



Joint World Refugee Day: Press Statement

June 2023

For Immediate Release

“Hope away from home.”

We mark **World Refugee Day (WRD)** with solemn comments from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees who reminds us of the new and ongoing conflicts that have led to over 110 million displaced people worldwide.

In light of this situation, the Commissioner emphasises the urgent need to prioritise and seek solutions for this crisis.

As we observe **World Refugee Day (WRD)** under this year’s theme **“Hope away from home”** let us find inspiration and encouragement to address the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers worldwide.

The annual commemoration marks its 23rd anniversary since its establishment by the United Nations General Assembly on the 4th of December 2000 under Resolution 55/76, to raise awareness and honour the resilience, courage and determination of millions of people who are forced to flee their home countries often under the threat of violence, conflict and persecution.

In the context of South Africa, this year marks 25 years since the passing of the Refugee Act of 1998. We acknowledge that this act has undergone subsequent amendments. Nevertheless, the Act’s essence is to comprehensively outline the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in alignment with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, alongside other international human rights treaties and conventions.

Unfortunately, despite the Act's aim to safeguard human rights and uphold human dignity, there persist instances of violations and the gross infringements of these rights through unlawful practices including unlawful detention and deportation, exclusions, xenophobic violence, ill-treatment and discrimination in South Africa. In numerous cases, refugees and asylum seekers are denied access to basic services including health care services, education, justice and social security services as well as access to documentation which will allow them to live legally in the country. Despite many of these rights being guaranteed to all who live in South Africa.

On this **World Refugee Day (WRD)**, a number of organisations and local government including the City of Johannesburg, Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, Lawyers for Human Rights, Centre for Child Law, the South Africa Refugee-led Network and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation seek to commemorate the day by raising awareness, promoting integration and social cohesion among local communities and non-nationals.



The event held at His Will Combined School in the Gauteng province will see over 400 learners, parents, and staff members engaging with the above organisations and coming together to commemorate **World Refugee Day (WRD)**.

We want to commend the school and its leaders for embracing the day and marking its significance. By marking this day, we show solidarity for those who are amongst the most vulnerable in the world.

It is a priceless lesson in empathy that our young people will embrace as we struggle to build international solidarity with millions of people forced to flee conflict, climate crisis and those who risk their lives because of their sexual orientation. United, we believe this form of support will give refugees some **“hope away from home”** in finding safety after fleeing conflict and persecution, restarting their lives and enable them to contribute to the hosting countries and thrive wherever they may find a home.

Taking this as a point of departure, this partnership makes a rallying call for all Africans to unite in solidarity to collectively give hope to our brother and sisters who are away from their home countries.

We hope that this show of solidarity will not end on **World Refugee Day (WRD)**. We call on communities to continue to mobilise and build solidarity to address the inequality that plagues our society and to fight for a better life for all who live in South Africa.

We also encourage the government to strengthen its policies on the rights, safety and security of refugees and migrants to enable them to fairly access enabling documents, healthcare and education. This includes ensuring that refugees and migrants are safely integrated and protected in our communities.

We further call all law enforcement agencies to ensure perpetrators of violence and xenophobia are brought to book. By doing so, it will guarantee all refugees some safety and have them all experience true **“hope away from home.”**

Joint statement by: City of Johannesburg, Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, Lawyers for Human Rights, Centre for Child Law, South Africa Refugee-led Network, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and His Will Combined School.

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