



Put Refugees at the Heart of Refugee Policy and Programmes

Geneva, December 1, 2021: As the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) prepares to get underway at UNHCR in Geneva (December 14 to 15), the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) calls on the international community to scale and expand efforts to include the people most directly affected by the ongoing global refugee crisis in decision-making processes.

COVID-19 continues to upend all aspects of lives globally with disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities. The world's growing population of 26 million refugees, which dwarfs the entire population of Australia, is even more vulnerable and underserved. The recent tragedy in the English Channel is a profound reminder that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic demands that refugee voices and experiences be better served rather than pushed down the agenda.

Policy-making devoid of insights from those directly implicated is not effective. Refugees have long campaigned for greater inclusion in a more participatory international and domestic processes with minimal traction. As officials meet to take stock of refugee experiences and global responses in the midst of the greatest pandemic in over a century, which constrains movement and access to vital services, the international community risks marginalizing and excluding refugee voices in the most important international discussion about their fate.

Ahead of the HLOM, more than 100 refugee leaders from nearly every region of the world, who are keen to reassert their dignity and chart a brighter future, held a landmark virtual Global Refugee Stocktaking Event. The diverse group called for:

- 25% refugee participation in the next Global Refugee Forum in 2023, reflecting an integration of age, gender and diversity. (The 2019 Forum only had 2% refugee participation.)
- Refugee representation in UNHCR's governing body, EXCOM, by 2023.
- Secure equal, quality health treatment for forcibly displaced people, including access to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Access to and flexibility with funding, particularly to help women, youth, LGBTQI and other often excluded refugee groups.

To learn more about the GRN's engagement at the HLOM, including interview requests, please contact hallbeecheer@gmail.com, follow @GRNRefugees and use #RefugeeVoices to see live reactions from those who matter most in refugee conversations and actions.