

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 07:00 GMT 29 SEPTEMBER 2021**

## **Statement by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi announcing the laureate of the 2021 Nansen Refugee Award**

GENEVA, 29 SEPTEMBER 2021 - I am pleased to announce the winner of the 2021 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award: the Jeel Albena Association for Humanitarian Development, a Yemeni humanitarian organization that has provided crucial support to tens of thousands of people caught up in the country's conflict.

Every year, the Nansen prize recognizes a person or group that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help displaced or stateless people. Jeel Albena does this in an extraordinary way helping people on all sides of Yemen's conflict. Its staff and volunteers have stayed put, working quietly on the ground throughout the conflict, in the face of the harshest adversity, at a time when many others have left.

Their courageous work – often near active frontlines – has included constructing 18,000 emergency shelters for internally displaced people and their host communities. Their work has also allowed thousands to make a living and a means to restore dignity.

Jeel Albena's motto is: "By Yemenis, for Yemenis" and this exemplifies its spirit of local community action. Always, they seek solutions together with the communities where they are active.

The organization's founder, Ameen Jubran, will collect the award on behalf of the organization. Mr. Jubran first started working with displaced people while he was at university and he has never stopped. He was nearly killed in the conflict and he, and many of his team, have experienced displacement first-hand. But he did not give up. In fact, he says the experience of being forced to flee his home only increased his determination – in the true spirit of Nansen.

The award to Jeel Albena puts a much-needed spotlight on Yemen, a country where the suffering faced by civilians does not receive the attention it deserves. Four million people have fled their homes in order to find safety. The human cost of that is enormous. Eighty percent of those people have been displaced for more than a year, which, of course, strains their capacity to cope as well as that of their hosts.

But it's not just about Jeel Albena. The award also highlights the extraordinary work done by many local NGOs on the ground in Yemen.

Jeel Albena is a worthy winner the Nansen Refugee Award, which is not only given by UNHCR, but by a committee led by the Governments of Norway and Switzerland. It is my profound hope this award draws international attention to Yemen and that Jeel Albena's extraordinary work will inspire more action for the people there who have suffered. Jeel Albena – thank you and congratulations!

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