

# THE MIGRANT and REFUGEE CRISIS

Part 3 of 6

## UNHCR and Canada's Role



**Overview:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950 by the UN General Assembly. It is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect and assist refugees and find a solution to their plight worldwide. Asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons are also under UNHCR's mandate. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with operations in more than 130 countries in 470 locations the Agency reaches uprooted people most in need with critical humanitarian assistance. In 1976, UNHCR opened in Canada.

**Protection:** Canada is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention that sets out the obligations of States towards refugees and asylum-seekers. Stateless persons also fall within UNHCR's mandate. Refugees shall not be returned to a country where they would be at risk of persecution. The main activities of UNHCR's protection work in Canada include:

- Strengthening Canada's asylum system by ensuring that it protects asylum-seekers and guarantees their fair access to the refugee status determination process
- Ending the detention of asylum-seekers by providing alternatives to detention
- Supporting the government to strengthen its capacity to collect and analyze data regarding asylum-seekers, refugees — including resettled ones — and stateless persons
- Advocating on key protection issues to help improve government's and civil society's policies and services for refugees

**Durable Solutions:** Resettlement is one of the three durable solutions that UNHCR promotes for refugees. The other two are (a) voluntary repatriation to the country of origin of refugees when conditions (security,

access to basic services like health and education) permit a safe and dignified return, and (b) local integration in the first country of asylum.

Resettlement is used in specific instances to provide protection for refugees who cannot remain in the country where they first found asylum because:

- They are in physical danger possibly because of their background such as their ethnicity, personal profile linked to past activities, or sexual orientation
- They are in need of specialized services because they are survivors of torture or sexual violence, or in need of medical treatment not available in the country where they found asylum

Every year, UNHCR refers thousands of refugees in need of resettlement to a number of countries, including Canada which is one of the largest resettlement receiving countries. UNHCR also advocates in Canada for additional pathways through private sponsorship, the granting of scholarships for refugees, and the engagement of private businesses.

## **UNHCR is currently focused on these emergencies: Yemen, Rohingya, Children, Syria**



Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze took up his functions as the UNHCR Representative in Canada, effective 16 January 2017, bringing with him more than 19 years of international humanitarian and human rights experience.

Please look forward to receiving more information, education and advocacy about refugees in our series of six Lenten notices.



Thank you for considering supporting the work of our ministry through your Lenten givings.



## **St. Andrew's-Wesley Refugee Ministry**