



*Brussels, 19 June 2013* – Every minute, eight people in the world have to flee because of war and persecution. This means that by the time you have finished reading this text, approximately 20 people will have been forced to flee. War and conflict have a devastating impact on families. In the chaos of their flight, fathers, mothers and children sometimes lose track of each other and risk never to see each other again.

About half of the refugees in Belgium and in the world are children under 18. Some of these children flee their home country together with their parents, but others get separated from their families and have to continue their traumatic flight to safety alone. Refugee children have witnessed and seen things which no child should ever experience. In most cases, not having any family around to comfort and support them hits these youngsters especially hard.

20 June is World Refugee Day. On this day, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) focuses our attention on the millions of people worldwide who have had to flee. Globally, World Refugee Day is celebrated in over 100 countries. In Belgium too, UNHCR and nine organizations that work with asylum seekers and refugees have collaborated to give meaning to this day.

## **One Minute**

In one minute, a refugee family can lose everything. This was the case for instance for Ammar from Syria, who found shelter in Belgium. He, his wife and his six-year-old son had to flee war-torn Aleppo. A few years ago, the neighbouring country, Iraq, had faced serious problems, but Ammar and many other Syrians never believed that Syria could possibly fall prey to war and violence. Yet it happened. 'Initially, we were convinced that the violence would die out soon but everything turned out totally different', says Ammar.

But in one minute, things can also change for the better. Danielle is a young mother from Guinea. At the age of 17 she fled to Belgium in order to escape the harmful practices of forced marriage and genital mutilation. "At the age where in Western countries, most of the adolescents lead a carefree life, I found myself alone, lost and without resources", she remembers. Today, Danielle is a brilliant student in Brussels and – after years – has finally been reunited with her child, who she had when she was still a teenager herself in Guinea.

Take one minute to read more about Ammar, Danielle, and other refugees on the website [www.worldrefugeeday.be](http://www.worldrefugeeday.be)

### **Candy at Belgian train stations**

On 20 June, from 7-9 am, more than 250 volunteers will be handing sweets to travelers in 27 different Belgian train stations\*\*. They will inform people that in the minute it takes to eat the candy, eight people in the world will have had to flee: fathers, mothers, and children ...

This is a joint initiative of: het Belgisch Comité voor de Hulp aan Vluchtelingen (BCHV), Commissariaat-generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen (CGVS), Coordination et initiatives pour réfugiés et étrangers (CIRÉ), Convivial, Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers (Fedasil), Rode Kruis-Vlaanderen, Croix-Rouge de Belgique, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

### **Additional links:**

- Contact details and partners (PDF)
- World Refugee Day (UNHCR)
- World Refugee Day (UN)

**\*\* LIST OF TRAIN STATIONS WITH SPOKESPERSON:**

Aalst, Antwerpen (Central and Berchem), Arlon, Beernem, Beveren-Waas, Brugge, Brussel (Midi, Central and North), Charleroi, Gembloux, Genk, Gent (St-Pieters and Dampoort), Hasselt, Leuven, Lier, Mechelen, Sint-Niklaas, Veurne, Wetteren.