



World Refugee Day

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The Israeli Model United Nations Association

Dedicated to the Next Generation of Diplomatic Leadership

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is celebrated each year in over 100 countries, honoring the courage and strength of the refugees. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness for the obstacles they face and to call for action.

World Refugee Day was first celebrated in order to commemorate a historical event for the human society; the ratification of The 1951 Refugee Convention, the first legal document to acknowledge and define the term 'refugee'. The convention, a multilateral treaty initially signed by 145 State parties, delineates the rights of refugees and describes the responsibilities of States to protect these rights.

This day is not only a reminder of the 1951 Convention, but foremost, a proclamation of the social rights it is based on, such as, the principle of non-refoulement. This principle is considered to be the cornerstone of the 1951 treaty which does not allow the deportation of asylum seekers to countries where they would be in danger. By that, it stresses their rights to live in security and with dignity. Furthermore, it signifies the importance of international solidarity and collaboration needed to resolve the refugee problem.

Today, more than ever, we can witness the importance of The Refugee Convention. In recent years, the world witnessed the largest number of individuals who were forcefully displaced from their homes, 70.8 million individuals (as of 2019).



Out of those individuals, 25.9 million are refugees - individuals who have been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence, and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. 41.3 million are internally displaced people - people who have been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border and therefore are not protected by international law.

These organizations helped about 260,000 refugees to resettle abroad. Half of them in the USA, and Sopheap Pich was one of them. In 2002 Pich returned to Cambodia and was reunited with the cultural identity of the place from which

A black and white photograph showing a long line of young children, likely orphans, walking along a street. They are dressed in coats and hats, and many are carrying large white sacks, suggesting they are being resettled or provided with supplies. The background shows a building with large windows.

Pich and the Cambodian people have experienced on their land. The morning glory is a common flower in south-east Asia, and it was one of the main sources of nourishment, and therefore survival in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge rule. Pich's artwork is relevant today more than ever, as it reflects both the beauty and the chaos the Cambodian people have gone through and are still dealing with. In this way it stresses the ambivalent relationship many refugees experience toward their motherland.

Pich is an example of one who had the opportunity to rebuild his life, one who contributed and created the cultural history of the world, and one who speaks in the name of his nation and other refugees in order to commemorate and present his nation as one which is not only recognized by its political conflicts. The second piece by Erkan Özgen, is a video called "Wonderland" (appendix 2). The video shows Muhammed, a deaf and mute 13-year-old boy who used to live with his family in a town named Kobani in the Kurdish area of Syria.

In this case, the artist is not a refugee himself, but he is one who literally gives Muhammed the voice to express his story. As mentioned by Jason Farago in the New York Times Magazine a "...refugee is not an outsider looking in, but a central actor in the writing of a global culture"



In his artwork Erkan Özgen represents a community who seeks to assimilate refugees, give them tools to rebuild their future while listening to their stories, and accepts their past. By doing so he illustrates the contribution they may bring to the nation.

I would like to use this day to commemorate those who had to flee their homes but were not able to complete their journey; to remember those who are still living in fear in their own land, and to celebrate the resilience and strength of the refugees who were able to rebuild their lives. I would like to acknowledge the importance of diversity by also remembering that some of the most influential artists, politicians, and scientists were refugees. By their societies accepting them and enabling them to rebuild their life, they felt no fear to raise their voice, to be part of their society and to contribute to the international community.





MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

For World Refugees Day

"Art is a tool to reveal our inner parts. Those parts are exposed to only a few. Thanks to globalization, we all have the opportunity to share global responsibility, therefore, we should search for those inner parts in others, and by that, listen, enable its exposure and protect those voices who are wishing to be heard."

- Klil Zimbalista-

MEET THE AUTHOR

Klil Zimbalista

Klil Zimbalista grew up in Tel-Aviv, and earned her B.A in Asian Studies ('Business in Asia' special program) with a focus on Japan at Haifa University. In 2019 she participated in a student exchange program at Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan. After returning from Japan, Klil became a member of the Model United Nations at Haifa University (HaiMUN).

Community service has always been an indispensable part of her life. She had the privilege of participating in the National Volunteer Service at "Bina" (The Jewish Movement for Social Change), serving in the IDF as a teacher and supervisor instructor for groups of teenagers whose parents suffer from drug abuse, and working as an instructor for children from low socio-economic status and refugee families in Israel at 'Bialik-Rogozin School' in Tel-Aviv. Over the last 3 years Klil has been working in a non-profit organization as the producer of a music festival which connects Jewish music students from Israel, with Arab students from Palestinian autonomous areas and east Jerusalem. Klil aspires to raise compassion between people and to progress toward a more equal and diverse society. She would like to pursue an MA in International Affairs and International Development Policy, after her expected graduation in summer 2020.

