

THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY COMMEMORATIONS, 20 JUNE 2022 IN KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP AND KALOBYEI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT



A refugee artist

21st June 2022

Summary

- ❖ This year's theme for the event was: *"Right to Seek Safety—whenever they are, wherever they come from and whenever they are forced to flee"*.
- ❖ Recent efforts include the installation of fiber optic cable that runs all the way across the border. *"It is a good effort but a huge burden to the government and the people of Kenya"*.
- ❖ Kenya is currently providing refuge to **550,817 refugees** a large majority of whom originate from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region.
- ❖ CRRF was to provide for a well-coordinated and predictable Government-led response to refugee issues as well as to address the needs of the host communities in refugee programs.

By Stanley Nyale

The World Refugee Day is marked on 20 June every year to recognize the resilience of persons displaced from their habitual residences by violent conflict, fear of persecution and other occurrences disturbing peace. The day is also meant to recognize the efforts of different stakeholders serving refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya. This year's theme for the event was: **“Right to Seek Safety—whenever they are, wherever they come from and whenever they are forced to flee”**. The main event for this year was held on 20 June 2022 at Kalobeyei refugee settlement in Kakuma Sub County.

Some of the dignitaries who attended the event include the UNHCR Country Representative, the Commissioner for Refugees Affairs (CRA), the Turkana County Commissioner, and the Chief Administrative Secretary (CAS) in the [Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government](#). The CAS represented the Cabinet Secretary as the chief guest. Apart from the messages from the dignitaries, refugees entertained the crowd with traditional songs and dances as well as speeches from some of their own leaders.

Madam Caroline van Buren the [UNHCR Country Representative](#) and who was visiting the camp for the first time since she assumed the office this year thanked the Kenya government for generously hosting refugees in the country for many decades. In light of these efforts, she promised full support to the government in continuing to carry out its mandate.

The [Commissioner for Refugee Affairs Mr. Katee Mwanza](#) was also visiting the camp for the first time since taking over on 24 March 2022. “Being a refugee does not mean loss of your culture. The traditional songs and dances by refugees today have shown us exactly that”, He said. He went on to thank the County government of Turkana for providing land for hosting refugees on behalf of Kenya. Lastly, he thanked the UNHCR for being in the frontline in helping the government to host refugees.

The representative of the County Government of Turkana echoed the need for understanding among communities. He said that most refugees were nomadic pastoralists who cross into Turkana County from their countries of origin. This trend also happens among the Turkanas who cross over to the other side in search of water and pasture for their animals. Therefore, this basically mean that they are the same people as the Turkanas. He however noted that there was urgent need to address imbalances between the host communities and refugees to address the needs of both communities adequately.

On the other hand, Mr. Wambua the County Commissioner of Turkana County detailed the government efforts in installing communication masts that benefit both refugees and host communities. Recent efforts include the installation of fiber optic cable that runs all the way across the border. "It is a good effort but a huge burden to the government and the people of Kenya".

In regard to crime he regretted the illicit business going on in Kakuma 1 including selling of illicit brews sourced from outside the country, criminal gangs some of whom are form four livers who have not yet secured jobs after school. "Another security issue is that of unregistered clinics that help some people to perform abortions illegally and it should stop immediately" he said. Unregistered motorbikes owned by refugees and which are operating in the refugee camps are sometimes used to conduct criminal activities. To avoid arrest, he urged all refugees to take advantage of the ongoing government registration process of motorbikes. Otherwise, he assured everyone that the county is secure and everyone should be free to visit places such as Lake Turkana and others for sightseeing.

The guest of honor, CAS in the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government madam Winnie Guchu graced the occasion on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary Dr. Fred Matiangi. She said that refugees teach us the

importance of living in harmony despite our diversity. She also hailed the county government for availing land to settle refugees.

Concerning the agencies working for refugees, she said that a lot of help is also needed among the host communities. He urged UNHCR and other partners to expand their programmes and decongest the refugee camps.

While reading the speech from the CS, she said that Kenya is currently providing refuge to 550,817 refugees a large majority of whom originate from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region.

She assured everyone that Kenya is still committed to receive and protect refugees from the dangers they faced in their countries of origin. This is the reason the government reviewed the law relating to refugees hence culminating to the new [Refugee Act 2021](#). The Act seeks to provide better ways to support refugees and asylum seekers in the country.

Another significant area of success she said was the formulation of the [Kenya Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#) with the aim to implement the New York Declaration of 2016 and the Global Compact for Refugees of 2018. She quipped that CRRF was to provide for a well-coordinated and predictable Government-led response to refugee issues as well as to address the needs of the host communities in refugee programs.

She said Kenya will continue with efforts to engage with the governments in the region to address the various conflicts which have led to forced displacement and the incidence of refugees in the region. She urged the International Community to support government efforts in providing durable solutions for refugees and host communities in the country.

“Meanwhile as we continue seeking durable solutions, the Government of Kenya will continue to undertake reception, registration, protection of refugees. We hope to facilitate the integration and voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin or resettlement them to third countries” she said.

Lastly, she asked refugees to abide by the Laws of Kenya and to live peacefully among themselves and their host communities adding that no criminal acts or violent conflicts will be entertained among refugees.