

Gary Smith, SJ, worked for six years with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Sudanese refugee camps in Uganda. He currently ministers with JRS in South Africa.

## African Gem

Gary Smith, SJ

**i** can get down and circle depression at times. I suppose that is because of a diet that includes unresolved wars, government corruption, the death of children, niggling tropical illnesses, and periodic snafus in programs and personnel conflict. But there are good things as well, and the morning star trumps the dark star.

One example is Pamela. When I met her, she was fourteen. I spotted her as I came in from one of the villages. She was sitting in front of the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) offices in Adjumani, Uganda, among the waiting crowd of people, most of them students. She looked vaguely familiar. I came out of the office a few hours later, and she was still there, sitting under a huge mango tree that shadows the office. One of the staff had noticed her too and observed that she seemed abnormally passive, approaching no one. I went over to her.

“Do I know you?” I asked.

“Yes,” she responded. “I am called Pamela, and we met a few years ago when you worked in the Rhino Camp Refugee Resettlement. I was very small then, one of the dancers at Mass.”

“You are a long way from Rhino,” I said. “Why are you here, why the long wait?”

“I was told that JRS sponsors girls in the secondary schools of Adjumani. I have waited because I was fearing to talk to anyone.”

“And how did you get here?”

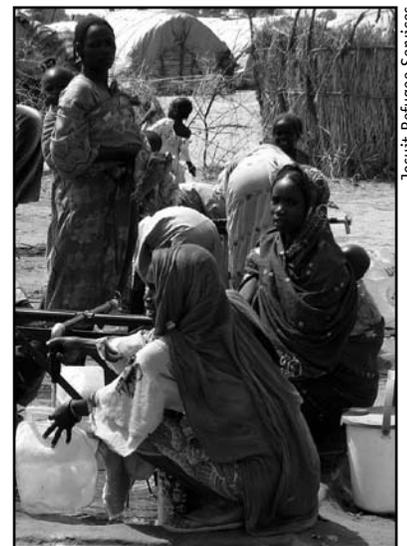
“I walked.”

Pamela left Rhino with one thousand Ugandan shillings (about fifty cents). Heading north, taking a shortcut along the west side of the Nile, Pamela came to the village of Lebongi at the end of her first day of walking. She was traveling in the dry season, so it was hot, and the dust clung to her like a fever. She had her dinner at Lebongi: a bag of peanuts that cost her one hundred shillings. People at the village borehole gave her some water to drink. She slept that night on a dirt floor in an open church. The next day, for eight hundred shillings, she secured a motorboat ride across the Nile.

On the second night, she slept again in a church, in a village called Maaji, an area infested with units of the Lord’s Resistance Army.

For her evening meal, Pamela spent her last one hundred shillings for a few bananas. On the third day, in mid-afternoon, she arrived at Adjumani, the last ma-

jor northern Uganda town on the east side of the Nile. She walked this day without food. When Pamela reached her destination, she rested under the shade of the mango tree.



African refugees gathering water.

Jesuit Refugee Services

She had nothing but a small book in a plastic bag and the clothes she wore. She had no money—not a shilling.

Her one clear desire was an education. She had finished primary school and wanted to attend secondary school. Students in Uganda must pay fees for each of the school year’s three terms. In the refugee settlements, each term costs about twenty thousand shillings, or about ten dollars. In expensive urban schools, yearly fees can be millions of shillings.

*continued on pg 3*

*Her one clear desire was an education.*



Dr. Anne Pitsch Santiago is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Portland. She has lived and worked in several African states, including Rwanda.

# Overview of Global Refugee Situation

Dr. Anne Pitsch Santiago

By the end of 2007, there were 6.5 billion people in the world.

- 16 million were refugees<sup>1</sup>
- 51 million were internally displaced persons (IDPs);<sup>2</sup>
- and at least 3 million were stateless people.

What defines a refugee, an IDP, or a stateless person and what accounts for this great number of at-risk people living in the world today?

## Refugees

Refugees flee because they fear. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>3</sup> A refugee differs from a migrant in that refugees flee because of fear of persecution whereas a migrant moves from one state to another in search of a better life.

The vast majority of refugees are fleeing violent conflict. Most are hosted by neighboring states and 80% remain in their region of origin. Religious and political persecution also create refugee flows, but on a smaller scale than violent conflict.

## Internally Displaced Persons

Like refugees, most Internally Displaced Persons flee because they fear harm to themselves if they stay in their home region. While refugees cross state borders when they flee, IDPS are displaced internally within a state. Conflict-driven IDPs are less likely than refugees to receive international assistance, because they remain close to the conflict zone. For example, in 2007 the UNHCR provided assistance to 13.7 million IDPs out of a total of 26 million who fled because of violent conflict. Those classified as natural disaster IDPs tend to be returned to their homes when it is deemed safe and prudent to do so.

*Refugees flee because they fear.*

## Stateless People

Finally, another category of “people of concern” globally is stateless people. The UNHCR counts 3 million people worldwide who are known to be stateless, but they fear the population is possibly as large as 12 million<sup>4</sup>. A stateless person is not considered to be a national by any state. That is, the state does not recognize the person or group of persons as citizens whether they reside within the state or not. Because of their status as “stateless” these people often have no rights at all. Some are also considered refugees.

## Caring for Refugees: The UNHCR and Others

The main global organization working with refugees, IDPs and stateless peoples is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Established in December 1950, its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees worldwide. Increasingly, the UNHCR has also become the main organization that safeguards the protection of IDPs.

Voluntary repatriation (that is return to the country of origin when safety of the refugees can be assured) is the solution which generally benefits the largest number of refugees. For every refugee who has been resettled since 1998, about 14 have repatriated.

In addition to the UNHCR, many non-governmental organizations, including Refugees International, the International Rescue Committee, the American Refugee Committee International, the US Committee for Refugees and



*Internally displaced persons camp in Afghanistan*

Immigrants and Catholic Charities assist refugees in various stages. Some work in refugee camps, some with repatriation, while others help the transition to living in third countries once they are accepted for resettlement.

## Seeking Asylum in the United States

An asylum applicant is a person who is seeking international protection and whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. It is important to understand that a person is a refugee from the moment he or she fulfills the criteria set out in the Refugee Convention. The formal recognition does not establish refugee status, but confirms it. Sometimes, because of conditions in the country of origin and the passage of time, the UNHCR determines that an entire group of refugees needs asylum in a third country as opposed to repatriation to their country of origin. The UNHCR then works with individual states to resettle the entire group of refugees. Over the past 25 years, 1.8 million refugees have been resettled in the United States.

In other cases, individual asylum seekers end up in third countries and seek asylum through the court system of these countries. Individual asylum seekers generally have the burden of proof in states in which they are seeking asylum and the legal process may take many years. European countries receive the largest number of asylum claims followed by African countries, then North and South American and Asian countries. In 2007, the total number of asylum claims received by the United States was estimated at 50,400 out of a global total of 548,000<sup>5</sup>. In 2007 approximately 45% of cases adjudicated worldwide resulted in the acceptance of the asylum application.<sup>6</sup> ~

1 Of these, UNHCR is responsible for 11.4 million refugees globally. Palestinian refugees, under a separate UN Mandate (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East-UNRWA), account for approximately 4.6 million refugees.



© Héctor Mauricio Moreno 2004

*A young Colombian family settles into their new home.*

2 Of these, 25 million are IDPs due to natural disasters while 26 million are IDPs due to violent conflict.

3 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, United Nations General Assembly

4 2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced, and Stateless Persons, UNHCR, June 2008, page 20.

5 Ibid. page 14.

6 Ibid. page 16.

### *“African Gem” from pg 1*

In addition to school fees, refugees must find money for food (the schools provide a simple lunch, but other meals are up to the student), mosquito nets, soap, a change of clothes, shoes, a portable mattress, writing paper, pens and a kerosene lamp. Girls have the additional expenses of feminine hygiene products. For most refugee students, because they are poor and frequently have lost immediate family, money is a constant struggle.

Eventually, Pamela was admitted to a local JRS-administered facility, Alere Secondary School. She paid her fees through the assistance of anonymous European donors who provide for such eventualities. My pastoral team was able to raise extra money to cover her material needs.

On the day that she received her admission papers, Pamela came to the JRS office to chat. She was beaming.

“Are you happy, Pamela?” I asked her.

“Yes, I am very happy.”

“Were you ever afraid of making the trip from Rhino alone?”

“Yes, often, but I knew that this is what I wanted to do, and I trusted in God.”

“But you are now in a new school where there are many strangers and many different tribes. Some kids will probably have more money than you.”

“Doesn’t matter. God has given me a chance. Those things are insignificant.”

In my carefree high school days, all I had to worry about was earning high grades in unchallenging classes and scoring points for the basketball team. It was nothing compared to Pamela’s struggle for an education. There are many

like her, African gems. Pamela’s story is just one story of a girl’s determination to climb the

mountain and cross to the other side rather than terminate the journey because of anticipated—and very real—hardships. ~

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*Pamela’s story is just one story of a girl’s determination*

# "Leave or Be Killed": Iraqi Refugees Five Years Later



Arlene Flaherty, OP is a Dominican Sister of Blauvelt. She works with Catholic Relief Services as Justice and Peace Partnerships Liaison.

Arlene Flaherty, OP

"One night, as I was working at my job in a factory near Baghdad, I looked up to see men planting explosive devices at the side of the road just outside the U.S. army barracks. I immediately reported it to the authorities. The next day, while I was at work, my wife was visited by members of a local militia with this warning: 'leave Iraq or be killed.' She fled first with the children. They lived on the streets of Damascus until I could join up with them. Now, we are here in Beirut. But, there is no future here. There is no work. My children are not in school. We cannot remain here and we cannot return to Iraq, it is too dangerous. We have no where to go."

As the young Iraqi father told me his story, I couldn't help but consider the cruelty of the option: "leave or be killed." Yet, this is the choice millions of Iraqis have to make every day since the war with the United States began in 2003. Like other Iraqi refugees, the

young family living in Beirut escaped death in their war-torn land only to find themselves living in limbo. As a snapshot of an ever-expanding humanitarian and moral crisis, this family's story highlights those realities with which Iraqis have to cope every day in exile; it is unsafe to re-

turn home, they cannot gain legal status or find work in neighboring lands, they are living in the fear

of being caught without proper documentation and they are running out of their savings and their options. With 2.8 million displaced within Iraq, and more than 2 million living without legal status in neighboring countries, Iraqis are the fastest-growing refugee population in the world.

Last year, I organized a delegation of women religious to Iraqi refugees living in Lebanon and Syria. As our sponsor, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), moved us from one family to another,

*... Iraqis are the fastest growing refugee population in the world.*

from UN officials to US Embassies, from local churches and mosques to NGOs, we saw the same common threads emerging from the tattered lives of other Iraqi families we visited. Because the countries to which they are fleeing have not signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, Iraqis are not officially recognized as "refugees" and therefore are not afforded the rights and protections they deserve. Traumatized by years of war, sanctions, and a harsh dictatorship, and with little access to healthcare and other services, they are now trapped in an unsustainable position.

Many Iraqi children are not able to attend school in the countries where they are temporarily

residing and some are working in dangerous situations to support their families. Iraqi women who are able to find day work are often underpaid, vulnerable to exploitation, and some are resorting to prostitution to buy food for their children.

Host countries such as Lebanon and Syria have experienced an enormous strain on their social and civil infrastructures as a result of the Iraqi influx. For example, rent prices in Syria have skyrocketed; food and oil prices have increased dramatically as well. The scope of the problem has caused many countries to close borders to Iraqis who are fleeing for their lives.

Applying for resettlement to other countries is a long and arduous process. As a nation with particular responsibilities for these casualties of war, the United States has been slow to process applications and less than generous in establishing resettlement quotas for Iraqis. In 2007, the U.S. promised 7,000 visas for Iraqi refugees, but only 1,608 were actually granted. This past year, with the support and advocacy of the faith community, the U.S. granted 12,000 visas. CRS and their partners are recommending that the U.S. grant at least 30,000 visas in 2009. However, given the scope of the problem, this is hardly an adequate response. Giving immediate and adequate attention to the crisis is not just a matter of compassion, it is a matter of justice. It is a matter of life and death. ~



Iraqi woman displaced by war.

© IOM 2003, Photo: Marc Petzold

© IOM 2003, Photo: Jeff Labovitz



Iraqi refugee children pose for camera

# My Story

Dr. Noah Salameh

**m**y name is Noah Salameh. My story is the story of 7 million Palestinian refugees.\*

I am from a village called Zakaria. It was depopulated in 1948 along with more than 400 other Palestinian villages in what had just become Israel. Today, there are no Palestinians left in Zakaria. Israelis live in the old houses.

Zakaria was a poor village. My father and my mother knew nothing about what was going on around them. Just before 1948, a massacre occurred in a nearby village, and my parents went hiding in the mountains. When they wanted to return to their village, they only found the army, telling them: "This is no longer your village; it is no longer your country. Go find another place." They ended up with their two

children in a refugee camp run by the UN close to Hebron. On the way, they had lost everything. The camp was called Al-Arroub and a few years later, I was born there in a tent. For the next 15 years we lived in the same tent, without water, without electricity, without anything.



*Al-Arroub Palestinian Refugee Camp*

Refugees are still living in Al-Arroub camp. It is surrounded by a military fence and only one gate allows the entry of the 10,000 Palestinians living on less than a

square kilometre. They are frequently subject to curfews, closures and military operations.

Like other refugees, I grew up dreaming of returning to my village. I am 56 years old now. Since I can think, I knew that I came from Zakaria, less than 30 kilometres from where I am living now. Nobody will ever take away our dreams of returning to our homes.

My story is the story of 7 million Palestinian refugees. We are waiting since 60 years. ~

*\*Editor's Note:* According to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, there are 4.6 million registered Palestinian refugees. By using the 7 million figure, Dr. Salameh is including the estimated number of unregistered Palestinian refugees.



Dr. Noah Salameh is the director of the Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, a Palestinian NGO committed to an alternative approach to conflict transformation.

## RESOURCES

### Websites

Catholic Relief Services  
[www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

Jesuit Refugee Service—USA  
[www.jrsusa.org](http://www.jrsusa.org)

Refugees International  
[www.refintl.org](http://www.refintl.org)

UN High Commission for Refugees  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

USCCB Migration and Refugee Services  
[www.usccb.org/mrs](http://www.usccb.org/mrs)

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
[www.refugeesusa.org](http://www.refugeesusa.org)

### Books

Kenney, David N. and Philip G. Schrag. *Asylum Denied: A Refugee's Struggle for Safety in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

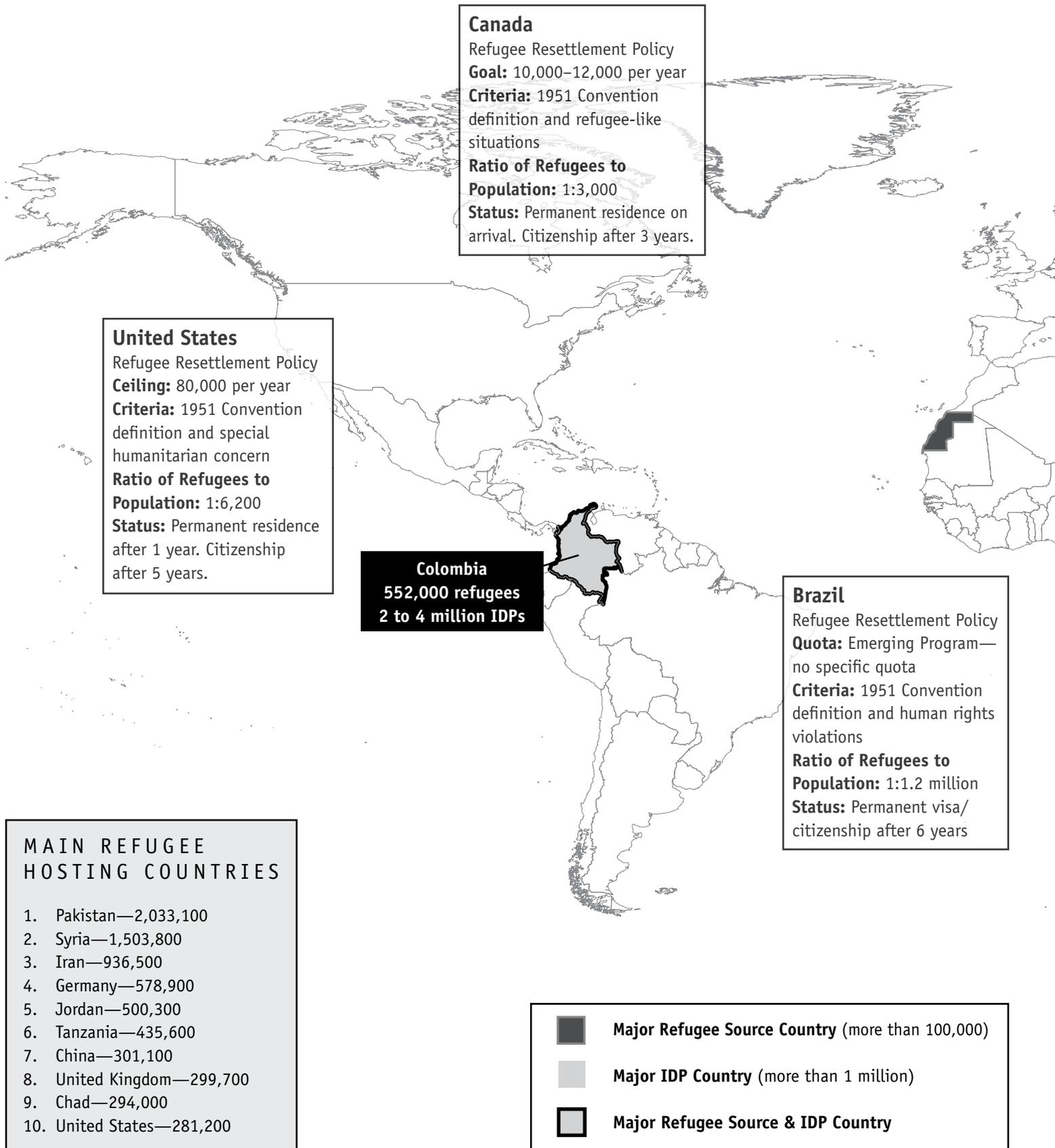
Smith, Gary. *They Come Back Singing: Finding God with the Refugees, An African Journal*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008.

### Video

*God Grew Tired of Us*, Sony Pictures, 2005  
A documentary about the "Lost Boys of Sudan" and their resettlement in the U.S.

*Iraqi Refugees-the Hidden Crisis*,  
<http://crs.org/iraq/refugees-hidden-crisis/>  
A 12 minute student documentary.

# Mapping Refugees & Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)



## GLOBAL TOTALS

16 million Refugees  
26 million conflict-generated IDPs  
+ 25 million natural disaster IDPs  
**67 million Refugees & IDPs**

### Sweden

Refugee Resettlement Policy

**Quota:** 1,840 per year

**Criteria:** 1951 Convention definition; torture; conflict or natural disaster; or gender based discrimination

**Ratio of Refugees to**

**Population:** 1:4,900

**Status:** Permanent residence on arrival. Citizenship after 5 years.

**Iraq**  
2.3 million refugees  
2.8 million IDPs

**Afghanistan**  
3.1 million refugees  
Over 200,000 IDPs

**Sudan**  
523,000 refugees  
6 million IDPs

**Somalia**  
457,000 refugees  
1.1 million IDPs

**Burundi**  
376,000 refugees  
100,000 IDPs

### Australia

Refugee Resettlement Policy

**Allocation:** 13,000 per year

**Criteria:** 1951 Convention definition; human rights violations; or humanitarian reasons

**Ratio of Refugees to**

**Population:** 1:2,000

**Status:** Permanent residence on arrival

Note: This map highlights the major sources of refugees and IDPs. The global totals include refugees and IDPs from more than 52 countries across the globe.

Sources: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, US Committee for Refugees & Immigrants.



Ken Gavin, S.J. has served as the National Director of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA for the past five years. For further information, visit [www.jrsusa.org](http://www.jrsusa.org).

## Accompanying Refugees—An Image of Church

Ken Gavin, SJ

Last year I met a man, James, and his family in the northern Tamil region of Sri Lanka. James spoke proudly of his family—of his daughters, his young grandchildren, and a son studying for the priesthood in a local diocese. But it was clear that his heart had been broken by Sri Lanka’s twenty-five year-old civil war. With sadness he described how five times in the last nine years he and his family had been forced to flee from one home to another. Most recently rebel troops had come through their village, demanding that every family “donate” a child—a boy or a girl—to serve in their armed militia. James quietly confided to me, “I could not give them one of my children and so, once again, we had to flee.”

There are more than 67 million refugees and displaced people in our world today—largely from impoverished countries—who have been forced by persecution, conflict or natural disasters to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries or within their own country. We can easily be overwhelmed by the enormous numbers of displaced people. Only when we get beyond statistics

*Today, too, God calls us to walk with, accompany, serve and defend...refugees...*

and walk with refugees in their losses and dreams can we begin to experience God inviting us to stand in solidarity and in justice with them.

In working with displaced peo-

ple, a sentence from the Charter of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) frequently rumbles through my head: “To accompany refugees is to affirm that God is present in human history, even in most tragic episodes.” This realization is deeply embedded in our Judeo-Christian experience. The wanderings of the patriarchs, the flight from oppressive Egypt, and the deportation of the northern tribes to Assyria all highlight a history of forced migration that shaped Israel’s self understanding. More importantly, the experience of displacement revealed to Israel a new understanding of God. Again and again, God enjoined on the people of Israel a covenantal obligation of caring for migrants and refugees:

“You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Lev. 19:33-34).

To be in relationship with God placed a demand on Israel to accompany displaced people.<sup>1</sup> Care for the vulnerable arose out of a profound experience of the abiding love, justice and compassion of the God who delivers migrants, exiles and displaced people (Deut. 10:17-18). Today, too, God calls us to walk with, accompany, serve and defend the rights of the many refugees—like those from Burma, Iraq, Congo, and Darfur—who are largely forgotten by the international community.

The forced displacement of

many millions of refugees in the past century has often been linked to the Holy Family’s painful flight into Egypt. Furthermore, the itinerant nature of Jesus’ ministry expresses a continuity with his earlier experience and his abiding concern for vulnerable women and men who were displaced to the margins of society. Jesus identifies himself so deeply with poor and displaced people that he assures us that, in our care for the vulnerable among us, we discover his presence (Mt 25). Our reflec-



*Displaced family in Sri Lanka.*

© Natalie Behring/10M/OnAsia 2005

tion on Jesus leads us to recognize ourselves as a Church composed of exiles and pilgrims. Our concern as Christians for the suffering of refugees and displaced people is not the product of mere chance or romantic sympathy. Our radical option for forcibly displaced people flows from the understanding of ourselves as a community of migrants. This is who we are as Church at our very core.

Refugees in camp settings have many needs—food, shelter, water, and security. Often displaced people, like the victims of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia and former child soldiers in northern Uganda, require counseling and

support to deal with the traumas they have experienced. In addition, refugees seek education for their children, vocational training, and adult literacy classes that will help put their lives together again, reestablish a sense of normalcy and a glimpse of hope for the future. Over the past 20 years, however, JRS and other like-minded agencies have come to realize that advocacy at local, national and international levels must be a central part of our outreach to refugees. Advocacy that addresses structural causes of displacement and evils—such as lack of an adequate international food supply, limited access

*...advocacy...must be a central part of our outreach to refugees.*

to education, and sexual abuse of women and young girls—is deeply important in nearly every refugee situation.

Abraham Heschl, the Jewish theologian, once told the story of a revered rabbi who gathered his best and brightest students around him and asked them a simple question: “How do you know when night is over and day has begun?”

Students replied that night is gone and day has come when you can look out toward the valley, see two figures and tell that one is a calf and the other a dog. Or when you are able to make out the difference between an apple and a peach tree

in the orchard on the ridge. The rabbi shook his head in disbelief and said, “You know that night is over and day is here when you can look into the eyes of a total stranger and recognize the face of your brother or sister. Until that time comes, you are always living in darkness.”

As we accompany refugees, provide them with much needed services, and advocate with and for them, we see in their eyes the light of God’s hope. Together we are led out of darkness into a future of light and hope. ~

<sup>1</sup> My understanding has been illuminated by the work of Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator (Hekima College, Nairobi, Kenya) in his “Justice for the Displaced: the Challenge of a Christian Understanding,” a paper delivered at Boston College, November 2008.

## A Transforming Opportunity

It began with a simple announcement in the bulletin at Holy Redeemer Parish in Portland, Oregon. Pastor Joe Corpora, CSC invited parishioners to consider how they might help a refugee family of nine from Burundi rebuild their lives in a new land. “The parish response was amazing,” says Tanya Griffin, co-chair of the parish refugee committee.

For six months, parishioners worked to find housing, collect donations, research what types of food might be familiar and appropriate, and prepare their apartment. After the family’s arrival in September 2007, parishioners continued to provide regular support—driving them to medical appointments, helping enroll the children in school, and providing orientation

to life in America.

Although the family is now more self-reliant, they are still very much a part of the Holy Redeemer community. The youngest children attend the parish school and the father is employed as a maintenance worker at the school. “They can’t speak the language

*The refugee project has had a tremendous impact on parish life.*

well, but they understand smiles and hugs,” says parishioner Erin Weisensee—the self-described “24/7 support person” for the family.

Prior to their arrival in Portland, the family had lived in a refugee camp in Tanzania for 11

years. The four youngest children had spent their entire lives living in a “10 by 12 tent,” according to Tom Markgraf, co-chair of the committee. “As Americans, we will never understand what happened to them.”

The refugee project has had a tremendous impact on parish life. “It brought together people who didn’t know each other,” says Griffin. “It’s been a transforming opportunity for all involved.” Markgraf agrees. “This wasn’t just a six month thing,” he says. “I think we’re involved with this family for the rest of our lives. That’s quite a gift.”

To learn how your parish might support a refugee family, contact your local Refugee Resettlement office. Visit [www.usccb.org/mrs](http://www.usccb.org/mrs) for contact information. ~



# intercommunity

## Please Support & Sustain IPJC

Hope comes in little ways,  
 it takes only one shining Star,  
 one faithful friend,  
 one wisp of inspiration,  
 one touch of creations' beauty...  
 to keep the illumination alive in us.  
 —Joyce Rupp

Hopefully everyone who sent us a donation has received a personal note of thanks from us. Your support makes a difference to us! Our annual report highlights all that you make possible with your contributions. We want you to know that we shepherd our resources wisely and in this time of economic challenge we are on solid ground.

If everyone who receives this publication of *A Matter of Spirit* and has not made a donation responded to Joyce Rupp's prayer and contributed in some little way, it would make a significant difference for us.

Since 1991 we have sent out our publication without a subscription or membership cost. We will continue this practice.

The religious communities sponsoring the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center make a significant commitment of personnel and financial support to this ministry. We ask that you join them to ensure sustainability into the future.

In this fiscal year July 08—June 09

- ∞ 4650 received *A Matter of Spirit*
- ∞ 320 have made a contribution

**Imagine:** If the other 4330 gave just \$5 or perhaps \$10

- ∞ It would mean that we would not have to spend money or resources to do an additional fund raising event this year.
- ∞ We would rejoice that together we are creating a more just and peaceful world. With your help nothing is impossible with God!

## Fall Events

Over 500  
 Join to Stop  
 Human  
 Trafficking



100's Participate in Faithful  
 Citizenship Workshops in  
 Oregon and Washington

Justice Circles—  
 grassroots  
 community  
 organizing



High School  
 Service Days

# peace & justice center

## Northwest Catholic Women's Convocation IV

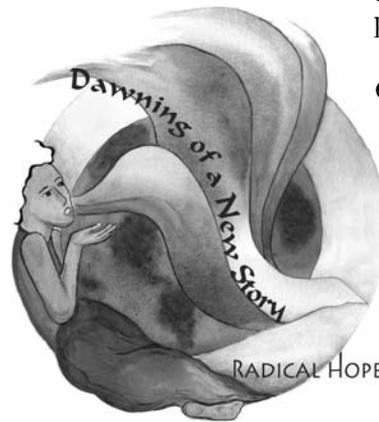
DAWNING OF A NEW STORY: RADICAL HOPE

MAY 1-2, 2009—BELLEVUE, WA

Keynote Speakers: Riane Eisler, Ivone Gebara, Cokie Roberts, Margaret Wheatley

**NOW IS THE TIME TO REGISTER!**

- **Registration Brochures Now Available!**  
Call IPJC—206.223.1138
- **Online registration is open! [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)**
- **Early registration** is \$110.  
After March 1st the cost will be \$135.
- Event **Hotel Discount** when you mention the Northwest Catholic Women's Convocation:  
Sheraton Bellevue—866.837.4275  
Courtyard Marriott Bellevue—888.236.2427



### CONVOCATION NEEDS & WANTS

The convocation is a unique opportunity to gather with thousands of women (and a few good men) of faith from the Northwest. The cost of the convocation far exceeds the registration fee. Your support and contacts in the following areas will make it possible for us to have a successful convocation.

- Advertisers & corporate sponsors (who will support a Catholic conference)
- Air miles for convocation speakers
- Display and staging materials
- Garden, plant, and flower displays
- Music CD Producer
- U-Haul Truck

### Catholic Advocacy Day

Seattle/Tacoma—February 24, 2009 (9:00am—3:00pm)

(To register contact IPJC, [ipjc@ipjc.org](mailto:ipjc@ipjc.org) BEFORE January 23rd)

Spokane—February 14, 2009 (9:00am—1:30pm)

Yakima—TBA (see [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org) for more details on all three events)

### Credit Cards Next Victim of Credit Crisis?

For more than a decade, religious shareholders have been addressing issues of predatory lending practices and inappropriate underwriting standards with financial institutions. As we know from our current economic crisis, the prophetic voice of faith was not heeded.

Concerned that predatory credit card practices will further weaken an unsustainable economy, **Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment** members in collaboration with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility have filed shareholder resolutions with six of the country's largest credit card issuers. Currently we are in dialogue with American Express, Bank of America, Discover, and JP Morgan Chase on the best practices for credit card companies:

- Business model based on repayment
- Transparent disclosure of terms
- Flexible servicing strategy\*



Shareholders contend that credit card policies and practices designed to strengthen the financial health of card holders is in the best interest of the company, its customers, and our U.S. economy.

\* Credit Cards at a Tipping Point, Innovest Strategic Value Advisors, [www.innovestgroup.com](http://www.innovestgroup.com)

# Ritual and Reflection

Gather a small group for contemplation and conversation in solidarity with refugees and displaced peoples.

**Set Up:** Arrange chairs for participants around a ritual table. Place a cloth, candle, globe, a picture of refugees (if you have one) and scatter 50 cents in small change on the table (enough for a coin for each person).

**Music:** Select a song of your choice, such as *For the Healing of the Nations*, *God of Day and God of Darkness*, or *We are Called*.

**Facilitator:** We gather today in solidarity with our world's 67 million displaced people. At this very moment, some are fleeing for their safety. Others are struggling to rebuild their lives. Let us take a moment of quiet, as we hold them in our hearts and minds. [pause] I invite you now to listen to the story of Pamela, a Sudanese refugee.

**Read:** Read aloud *An African Gem*, by Gary Smith, SJ from pages 1 and 3 of this issue of *AMOS*.

**Facilitator:** Let's take some quiet time to reflect on Pamela's story in light of your own story. During the quiet I invite you to consider one thing that struck you about Pamela's story, or one memory from your own life journey in light of Pamela's story.

## Sharing:

One thing that struck you about Pamela's story or

One memory from your own life journey.

**Litany:** We journey with the 16 million refugees in our world today, fleeing violent conflict and persecution.

**Response:** We journey with you!

We journey with the 26 million internally displaced people fleeing violent conflict and environmental disaster. **R**

We journey with the 3 million stateless people, unrecognized as belonging to any country. **R**

We journey with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations that accompany, serve, and advocate for displaced people. **R**

We journey with families, parishes, schools and others who help displaced people rebuild their lives in a new land. **R.**

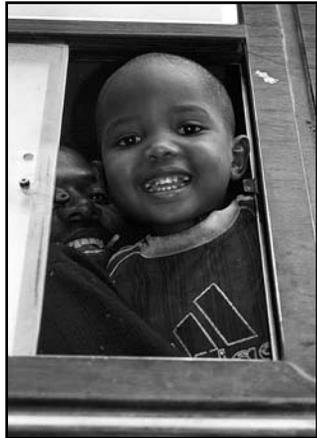
**Quiet:** Let's take a few minutes of quiet. Consider ways we might be called—collectively and individually—to journey with refugees and displaced people. After the quiet, I will begin.

**Facilitator:** Pamela began her journey with one thousand Ugandan shillings, approximately 50 cents. We also have 50 cents on our table. I invite you to take a coin as you share one way you feel called to journey with displaced people.

**Sharing:** All who wish share and take a coin.

**Facilitator:** I invite you to place your coin in a special spot or pocket this week as a reminder to listen for stories of refugees in our midst or in the news.

**Closing Prayer:** God of all peoples, open our hearts and minds to the reality of forced displacement. Guide our brothers and sisters who are fleeing for safety or rebuilding their lives. Amen.



Somali refugees depart for U.S.

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