



Refugee family in Goz Amer camp, Chad. © UNHCR/H. Caux

World Refugee Day - June 20

Government thugs are scouring the cities and rural areas carrying out the decree that all children two years old and younger be killed. A father plans his family's escape to Egypt as the mother gathers a few belongings for the journey. Their son, Jesus, sleeps as Joseph thinks of the difficulties they will encounter in another country and wonders when they will be able to return home.

Scenes like this one have been repeated countless times throughout history and are being repeated today.

June 20 is World Refugee Day, a day to remember that millions in our world do not have a home. Home is that location that provides a sense of belonging, offers a sense of security and helps define the sense of family. On this World Refugee Day, more than 12 million refugees have no place to call home. Countless families are separated and wondering when they may return home or find a new home where they can be whole again and be free from the persecution and violence that forced them to run in the first place.

What is a Refugee?

A refugee is a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

Defined at the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees

Refugee Facts

Number of refugees: 12 million

People forcibly displaced within their own countries: 24 million

Continent with the largest number of refugees: Asia

Refugees resettled in the U.S. in 2004: 52,838

Church World Service

The Church World Service (CWS) Immigration and Refugee Program and its member churches provide help and homes to refugees. Each year, CWS resettles about 5,000 refugees in the United States, with congregations and affiliate resettlement offices providing services locally. In 2004, CWS offices in Accra and Nairobi processed the cases of 23,000 African refugees for U.S. resettlement. In Tanzania, refugee youth are receiving a high school education because of CWS. In Afghanistan, CWS provides health services to refugees returning home.

As the refugees Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were one day able to return to Nazareth, let each of us work to bring people back to their homes, reunite children with their parents, and make families whole again. For more information, contact your denomination's refugee office or Church World Service.



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROGRAM
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