

# With you



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- UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi Assumes Leadership

## Hope Amid the Destruction

Newly-appointed UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi visits Nizip Refugee Camps in Turkey, the country that hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees.



*"In the last five years, UNHCR has been on the frontlines – delivering life-saving assistance, safeguarding fundamental human rights, and developing solutions to help families forced to flee to find a better future."*

## ***Understanding and Addressing Forced Displacement***

**F**rom the Middle East to Africa, wars and conflict are driving an unprecedented number of people from their homes.

Meanwhile, in other places, most notably parts of Asia particularly in the Philippines, floods, storms, cyclones and droughts are destroying more and more peoples' homes and livelihoods.

Over the past five years, the steep rise in humanitarian needs resulting from conflict and natural hazard displacements far exceeds the capacity of the international humanitarian community to provide the minimum core protection and life-saving assistance to all those affected. But we often tend to oversimplify these concepts to look at humanitarian crises in terms of a dichotomy – conflict versus natural disasters. We treat them as two big streams of displacement. We design our responses to them differently creating consequential variations in donors' appreciation of the needs of the vulnerable populations when there should not be any.

While there may be practical arguments for doing this, it also leads to fragmentation and reinforces our tendency to focus on the immediate emergency response without sufficiently analyzing what got us here in the first place.

A deeper analysis of conflict always requires not only a historical, but also a geographical and an environmental perspective. In addressing forced displacement in the

long-term, durable solutions for displaced populations must be a clear development priority. Development policies should aim at creating the conditions for people to be able to stay and not to be forced to move, to give them a better future in their own countries – essentially, so that migration can be an option rather than a desperate need.

In the last five years, UNHCR has been on the frontlines – in forced displacement hotspots in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Nepal, and even the Philippines – delivering life-saving assistance, safeguarding fundamental human rights, and developing solutions to help families forced to flee to find a better future.

The crisis we are faced with show no signs of ending. With tens of thousands of forcibly displaced families taking perilous sea journeys or moving into evacuation centers everyday, your support today is as crucial and as vital as ever.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BK' with a flourish underneath.

Bernard Kerblat  
Country Representative, Philippines  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## Filippo Grandi takes the helm as UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Filippo Grandi, a UN official who has worked in refugee and political affairs in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, began his five-year term as UN High Commissioner for Refugees on January 1, succeeding António Guterres whose more than 10 years in office ended in 2015.

High Commissioner Grandi takes up the position at a time of unprecedented displacement challenges. Record numbers of people globally are forced to flee war and persecution. "UNHCR is navigating extraordinarily difficult waters," he said. "The combination of multiple conflicts and resulting mass displacement, fresh challenges to asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and growing xenophobia is very dangerous. The road ahead is a

challenging one, but I hope that – working with governments, civil society, and other partners – we will make progress in ensuring international protection and improved living conditions for millions of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people."

Grandi added that he hoped solutions to crises of displacement would be "pursued with renewed determination by addressing their root causes and investing adequate political and material resources. UNHCR, whose mandate includes the search for solutions, stands ready to work with all those pursuing this goal."

Grandi, 58, is from Italy has been with the United Nations for 27 years. His vast experience includes being former head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) after working for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as Deputy Special Representative. After committed work to NGOs, his career finally shifted to serving the UNHCR in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and at the organization's Geneva headquarters.

## Hundreds finally out of legal limbo through global #IBelong campaign to end statelessness

After years of living in legal limbo, a first group of over 660 people in the southern Philippines had their citizenship confirmed in March 2016 – an important step in the global campaign to end statelessness by 2024. The event took place in Glan, Sarangani as the governments of the Philippines and Indonesia, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), continue efforts to assist people who are at risk of being stateless.

Stateless people and those at risk of statelessness are sometimes not registered in either country and have lost their connection with their former countries of origin. Some live in remote areas or have limited access to information about their rights and nationality procedures. To address this issue, a confirmation and registration of persons of Indonesian descent (PIDs) was launched in 2014. The exercise registered more than 8,745 PIDs in seven provinces and two cities which include Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, General Santos City and Davao City. The event saw the first group of about 660 PIDs getting their citizenship confirmed by either Indonesia or the Philippines and receiving the appropriate identity documents.



UNHCR commends the Government of the Philippines for ongoing efforts to consider acceding to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which establishes an international framework to ensure the right of every person to a nationality by establishing safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth and later in life.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, leads the international action to protect some 55 million people who have been forced to flee their homes, including the millions of Syrian families displaced by conflict.

During the last five years, UNHCR has been on the frontlines, both inside Syria and in surrounding host countries.

Your support enables us to deliver life-saving assistance, safeguard fundamental human rights, and develop lasting solutions to help Syrians find a better future.



## THANK YOU!

Because of donors like you, UNHCR is able to:

- Offer direct support and protection to the most vulnerable refugees
- Prepare emergency aid stocks
- Deliver safe water, sanitation and health
- Deliver and install refugee housing in host countries
- Provide safe accommodation places

# 5 Years of the Syrian Crisis

Hope Amid the Destruction



## RESTORING HOPE, REBUILDING LIVES

UNHCR works both within Syria and in the surrounding host countries in the Middle East and Europe to support families who have fled and offer them the protection and help they need.

# THE SYRIAN CRISIS: A TIMELINE

2011

The Syrian crisis begins when peaceful protests spread nationwide. As protests grow, a number of Syrians begin to flee their homes. The first camps for refugees open in Turkey.

2012

UNHCR and Jordanian authorities open Za'atari Refugee Camp. One year later, it will be home to some 120,000 refugees. By December, neighbouring countries already host half a million refugees and people continue to arrive in search of safety from UNHCR.

2013

The number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR reaches 2 million by September. UNHCR warns of the far-reaching consequences of the conflict and the increased need to support Syrian refugees who have found safety in host countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

2014

UNHCR has registered over 2.5 million Syrians in neighboring countries, and estimates some 6.5 million people are displaced within Syria and in need of help. By October, 1 in 3 people crossing the perilous Mediterranean Sea are Syrian refugees.

2015

By August, the Syrian crisis has claimed an estimated 250,000 lives, and displaced 12 million people. UNHCR deploys staff to Greece and other European transit countries to offer protection and support to the tens of thousands of people in search of safety.

## 5 HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIES FOR 2016

- Coordinated action
- Prioritisation of needs
- Increasing response capacity
- Ensuring access to affected people without discrimination
- Emergency preparedness

*“Help can come in different ways. Filipinos can donate money to any organization working for refugees and the displaced. They can also support campaigns to open borders of countries and protect the rights of asylum seekers and migrants. They can volunteer and there are several organizations that will welcome them.”*

**Brenda Escalante is a national protection officer for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in the Philippines. Recently, she was deployed to the refugee crisis in Europe to provide assistance to families forced to flee their homes.**



**Please introduce yourself briefly.**

My name is Brenda Escalante, a national protection officer of UNHCR Philippines' since February 2010. I was first based in Manila and was later transferred to Mindanao when it opened its office in Cotabato City in May that year.

**What is the situation in your duty station?**

In late 2015, I was deployed to Serbia for three months to help in the Mediterranean humanitarian crisis. UNHCR was the Republic of Serbia's main partner in supporting refugees passing through the country to reach safer haven in Europe. UNCHR provides life-saving support to ease the difficulties in their journey and to provide counselling about their rights to seek asylum. This March, I will be deployed to South Sudan.

**How does UNHCR respond to emergencies?**

UNHCR works with governments and partners by providing protection to affected population through emergency shelter and life-saving non-food items to alleviate the suffering specifically of extremely vulnerable individuals.

**What are the major challenges in your role?**

The major challenge for me is not so much about my role in the emergency, but the overall issue of forced displacement. The hardest part is to see people fleeing from war, conflict, persecution and poverty everyday – seemingly without an end in sight. It's survival of the fittest by a population toughened both by hardship from where they came from and by determination of what they want to be in the future.

**What is the impact of refugee and displacement crises around the world on countries like the Philippines?**

We are all connected even if the Mediterranean crisis is thousands of miles away from us. There are similarities in issues why people are forced to flee. The aspirations to have a better life are parallel. The global political issues that affect the search for solutions are somehow connected. If the crisis in Europe worsens, our work in the Philippines is affected too.

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

As was our experience when Haiyan struck the Philippines, we benefitted from the compassion and generosity of other countries. We should also do the same to persons who were forcibly displaced. It's not about being wealthy. It's the gesture and solidarity to extend help that counts.

**Can you share a memorable or inspiring anecdote from your time in the ongoing crisis?**

I met a Syrian mother who was traveling with her husband and children. She admitted in a hushed voice that they hailed from the Bedouin tribe and had to keep their identity secret out of fear of discrimination from other refugees. She said they were heading to Germany to seek asylum for the future of their children, and for medical care for her husband. I was totally inspired by her strength and determination to secure the future of her family. The more than 2,000-kilometer journey to Serbia and an additional 1,500 km to Germany is not a joke even for a physically-fit person.



**UNHCR Philippines turns over Simariki Project to Community**

It has been more than two years since clashes broke out between government forces and a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Zamboanga City in western Mindanao. The armed conflict forced thousands to flee their homes and seek temporary shelter elsewhere. One of the communities affected was Sitio Samariki in Barangay Talon-Talon, where 125 families were displaced.

Today, 85 families have so far been allowed to return and UNHCR is hard at work in helping Sitio Samariki residents rebuild their lives. The Zamboanga Basilan Integrated Development Association (ZABID), has constructed 50 houses and provided two boats. Through the assistance of Simariki Sama Banguingui Association (SISBA), the families who returned have resumed fishing and re-planting seaweeds. The progress remains steady, though it is evident that much remains to be done. There is still a need to deliver basic social services.

UNHCR also assisted in the installation of the Simariki Boardwalk, which would help connect houses to the main island. The boardwalk was especially beneficial to residents who did not have makeshift boats to move around their community.

UNHCR Philippines is hard at work to provide durable solutions for displaced persons in Zamboanga City. According to the 2015 Forced Displacement Annual

Report of the Mindanao Protection Cluster, it is estimated that nearly 24,000 of the 120,000 persons forced to flee from the armed conflict two years ago are still in need of durable solutions.

UNHCR implements community empowerment initiatives such as livelihood and infrastructure projects aimed at improving resilience after displacement of armed-conflict affected communities in Mindanao.

“While progress is gradually being made through the Zamboanga Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction Plan led by city authorities, serious protection concerns still exist for internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in inadequate relocation sites identified and supported by international organizations,” said the Report.





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In 2015, you helped UNHCR protect and support millions of people forced to flee their homes. Wherever needed, we responded with life-saving support, safeguarded human rights, and helped them build better futures.

We have to continue to protect and respond because we are all human beings.

[www.unhcr.ph](http://www.unhcr.ph)

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