

*\*Check against delivery*

72th Anniversary of the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI)

Remarks by UNHCR Representative Thomas Vargas

Bua District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia

Sunday, 17 September 2017

---

Your Excellency, Bapak H. Syahrul Yasin Limpo, Governor of South Sulawesi,  
Bapak Ichsan Yasin Limpo, Head of the Indonesian Red Cross for South Sulawesi,  
Bapak Bupati of Luwu Regency,  
Para Sahabat dan Relawan PMI,

It is a pleasure to be here today to help celebrate your 72 Anniversary,

SELAMAT ULANG TAHUN!

I am so honored to be here today with my friend Bapak Ichsan, and also to have the pleasure to meet Bapak Gubernur and Bupati in this beautiful spot of Luwu regency.

I am honored to be here with you for two additional reasons:

First,

PMI Represents all that is good about humanity. You volunteer and give of yourselves to help all people in need. People who become vulnerable or **less fortunate** because of **unfortunate circumstances**. You help them like brothers and

sisters, no matter where they come from, no matter the language they speak, or the color of their skin.

All of us at UNHCR share your great humanitarian spirit. We share the same principles of humanity, impartiality and non-discrimination.

Second,

Since 2015, PMI has partnered with UNHCR throughout the country and here in Sulawesi Selatan, having signed an agreement to work together to help refugees. PMI here under the great leadership of Bapak Ichsan has established several programs to help prepare refugees for the future and to promote understanding and harmony with host communities. For example, through a PMI vocational training program, young refugees have learned how to be a chef in a restaurant. In another PMI project, refugees were given nursing training. These programs teach refugees skills that they will be able to use later when they are in a position to look for a job and they also provide refugees with hope for a better future.

Through the years PMI has demonstrated many other ways it has helped refugees. A major example was during the 2015 Andaman Sea crisis, in which some 1,000 Rohingya, as well as a large group from Bangladesh, were rescued from boats off the coast of Aceh and brought to safety by the local community there. Having spent

many days without water and food, they all had very urgent medical and other emergency needs that had to be addressed. PMI was among the first agencies there on the spot to provide this emergency care.

This is why I am so pleased to be able to re-affirm our joint collaboration with PMI South Sulawesi today by symbolically signing a new copy of our Memorandum of Understanding with Bapak Ichsan shortly.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Bapak Gubernur, and all the people of Sulawesi Selatan for your generous hospitality and for all you do to help refugees. The Province has hosted refugees for several years now and we look forward to your continued generosity towards protecting refugees in the future.

In closing, let me again salute PMI for all the good work you do here. All of you standing here today— volunteers genuinely helping those in need-- are true humanitarians!

Thank you



UNHCR Representative Thomas Vargas (*left*) with Head of the Indonesian Red Cross for South Sulawesi Ihsan Yasin Limpo.

Photo courtesy of UNHCR/Y. Tamaela