

Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini in Darashakran camp for Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



Support *Celebrity*

UNHCR's goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters help deliver key advocacy and fundraising initiatives. Their engagement and presence amplify messages about refugees and help to access audiences that UNHCR might otherwise not reach.

When the world's attention might be focused elsewhere, they shine a light on critical situations. And importantly, they tell the human story. They bring to the forefront the stories of individual refugees behind the numbers.

With displacement levels at their highest in UNHCR's history, and multiple emergencies challenging capacity across the globe, the contributions of these supporters are vital. ●●●

Goodwill ambassadors and other high-profile supporters undertake a range of activities for UNHCR to support advocacy, awareness-raising and fundraising efforts. In 2015, these will include field missions, media initiatives, filmed messages, social media activity and attendance at public events. Their voices, influence, creative abilities and audience reach will thus greatly benefit the refugee cause.

UNHCR goodwill ambassadors are appointed on the basis of their proven interest and commitment to refugees. Their work is grounded in experience gained through field missions and engagement with refugees and staff. This insight lends credibility and authority to their support. Some, such as Khaled Hosseini and Alek Wek, also have personal experience of displacement, bringing another dimension to their testimonies.

Goodwill ambassadors have responded to the mounting

displacement crises in 2014, working harder than ever to raise awareness of the needs, and of UNHCR's leadership role in humanitarian emergencies.

They were joined by an increasingly active family of high-profile supporters including writers Neil Gaiman and Henning Mankell, actors Kat Graham and David Morrissey, fashion designer Georgina Chapman, musicians Juanes, Rokia Traoré and Maher Zain, and TV personalities Chermarn Boonyasak and Jung Woo-Sung. Behind them stands a growing group of talent willing to add their voices to major UNHCR campaigns via their social media channels.

With mounting humanitarian needs anticipated in 2015, UNHCR will seek to appoint new goodwill ambassadors from its family of supporters. It will also continue to invest in recruiting new advocates, including those who appeal to audiences in the United States.

● Extending public focus on the human dimension of displacement

Goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters have recognized the overwhelming scale and seriousness of the Syria situation – now the largest displacement crisis in UNHCR's history – and responded with energy, commitment and creativity.

Throughout the year, goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters have stimulated strong interest in the Syria emergency via their active social media messaging and digital initiatives. This has brought the plight of the displaced and the work of UNHCR to a

global audience of millions, while also highlighting the outstanding generosity of neighbouring host nations.

Khaled Hosseini's mission to meet Syrian refugees in northern Iraq generated extensive media coverage across numerous countries, including an OpEd in the New York Times and major features in a range of publications and broadcast channels including Al Jazeera, BBC, The Guardian, The Independent, Newsweek and La Repubblica. Hosseini brought the human face of displacement to life in interviews and discussions during his book tour for *And the Mountains Echoed*, as well as via social media and personal video messages.

Three missions to Lebanon enabled the Goodwill Ambassador for China, Yao Chen, Uruguayan Goodwill Ambassador Osvaldo Laport and Supporter Maher Zain to highlight to a wide geographic audience the plight of Syrian refugees displaced by conflict and the hospitality of the Lebanese people. Zain's social media activity generated tens of thousands of visits and video viewings, and his social media posts garnered over 1.5 million "likes". He was one of the biggest drivers of traffic to UNHCR's website for over a month.

Through their respective missions to Jordan, actors Kat Graham and David Morrissey reported on the impact of war on Syrian families, bringing human stories to new

audiences via American and British television, digital and print media respectively. Writer Neil Gaiman, designer Georgina Chapman and Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein also visited Jordan (see extract from The Guardian article *So many ways to die in Syria now*) and the resultant media and social media coverage reached a combined potential audience of over 600 million people.

The Spanish Goodwill Ambassador, Jesús Vázquez, has actively supported UNHCR fundraising actions and appeals for the Syria emergency operation through the social media, where he has over 800,000 followers.

This work will continue in 2015, as UNHCR continues its operations for Syria's displaced populations.

Celebrities have also helped spread the message about many other humanitarian emergencies. Support for UNHCR's operations following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 came from celebrities such as Yoko Ono, Maroon 5, Paul Abdul and Dido. The displacement crisis that erupted in northern Iraq in the summer of 2014 came on top of emergencies in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, and high-profile voices encouraged new audiences to engage with the issues.

In 2015, goodwill ambassadors and supporters will be standing ready to respond to UNHCR's calls for action, in support of its work throughout the world.

● On the side of people



UNHCR / J. MATAS

Neil Gaiman in Azraq refugee camp, Jordan.

In an article in *The Guardian* published on 22 May 2014, Neil Gaiman recalled his impressions during a visit to meet Syrian refugees in camps in Jordan. The following is an extract from the article *So many ways to die in Syria now*:

... Everyone I talk to in the camps has a nightmare story: they stayed in Syria, going through hell, until they could take no more, and then the journey to the border, with whatever they could carry, normally just a change of clothes for the children, would be a journey across hell. They put their lives at risk, and if they arrived at the border alive, it was worth it.

... I realise I have stopped thinking about political divides, about freedom fighters or terrorists, about dictators and armies. I am thinking only of the fragility of civilisation. The lives the refugees had were our lives: they owned corner shops and sold cars, they farmed or worked in factories or owned factories or sold insurance. None of them expected to be running for their lives, leaving everything they had because they had nothing to come back to, making smuggled border crossings, walking past the dismembered corpses of other people who had tried to make the crossing but had been caught or been betrayed.

I keep going, talking to the refugees, to the people who run the camps and care for the refugees, and then, after accompanying Ayman, a Syrian volunteer nurse on his rounds, as he changes the dressings on a youth whose foot was blown off by a landmine and an 11-year-old girl who lost half her jaw in a mortar attack that killed her father, I realise I can't think straight. All I want to do is cry. I think it is just me, but Sam, the cameraman, is crying too.

I imagine the world dividing into the people who want to feed their children, and the ones shooting at them. It is probably just an artificial divide but UNHCR is on the side of the people who want to feed their children, on the side of human dignity and respect, and it is rare that you know you have picked the right side. You are on the side of people. ■

UNHCR campaigns and events make ever bigger news

World Refugee Day is always a major focus of activity for UNHCR's celebrity advocates.

2014 saw record-breaking levels of high-profile support from around the world: 38 public service announcements, 24 story-telling videos. It included contributions from Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai; actors Chermarn Boonyasak, Kristin Davis, Romola Garai, Diane Kruger and Emma Thompson; film director Wes Anderson; the American cast of *The Vampire Diaries*; writers Esther Freud, Neil Gaiman, AA Gill, Khaled Hosseini, Judith Kerr, Marina Lewycka, Henning Mankell and Mario Vargas Llosa; football stars Saido Berahino, John Obi Mikel and James Rodriguez; musicians Juanes, Chantal Kreviazuk, Aidos Sagat, Rokia Traoré and Maher Zain; and European TV presenters Giorgia, Alkinoos Ioannidis and Grazyna Torbicka.

From a massive screen in Times Square, to cinemas in Colombia, from TV stations across China, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, to events in Paris, Seoul and Bangkok - the World Refugee Day message that "even one family torn apart is one too many" reached a vast and diverse audience. This was reinforced by a celebrity social media campaign

with an audience reach of over 182 million. Those who posted social media messages for World Refugee Day included Judd Apatow, Paulo Coelho, Mo Farah, Stephen Fry, Luol Deng, Simon Le Bon, Annie Lennox, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Ed Norton, Simon Pegg and Shonda Rhimes.

For World Refugee Day 2015, UNHCR will be seeking similar levels of celebrity support worldwide.

The 2014 **Nansen Refugee Award** ceremony featured captivating performances from Mexican guitar duo Gabriela y Rodrigo, Malian singer Rokia Traoré, and Lebanese-Swedish performer Maher Zain, as well as a keynote address by Special Envoy Angelina Jolie. Zain penned a song especially for the event, inspired by his recent mission to the field to witness UNHCR's work and meet with refugees. Having premiered it at the ceremony, he shared the song via his social media channels, helping to draw his many fans closer to the compelling situation of refugees. Paying tribute to the 2014 laureate, a range of celebrities, including Kristin Davis, Stephen Fry, Juanes, Annie Lennox, and Puerto Rican band Calle 13, issued messages of congratulations.

In September 2015, acclaimed musicians will once again travel to Geneva to participate in this important event, which honours outstanding service to refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Their music, integrated throughout the ceremony, will again form part of the broadcast that will be viewed in millions of homes worldwide.

In the run up to the launch of UNHCR's 10-year Campaign to End Statelessness (see chapter *Ending Statelessness*), Honorary Lifetime Goodwill Ambassador Barbara

Hendricks travelled to Côte D'Ivoire to witness and talk about the impact of statelessness on individuals. She subsequently advocated on the issue via European media, and at the Global Forum on Statelessness in The Hague in September 2014. Writer AA Gill also spoke at this meeting, having witnessed and written about statelessness following a mission to Bangladesh.

Goodwill ambassadors' involvement in the campaign will continue in 2015, including further meetings with stateless people and resultant media and advocacy work.

Raising the level of global engagement

From hard news to softer communications, from print to digital, UNHCR's supporters have – and will continue – to challenge audiences to engage with the refugee experience. The insightful and moving writing of Khaled Hosseini and of Neil Gaiman have garnered extensive media reach through articles in the New York Times, The Guardian and through broadcast channels including CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. Goodwill Ambassador Alek Wek uses her personal experience of displacement to raise awareness for the cause, most recently via CNN Impact, HuffPost Live, Al Jazeera America and Marie Claire. China's Goodwill Ambassador Yao Chen has extensive social media reach (over 70 million

followers on Weibo) enabling her to introduce the refugee story to a mass audience.

2015 will see continued media outreach by high-profile supporters, while exploring new avenues to tell the refugee story in creative and engaging ways.

Field missions will form an important part of the goodwill ambassador and supporter work in 2015, with missions taking place to a range of countries hosting refugees and displaced people, generating media and digital coverage and helping build new support. UNHCR is deeply grateful to these supporters who generously give their time, and help fund refugee protection and assistance via their own foundations and activities. ■

Chinese star Yao Chen turns cameras onto Syrian refugees in Lebanon

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

21 MAY 2014

TYRE, May 2014 | *At home in China she is a film star, but on her three-day visit to Lebanon, Yao Chen is turning the cameras round to capture the suffering of Syrian refugees and help spread awareness about their plight.*



UNHCR/A. MCCONNELL

Chinese actress Yao Shen meets Syrian refugees at a collective shelter in Tyre, Lebanon

On Tuesday, the UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador spent a day with some of those who have fled bombing and destruction in northern Syria and found shelter in the settlement of Ras el-Ein, near the southern Lebanese city of Tyre. Here, families crowd into makeshift tents or ramshackle apartment blocks without running water.

Chen, 34, is making a documentary about the experience that she will post on her Weibo account – China's version of Twitter. She hopes to remind her 68 million followers about those who have lost everything in the struggle to escape war.

"My job is to pass the message," she told UNHCR staff. "I don't know about other countries, but in China, people living in peacetime only have a vague idea of what it means to be a refugee."

More than 330 refugees live in Ras el-Ein, where many of the young men and women

wake up before dawn each day to look for work in the nearby banana plantations and vegetable fields. Those who are hired make US\$5-US\$7 per day.

The Chinese superstar sat with Ibrahim, 41, and his wife Shams, 31, along with their five children in their small apartment. Shams, a housewife who used to make wall decorations for a living, now decorates her home in Lebanon with plastic flowers made from old garbage bags.

Chen asked each of Ibrahim and Sham's children what they aspired to be. Amal, 11 and first in her class at a school for refugees, hopes to be a teacher. Mohammed, 16, is learning to be a car mechanic.

Chen, who wraps up her Lebanon visit later today, said she felt a special duty to seek out refugee children. "I want to let them know they are not alone, there are people who love them," she said. ○