



## Joint World Refugee Day: Press Statement

June 2021

For Immediate Release

### **“Together we heal, learn and shine”**

We join the rest of the World in embracing, celebrating and observing this year's, ***World Refugee Day*** which falls under the theme **“Together we heal, learn and shine”**. The annual commemoration marks its 21<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its establishment by the United Nations General Assembly on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2000 under Resolution 55/76, to raise awareness and honour the resilience, courage and determination of millions of women, men and children who are forced to flee, under the threat of violence, conflict and persecution and leave everything behind

Relatively, for South Africa, this year marks 23 years since the passing of the Refugee Act in 1998. In its simplicity and precision, the Act comprehensively stipulates the rights of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in congruence with the South African Constitution, alongside other international pacts and conventions.

However, in defiance of the Act's aspiration to protect human rights and respect for human dignity, refugees and asylum seekers' continue to experience infringements of these rights through unlawful practices, exclusions, xenophobic violence, ill-treatment and discrimination in our country South Africa. In these unprecedented times of Covid-19, their grievances predominantly worsen. In numerous cases, refugees and asylum seekers are denied access to basic services including health care services, education, justice and social security services.

Asylum seekers continue to face an uphill battle to get access documentation to be recognised as refugees. Migrants in South Africa and across the globe are exposed to unlawful arrests and deportation. Often, being separated from their loved ones. Under conditions of COVID, little is known about the plight of migrants detained at places like Lindela Repatriation Centre or in police holding cells. There have been shocking reports about the conditions at Lindela including overcrowding and lack of access to health care.

We mark WRD in collaboration with a number of organisations, government departments of local government including Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in



South Africa, Lawyers for Human Rights City of Johannesburg, Department of Justice, Jesuit Refugee Services and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. United we believe that we learn, heal and shine regardless of our nationality or country of origin or documentation statuses. We heal through advancing refugees' access to health care services during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. We learn through transforming the lives of refugees by ensuring their access to education and we shine through integrating everyone including refugees in sport, among others.

Taking this as a point of departure, this partnership makes a rallying call for us Africans born on African soil, human beings who all bleed red blood, to unite in solidarity in order to collectively heal, learn and shine. It also encourages everyone involved including state governments to shine a light on the rights, needs and aspirations of refugees, demonstrate political will, as we embrace our African heritage as one.

We call for communities to mobilise to build solidarity to address the evils of poverty and inequality to ensure a better life for all who live in South Africa.

Joint statement by: Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, Lawyers for Human Rights, City of Johannesburg, Department of Justice Jesuit Refugee Services and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

For more information or inquiries contact:

Vimbai Mataruse –CoRMSA

[communications@cormsa.org.za](mailto:communications@cormsa.org.za)/011 403 7560/0032/0033

OR

Thifulufeli Sinthumule - [thifulufheli@cormsa.org.za](mailto:thifulufheli@cormsa.org.za)/

[011 403 7560](tel:0114037560) / [071 3580059](tel:0713580059) / [0848703825](tel:0848703825)

Or Muluti Phiri (011 403 7560/ [advocacy@cormsa.org.za](mailto:advocacy@cormsa.org.za))