

## World Refugee Day 2021



The Universal Esperanto Association ([UEA](#)) greets the United Nations, the UN high Commission on Refugees, and especially all refugees themselves, on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2021. This day honours the strength and courage of refugees and those who assist them, and aims to raise public awareness and support for those people who have been forced to flee from their homes because of conflict, persecution, and natural disasters.

A recent UN communication explains that the number of people driven from their homes by violence, war or human rights violations reached 82.4 million in the year 2020 – 4% more than in 2019. Between 2018 and 2020, nearly one million children were born as refugees. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, over one percent of humanity is now forcibly displaced.

The topic of this year's Refugee Day is *Together we Heal, Learn, and Shine*. The topic emphasizes the need for refugees to reach public health, educational and recreational services. We grow healthy together when we all receive the needed care. When we learn together, we create a stronger community. We shine when we play together as a team. And inclusion will make possible a better recovery after COVID-19.

The language dimension is crucially important. What languages must refugees use to access these services? This is no easy question, because we must respect the origins of refugees, help them to adapt to new circumstances, and support the widest and richest education possible. Refugees often do not understand, or misunderstand, life-saving information and are incapable of communicating to ask for help. They suffer, for example, a language handicap or lack of confidence, and they must confront many obstacles with respect to language.

People gain access to human rights through language. Thus, respect for someone's language is respect for that person. In the face of this truth, the Esperanto movement supports linguistic justice in every type of communication, and proposes Esperanto as one effective way among many. Esperanto can help both refugees and hosts as an instrument of understanding and cultural dialogue.

Esperanto speakers throughout the world participate in activities to help refugees, among them the translation of vital information, and the teaching of local languages and of Esperanto. One good example, among many, is a series of websites that teach languages and offer useful information about ways of life and employment in [Germany](#), [Austria](#), [Slovakia](#), [Russia](#) and the [Czech Republic](#), in many languages, including Esperanto.

Two months ago, our Association was among those who sponsored a virtual symposium on Language and Migration. The Symposium, whose speakers included authors Viet Thanh Nguyen and Jhimpa Lahiri, brought together over 1000 people from some fifty countries to discuss, among other topics, language services, multilingual education, and the linguistic human rights of refugees

Through these and other initiatives, the Universal Esperanto Association invites everyone to inform themselves about the situation of refugees and displaced persons within their boundaries, insist that their governments acknowledge the rights of these individuals, and themselves do what they can to alleviate their suffering, advance their opportunities, and restore their dignity. Only together can we build a good, healthy, strong, secure, and shining world.