Dear Friends,

The year 2020 was unlike any we’ve experienced in our lifetimes. The onset of the novel coronavirus posed an enormous health and safety risk for the more than 80 million people worldwide displaced by conflict and persecution, as well as millions more forced from their homes due to disaster caused by natural hazards.

While the pandemic required that we at Refugees International work remotely, COVID-19’s impacts on displaced communities only underscored the importance of our advocacy for and with displaced people worldwide.

During the year, we expanded investments in local partnerships, identifying the needs of the displaced amid the pandemic, creating solutions, mobilizing coalitions, and advocating for change in the virtual policy environment.

To be sure, we continued to pursue objectives that have defined our work over four decades: exposing atrocities, raising the alarm on under-reported crises, advocating for the displaced in armed conflict, confronting climate displacement, championing the rights of women and girls, and promoting sustainable solutions for the displaced. But we did so in a particular context defined largely by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fact, the scale and speed of the pandemic underscored how deeply interconnected the world’s populations have become. As we wrote in a March 2020 report on COVID-19 and the world’s displaced populations, “A virus does not respect borders. Nor does it discriminate. A truly effective response, not to mention a morally correct one, also must not discriminate.”

Refugees International has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure that displaced people are not left behind in the response to the coronavirus, to push for equity in vaccine access, to promote responses to humanitarian needs exacerbated by COVID-19, to defend refugee rights that have been put in greater peril by official actions during the pandemic, to listen to displaced people about their needs, and to hold leaders to account.

During this exceptionally challenging year, our work would not have been possible without your steadfast support. We offer our most sincere thanks.

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance, human rights, and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises around the world. We do not accept any government or UN funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of our work.

Investigate displacement crises
Create policy solutions
Advocate for change

Eric P. Schwartz
President

Jeff Tindell
Board Co-Chair

Maureen White
Board Co-Chair
COVID-19 AND THE DISPLACED

A migrant family wearing handmade protective face masks stands next to their tent in the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece in March 2020. Photo Credit: Manolis Lagoutaris/AFP via Getty Images.
In early 2020, the world became gripped by a global public health emergency. And as the pandemic has spread, the world’s displaced people have faced greater risks and challenges.

The pandemic impacted displaced populations in a number of ways. Crowded urban and camp-like settings were ripe for the spread of the virus. Border closures limited access to asylum. Gender-based and intimate partner violence surged. Lockdowns and closures impacted supply chains and interrupted the delivery of food and other aid. Humanitarians scrambled to respond to climate-related disasters amid a complex operating environment. Powerful countries turned inward instead of partnering to confront global crises, and funding requirements remained unmet.

Refugees International spent most of 2020 sounding the alarm and charting a path forward on how policymakers, humanitarians, donor governments, and multilateral organizations must respond to the crisis to make sure the world’s forcibly displaced people are not left behind. Refugees International played a leading role in calling for financial and diplomatic support for the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) to the COVID-19 pandemic and for increased international humanitarian leadership. Our groundbreaking report at the outset of the pandemic, “COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies,” provided critical information to policymakers and the public as well as a guidepost for effective action. And throughout the year, Refugees International prepared a series of reports and issues briefs on the evolving humanitarian challenges that the pandemic has presented.

THE PANDEMIC AND REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS

As COVID-19 increased the vulnerabilities of displaced people around the world, displaced women and girls were among the most seriously affected.

Gender can determine access to economic stability, healthcare, information, and education, as well as increase vulnerability to violence, and affect overall quality of life. These disparities dramatically impact displaced communities, and this is compounded during a pandemic. Previous health emergencies—like the Ebola and Zika epidemics—have shown that gender matters.

Throughout 2020, Refugees International reported on a “shadow pandemic”—the increase of gender-based violence (GBV) amid lockdowns, limited access to sexual and reproductive services, and a lack of safety and sanitation for displaced women. Women and girls have also been left behind in the workplace and in the classroom.

In “Gender Matters: COVID-19’s Outsized Impact on Displaced Women and Girls,” Refugees International focused on the gendered implications of the pandemic. This was followed by reports on “Exacerbating the Other Epidemic: How COVID-19 is Increasing Violence against Displaced Women and Girls,” and “Critical Policy Advice for President-elect Biden: A Comprehensive Approach for Displaced Women and Girls.”

Our reporting provided important information and evidence to support our advocacy for bolstering the safety and security of displaced women and girls in humanitarian situations. In coalition with partners, Refugees International effectively pressed the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to increase its request for GBV-specific funding to $50 million in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Refugees International supported new legisla...
tion, including a Senate resolution recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls globally, which covered a wide range of disproportionate impacts women have faced throughout the pandemic.

As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be all-the-more important to make sure that refugee women and girls are not left behind. And Refugees International will continue to champion this cause.

COVID-19 AND CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT

Refugees International fought for solutions for those displaced by disasters resulting from natural hazards—hazards that are often caused or exacerbated by climate change.

The world is in a climate crisis. The earth is on track to warm to 3-4 degrees Celsius by 2050, and even a warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius would mean we will experience more frequent and extreme climate events and resource scarcity in the years to come. All of this will affect food security and livelihoods, and ultimately force more people to make the difficult decision to leave their homes.

The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-related disasters was a stark warning of a future of complex crises. Amid the pandemic, humanitarians responding to weather-related crises faced travel restrictions and disrupted supply chains. Affected people who lost their homes were often confined in crowded emergency shelters, increasing the risks around the spread of COVID-19. And much-needed humanitarian resources were stretched thin and diverted to the pandemic response.

Refugees International raised the alarm on these trends in two reports: “A New Vulnerability: COVID-19, Cyclone Amphan, Monsoon Flooding Collide in Bangladesh and India.” Our reporting and our advocacy highlighted important lessons learned from responses to these two cyclones, to hurricanes in Central America, and locust swarms and floods in East Africa. Beyond the relationship between COVID-19 and climate displacement, our enduring work on climate continued in 2020. Refugees International was encouraged that policymakers are beginning to respond more positively to advocacy for those displaced due to climate change. In 2020, the UN Refugee Agency both affirmed that climate change is a serious driver of displacement and revisited the question of legal protections for those at risk due to such forced movement. UNHCR identified and suggested a range of ways that national governments could expand protections for those at risk.

During the 2020-2021 presidential transition, Refugees International urged the Biden administration to take a series of important steps relating to protection, including resettlement, of those impacted by climate displacement. We were gratified when, on February 4, 2021, President Biden directed the U.S. National Security Advisor to report on additional measures the United States and other governments should be taking to address both prevention of displacement and resettlement of those who are forced from their homes. The directive, issued as part of a broader Executive Order on Refugee Admissions, requested a report from the National Security Advisor by August 2021, and, during the initial months of 2021, Refugees International was deeply engaged in efforts to inform this important product (which, as of September 2021, had yet to be issued).
COVID-19: ECONOMIC IMPACTS FOR THE DISPLACED

In 2020, lockdowns and other measures to mitigate the spread of the virus brought many economic activities around the world to a grinding halt, sparking a global recession.

As the pandemic risked pushing more people into extreme poverty around the world, the impact was compounded for millions of refugees and internally displaced people living in low- and middle-income countries.

Refugees in host countries were also seriously affected. Refugees International partnered with the Center for Global Development and the International Rescue Committee on research and reporting that showed that refugees were 60 percent more likely than host populations to work in sectors of the economy impacted most by COVID-19. This kind of information is critical for advocacy on behalf of assistance to refugees during the pandemic.

Refugees International has long advocated for the economic inclusion of refugees and forcibly displaced people in their host economies. But COVID-19 showed that efforts to include refugees in the labor market were even more urgent to improve economic outcomes, combat xenophobia, promote development, and build a labor force ready for recovery.

Using Colombia and Peru as case studies in 2020, Refugees International and the Center for Global Development made the strong case for integrating displaced populations into their economies. In early 2021, Colombia made a landmark decision to give temporary status and work permits to the 1.8 million displaced Venezuelans living in the country. Refugees International was encouraged when the government of Colombia cited the importance of this research in our decision-making.
“Refugees International’s advocacy reminds us of our shared humanity. Its enduring commitment to displaced people creates a world in which refugees may thrive—and maybe even someday become Secretary of State.”

– The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, 64th Secretary of State of the United States and refugee
Beyond Covid-19: Enduring Reporting and Advocacy Efforts

Rohingya woman fled from the Myanmar military’s operations in Rakhine state to cross the border into Bangladesh in October 2017. Photo Credit: Stringer/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images.
RAISING AWARENESS FOR ATROCITIES, UNDERSHOT REPORTED CRISES, AND CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Alongside our COVID-19 research, we have remained laser-focused on calling attention to atrocities and human rights abuses; elevating crises that remain hidden from headlines and offering solutions to policymakers; and advocating for civilians displaced by armed conflict.

Call It Genocide: Act for the Rohingya

In 2020, we created the campaign, Call It Genocide, to make a concerted push to re-energize the policy debate and address displacement of the Rohingya from Myanmar and violations of their human rights. On August 25, 2017, the Myanmar military waged genocidal attacks on the Rohingya that led to thousands of deaths, mass rape, and massive forced displacement. Now, nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees remain displaced in camps in Bangladesh, and 600,000 more face the threat of further atrocities inside Myanmar.

Prominent legal experts, human rights organizations, faith organizations, members of Congress, celebrities, and Rohingya activists joined our campaign to use the word that fits the crime. We delivered a 9,000 signature petition to then U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo, urging him to call it genocide. Refugees International President Eric Schwartz brought the call for a genocide determination to Capitol Hill in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. And in 2020 letters to both major U.S. presidential campaigns, Refugees International urged both Vice President Biden and President Trump to speak out on this issue.

Refugees International will continue to press for accountability on this critical issue.

Sahel

The Sahel has always suffered from intermittent attention from the media and limited support from the international community. Humanitarian and displacement crises have trended from bad to worse as need grows. In “It’s Time to Change How We’re Supporting the Countries of the Sahel,” Refugees International urged international donors to double down in support of countries in the Sahel. (This followed our COVID-19 related report on the Sahel, “Mounting Hunger in the Sahel: The Unintended Impact of COVID-19 Prevention.”) In that report, Refugees International explored an unintended consequence of the effort to contain COVID-19 in the region—worsening food insecurity in a part of Africa already reeling from immense resource scarcity, violence, and humanitarian need—as well as options for improving the response.

Tigray, Ethiopia

Tigray, the northern region of Ethiopia, erupted in violence in November 2020, where warring parties have committed horrific crimes. Millions of people are facing widespread displacement, atrocities, rights violations—and a man-made famine. Amid reports of atrocities, tens of thousands of Ethiopians crossed the border into Sudan, a country that is not well-equipped to meet their needs. In late 2020 and early 2021, Refugees International published two reports, “Caught in the Crossfire: Averting Further Humanitarian Disaster in Ethiopia” and “Time is Running Out: Urgent Action Needed to Address Humanitarian Crisis in Tigray” laying out urgent steps to halt this downward spiral, accelerate humanitarian aid delivery, and spur the world to end this needless suffering.
Lebanon

In Lebanon, an economic collapse in late 2019, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the tragic port explosion in Beirut in August 2020 have all converged to send the country toward a breaking point. In the report, “Doing No Harm in Lebanon: The Need for an Aid Paradigm Shift,” Refugees International argued that aid to Lebanon will only be effective if it evolves to avoid the mistakes of the past and finally confronts the country’s legacy of structural corruption. This is the only way forward to protect the most vulnerable among Lebanese citizens and refugees from the dire consequences of the humanitarian and health crises.

PROTECTING ASYLUM AT HOME AND ABROAD

Around the world and at the U.S. southern border, Refugees International has fought against serious efforts to undercut the right to seek asylum.

In the report, “Deportation with a Layover: Failure of Protection under the U.S.-Guatemala Asylum Cooperative Agreement,” Refugees International and Human Rights Watch scrutinized the implications of the U.S. violation of the right to seek asylum under the Asylum Cooperative Agreement (ACA) with Guatemala. This agreement allowed the United States to rapidly transfer non-Guatemalan asylum seekers to Guatemala without allowing them to lodge asylum claims in the United States. Guatemalan officials were unable to provide effective protection to deportees, who faced serious risks in Guatemala or after returning from Guatemala to their home countries. Refugees International also looked back at lessons learned from the last thirty years of border management and outlined policies that the incoming Biden administration could implement to more fairly and humanely manage asylum.

Refugees International also focused on the EU’s efforts to undermine access to asylum. In Spain, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged just as the country was grappling with another challenge: a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking refuge. In the report, “Reform Past Due: COVID-19 Magnifies Need to Improve Spain’s Asylum System,” Refugees International outlined steps that Spain, with support from the EU, had taken to protect forcibly displaced people who reach its borders and address shortcomings in its asylum system. Meanwhile, in Greece, authorities made a concerted effort to deny or undercut access to asylum to those seeking safety. The report, “Blocked at Every Pass: How Greece’s Policy of Exclusion Harms Asylum Seekers and Refugees” laid out a framework for how Greece and the EU could reverse course and fulfill its international commitments to asylum seekers and refugees.

CRITICAL POLICY ADVICE FOR THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

The Biden-Harris administration inherited immense damage wrought by the Trump administration’s policies toward refugees and displaced people both at home and abroad. On the campaign trail, President Biden made important commitments to reverse these policies, reestablish U.S. leadership and credibility, and dramatically improve the lives of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

Refugees International was deeply engaged in efforts to encourage the Biden transition team to make these commitments a reality. Across our portfolios, Refugees International offered expert policy advice and guidance to the Biden-Harris administration during the transition and within their first 100 days in office. These briefs outlined a path forward for how the administration should reimagine the U.S. asylum system, expand protections for displaced women and girls worldwide, craft policy toward our neighbors in Central America, respond to the Rohingya crisis, and tackle climate displacement.

Our reporting illuminated a path forward for how the administration can uphold the rights of displaced people and repair U.S. credibility abroad. Our advice was directly received at very senior levels, with strong expressions of commitment to move forward on key priorities addressed by Refugees International.
“A genocide determination by the U.S. can change our fate.”

– Rezuwan, Rohingya refugee living in Bangladesh, genocide survivor, and poet
Dr. Heval Kelli is a Syrian refugee and cardiologist living in Georgia. In addition to keeping the community that welcomed him healthy, Dr. Kelli has helped reach refugee communities in the United States and educate them about COVID-19. Photo Credit: Shaw Oz.
In September 2020, we were proud to launch The Refugee Advocacy Lab, a partner-driven initiative of Refugees International, the International Rescue Committee, the International Refugee Assistance Project, and Refugee Congress.

The mission of the Refugee Advocacy Lab is to grow the diverse constituency for U.S. leadership on refugee protection. The Lab supports the refugee advocacy community by developing and sharing strategic communications insights to mobilize diverse audiences, supporting inclusive policies at the state and national level, and developing strategic partnerships.

In 2020, the Lab and partners engaged in an effort to present stories of refugees and their contributions to their neighborhoods and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative has grown into the Refugee Storytellers Collective, a formal network of refugees and displaced people living in the United States who are sharing their lived experiences and who believe in the power of storytelling for social change.

By partnering with local networks, the Refugee Advocacy Lab has contributed to several state measures that promote refugee inclusion, including the creation of an Office of New Americans (ONA) in Virginia, legislation that enables internationally trained medical professionals to join the COVID-19 response in Colorado, a resolution adopted by the state legislature in Georgia which commended the contributions of the refugee community in the state, and the preservation of funding in Utah for local healthcare clinics to continue providing services to refugees and other vulnerable people.

“We need to talk about our rights as refugees and international doctors. We need to talk about a system that needs to be thoroughly changed.”

– Lubab Al-Quraishi, a Pathologist, Iraqi Refugee, and Refugee Congress Delegate
“[Refugees International’s] work in drawing the connections between climate change and humanitarian concerns is truly changing the conversation in the halls of Congress and beyond.”

– U.S. Senator Ed Markey
Given the unprecedented challenges of the past year, we are deeply grateful for your generous support that continued to inspire our advocacy on behalf of more than 80 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. As the devastating impact of COVID-19 threatened already vulnerable populations, you made it possible for us to strategically pivot our work, forging new partnerships with organizations on the ground, even as our travel was restricted.

As we do not accept any government or UN funding, you made it possible for us to continue our independent research and reporting. Your unwavering generosity bolstered our work at a critical point in time, as we continue to face the highest levels of displacement since these numbers have been recorded. Thank you for joining us in the fight to defend and protect the rights of the forcibly displaced around the world.

Lisa Cantu-Parks
Vice President of Philanthropy
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Artist and activist Ai Weiwei launched Ai Weiwei MASK, an art project in collaboration with eBay for Charity to raise funds for the COVID-19 humanitarian and human rights efforts undertaken by Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Refugees International. Refugees International is honored and humbled to be among the non-governmental organizations that Ai Weiwei has designated to receive funds from this noble initiative.
At Refugees International’s 18th Annual New York Circle, we honored former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright with the 2020 Richard C. Holbrooke Award and Nicolle Wallace, host of MSNBC’s “Deadline: White House,” who interviewed Secretary Albright.

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Joe Reeder
Johanna Schmitt

Refugees International’s Vice President for Programs and Policy Hardin Lang testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the humanitarian crisis in Idlib, Syria in March 2020. Photo Credit: Refugees International.
Refugees International and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum hosted a conversation with Rohingya refugees and activists, genocide and human rights experts, and celebrities alike about the Rohingya refugee crisis and why the United States needs to call Myanmar’s crimes genocide. From top left to bottom right: Refugees International’s Senior Advocate for Human Rights Daniel P. Sullivan, Actor Thomas Sadoski, Rohingya Activist and Refugee Yasmin Ullah, Actor Sam Waterston, and Rohingya Activist and former politician Wai Wai Nu.

You make the difference.

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises around the world. We do not accept any government or UN funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of our work. That is why your support is crucial. Your contribution helps shed light on unseen crises around the world and brings the untold experiences of refugees and displaced people to the halls of political power.

Please visit our website at www.refugeesinternational.org/#donate to submit your donation.

Together, we can create a more welcoming world.

Thank you.
### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

**SUPPORT AND REVENUE**

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**EXPENSES**

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**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS**

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets at Beginning of Year</td>
<td>3,667,120</td>
<td>5,821,326</td>
<td>5,405,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,821,326</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>5,405,228</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,093,322</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Includes $2,892,814 foundation grant funding (net of present value discount) that is a multi-year gift through 2021.

Editor’s Note: Please see the 2020 annual audit report on Refugees International’s website for details.

### JOIN US

#### JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Sign up for our newsletter at [www.refugeesinternational.org/newsletter-signup](http://www.refugeesinternational.org/newsletter-signup) or follow us on social media to learn how you can help us advocate for displaced people.

[Refugees Intl](https://www.instagram.com/RefugeesIntl)
[Refugees Intl](https://www.facebook.com/RefugeesIntl)

#### FUTURE GIFTS

Ensure lasting support for displaced people through a bequest to Refugees International.

Contact [lisa@refugeesinternational.org](mailto:lisa@refugeesinternational.org) for more information or to indicate that you have already included Refugees International in your estate plan.

#### DONATE

Give online at [www.refugeesinternational.org/#donate](http://www.refugeesinternational.org/#donate) or by mail to:

Refugees International
Attn: Lisa Cantu-Parks
PO Box 33036
Washington, DC 20033

Refugees International also accepts gifts in the form of stocks. For more information, please contact [development@refintl.org](mailto:development@refintl.org).

#### FUNDRAISE

Ask your friends and family to join the movement. Start your own fundraising campaign on Facebook or contact [donations@refintl.org](mailto:donations@refintl.org) to set up a personal fundraising page.

#### ATTEND OUR EVENTS

Stay tuned for upcoming events on our website: [www.refugeesinternational.org/events](http://www.refugeesinternational.org/events).
“From south central Somalia to Bangladesh to the U.S.-Mexico border and beyond, Refugees International advocacy has secured more humane and generous policies for the forcibly displaced, and pushed effectively against measures that would curb human rights and cause greater suffering among refugees around the world.”

– Thomas Pickering, former U.S. ambassador