Despite facing many difficulties, Nurhuda has not lost hope for a better tomorrow. "Displaced families like ours have a lot of big dreams and we try our best to achieve them. For now, however, we hope to have a home to call our own because a life without permanent shelter is difficult. The future is very uncertain."

The search for durable solutions continues. Because of donors like you, UNHCR is able to:

- ✓ Deploy personnel for profiling and monitoring of displaced families, in partnership with Zamboanga's Department of Social Welfare and Development
- ✓ Reach out to far-flung areas where displaced families may be staying
- ✓ Support the government's recovery strategies
- ✓ Identify the needs and vulnerabilities of displaced families, and address current protection conditions
- ✓ Implement durable solutions like quick-impact projects and livelihood programs
- ✓ Strengthen partnerships with local stakeholders to support displaced families

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, works for a world where every person forced to flee can be protected and is empowered to build a better and brighter future.

Thank you very much for standing with us.



“ In the current reality of seemingly endless conflicts leading to millions becoming refugees or being displaced, the world needs a compassionate spirit and every country has at the very least, a moral responsibility to help. ”

- JULIAN HERRERA *Protection Cluster Coordinator
Baghdad, Iraq*

Please introduce yourself briefly.

I'm Julian Herrera, the Protection Cluster Coordinator in Iraq based in Baghdad. My journey with UNHCR started when I was 25 as I was trying to figure out what to do with my life. I suppose you could say I stumbled upon UNHCR and became an accidental refugee and humanitarian worker since then!

Take us through your journey towards your current assignment.

I joined UNHCR in the Philippines in 1990 for its refugee status determination (RSD) activities for Vietnamese asylum seekers of a refugee camp in Puerto Princesa, Palawan. In 1994, I took up the assignment of Protection Officer in Banjaluka, Bosnia. The civil war was ongoing then and it was my first time to work in an area of conflict. I can only say that up until that point, I had never seen such level of violence and impunity that human beings inflict on one another. Just as remarkable is witnessing all the acts of kindness towards the victims of war by people from all walks of life. Since then, I have been posted to different field offices or duty stations including Indonesia, Hong Kong, Russia, Thailand, Kosovo, Turkey, Macedonia and Geneva.

What is an average day like in your office?

I used to say that my day here starts the day before. The volume of work is quite high as there are always situations arising in different parts of the country that needs to be addressed. I start work early around 6 AM to check on developments of the previous evening and I end around midnight.

What are the major challenges that you face?

Most of Iraq is an active conflict zone which continues to displace at least 3.4 million Iraqis. As the national coordinator of the Protection Cluster, my main responsibility is to ensure that the protection aspect of the humanitarian response is well-coordinated, that we provide clear guidance to the Iraqi authorities so that the needs of the displaced people are appropriately and promptly addressed.

Why is it important for Filipinos to extend their concern and compassion to refugees and displaced families outside the Philippines?

Filipinos are compassionate and hospitable by nature. This goes back to the time of the Vietnamese boat

people in the late 70's to '80s when we hosted refugees and asylum seekers in Bataan and Palawan. This humanitarian spirit is an integral part of the Filipino identity. In the current reality of seemingly endless conflicts leading to millions becoming refugees or being displaced, the world needs a compassionate spirit and every country has at the very least, a moral responsibility to help. We have a proud history of doing so and it is needed now more than ever.

What has been your most memorable experience working at UNHCR?

There have been many memorable moments and experiences over the years. Each is special for what they represent and mean to me. In Bosnia in 1995, I remember facing the daunting task of taking a woman who had been shot to a neighbouring country for emergency treatment. The journey required driving through several military checkpoints which was quite risky. On top of that, I needed to drive the ambulance myself while making sure that the wounded passenger would be fine during the trip. To cut a long story short, we made it successfully to Croatia where the woman was given treatment. She has since been resettled to a new country and continued on with her life.

GLOBAL FORCED DISPLACEMENT HITS RECORD HIGH



Every day, war and persecution drive people from their homes. In 2015, the number of families forced to flee has reached unprecedented levels – higher than at any time since recorded history – with over 65 million men, women, and children currently displaced.

Representing immense human suffering around the world, the number of forcibly displaced individuals totals more than the population of France. This data is based on the annual Global Trends report released by the UNHCR last June 20, World Refugee Day. The Global Trends Report provides information about forced displacement worldwide based on data from governments, partners including the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, and the organization’s own reporting.

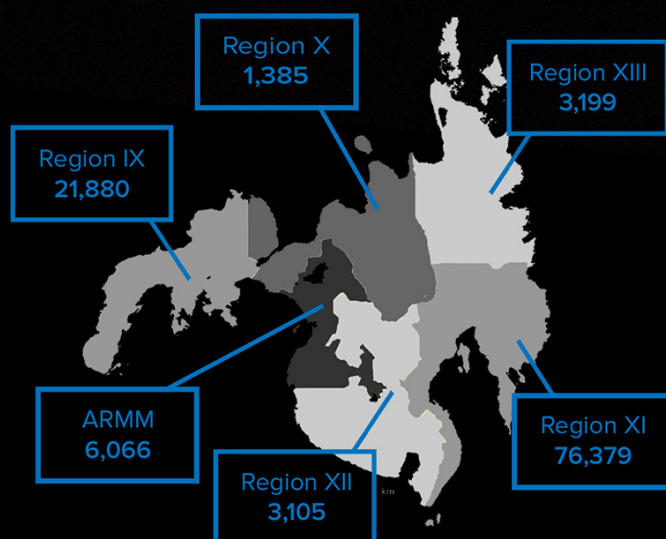
Half the world’s refugees are children, and half come from just three war-torn countries – Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. Behind the continuously growing outflow of refugees are three major factors: prolonged crisis situations like the decades-long conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, emergent and reignited situations occurring frequently like the Syrian crisis, and the shortcomings in finding solutions that can adequately address the increasingly complex needs of refugees and internally displaced people.

“More people are being displaced by war and persecution and that’s worrying in itself, but the factors that endanger refugees are multiplying too,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. “At sea, a frightening number of refugees and migrants are dying each year; on land, people fleeing war are finding their way blocked by closed borders. Politics is gravitating against asylum in some countries. The willingness of nations to work together not just for refugees but for the collective human interest is what’s being tested today, and it’s this spirit of unity that badly needs to prevail.”

DISPLACEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Forced displacement remains to be a pressing issue in the Philippines. In Mindanao, specifically, displacement is largely driven by armed conflict and internal violence.

112,449	TOTAL NO. OF PERSONS PRESENTLY DISPLACED IN MINDANAO (2012 - JUNE 2016)
76,579	PRESENTLY DISPLACED DUE TO NATURAL DISASTERS
35,870	PRESENTLY DISPLACED DUE TO CONFLICT



Saving Lives, Protecting Futures



Celebrating humanitarians on the frontlines

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Thank you for making our work possible.

On August 19, we marked World Humanitarian Day to honor the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives serving millions of displaced families worldwide.

Your continued support helps us deliver life-saving protection and solutions on the frontlines. Thank you for making this possible.

 **UNHCR** | Philippines
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