TED TALKS TO WATCH

What does it mean to be a refugee

About 60 million people around the globe have been forced to leave their homes to escape war, violence and persecution. The majority have become Internally Displaced Persons, meaning they fled their homes but are still in their own countries. Others, referred to as refugees, sought shelter outside their own country. But what does that term really mean?

Don’t Feel Sorry for Refugees, Believe in Them

"We have seen advances in every aspect of our lives -- except our humanity,” says Luma Mufleh, a Jordanian immigrant and Muslim of Syrian descent who founded the first accredited school for refugees in the United States. Mufleh shares stories of hope and resilience, explaining how she's helping young people from war-torn countries navigate the difficult process of building new homes. Get inspired to make a personal difference in the lives of refugees with this powerful talk.

Life and Inspiration in the World’s Largest Refugee Camp: Moulid Hujale

Born in Kismayo, Moulid was forced to flee Somalia with his family at the age of 10 to the Dadaab refugee camp across the border into Kenya. After witnessing the lack of opportunities for youth in Dadaab, Moulid started the Refugee Newsletter and engaged 30 young people, partnering with FilmAid International. He also partnered with UNHCR and other organizations working in Dadaab to collaborate on an umbrella initiative that provided skills training and jobs to Dadaab youth. Moulid recently moved to Mogadishu to work on making education accessible to all.

Promise and Opportunity: From Refugee to Building up a Life: Parweez Kohestanie

Parweez was born in Kabul in 1982, aware from the age of 5 years old that he wanted to become a doctor. At 16 years old he fled Afghanistan to escape the Taliban and ended up in the Netherlands after a long journey full of horrors. Join Parweez as he takes you through the history of his life, his place of birth in the present day and his belief that education is the key for building a future peaceful world.

Being a refugee is not a choice: Carina Hoang

Refugees are often marginalized, their humanity ignored as their stories go untold. In this remarkable and emotional talk, however, author and former refugee Carina Hoang discusses her experience as a “boat person”. It’s a powerful account that is impossible to ignore.

Entrusting our Future to our Youth: Walid Issa

Walid Issa is a 25-year-old Palestinian from Bethlehem. Born in the Deheishe Refugee Camp, Walid attended a Christian school in Bethlehem where he was introduced to his American family, who have hosted him for six years. Issa has co-founded a non-profit dedicated to connect young professionals and finding more effective economic aid programs for the Middle East.

Caring for 90,000 Refugees – The Story of Somalia’s Hope Village: Deg Mohamed

Dr. Deg Mohamed grew up outside Mogadishu, Somalia in Hope Village – a refugee camp run by her mother Dr. Hawa Abdi. She delivered her first baby at age 15, and now oversees the community as it transitions from emergency response to sustainability. Listen to her powerful story of resilience and recovery.
Finding my Voice, Seeing a Future: Andrew Lam

Andrew Lam describes the struggles he faced and how they've led to new opportunities. Through the crises he encountered as a child refugee, Lam found the root of his emptiness, and now uses his words to help those who face the same problems he once conquered.

Refugees Starting Over: Kathryn Stam

Utica is the city that is welcoming to refugees, and over 25% of the city’s population are former refugees. Kathryn Stam shares her story about how refugees are shaping their communities, the challenges they face, and the lessons we can learn from them.

Integrative Thinking and Solutions for Refugees: James Milner

James Milner advocates an integrative approach to solving the plight of millions refugees who wait on average 18 years in refugee camps. James Milner has been a researcher, practitioner and policy advisor on issues relating to refugees, peacebuilding, African politics, and the United Nations system.

Refugees & Migrants are Added Resources: Thouiba Hashim Galad

Thouiba Hashim Galad attended the University of Juba where she graduated with a first degree in Economics and an MA in Gender Migration and Multicultural Studies. Because of her affiliation with Eastern Sudan, a well-known passageway for migrants, and one of the areas that receive the largest number of refugees, Thouiba became extremely interested in issues of minorities, refugees and forced migration. Here she advocates for their role within their host communities.

A Refugee’s Dream: Saba Abraham

Saba was born in Eritrea, Africa and fled to Sudan then Egypt before arriving in Australia as a refugee in 1992. She has been many things in her life including a freedom fighter, penniless refugee, celebrated community leader and now a successful businesswoman. She is the founding member of the Queensland African Communities Council and the President of Eritrean Australian Women’s and Family Support Network.

A Personal Story of the Syria Conflict: Riad

Riad had to flee his hometown in Syria because of the conflict, and is now building his life anew as a refugee in Europe. In this moving talk, he takes his audience through a photographic journey of destruction in his home country, sharing his experience through an intimate and individual viewpoint which the media coverage of the Syrian conflict does not allow.

No Human is Illegal

Yoonis Osman Nuur came to the Netherlands 10 years ago after fleeing his home country Somalia, and is one of the many refugees in the Netherlands who cannot get Dutch nationality. While being categorized as an illegal immigrant rather than a refugee, Osman decided to let his voice be heard and demand acknowledgement of his existence in this country. What does it mean to be called ‘illegal’, and should any human being ever be called illegal?

War and What Comes After

Clementine Wamariya was six years old when the Rwandan Civil War forced her and her sister to flee their home in Kigali, leaving their parents and everything they knew behind. In this deeply personal talk, she tells the story of how she became a refugee, living in camps in seven countries over the next six years -- and how she’s tried to make sense of what came after.
Follow the Sound
Playing "Follow the Sound" from her album "Borderless Lullabies" -- which was created in support of immigrant and refugee children entering the US -- Morley weaves jazz, soul and resonant vocals. She's joined onstage by cellist Dave Eggar and multi-instrumentalist Chris Bruce.

What's Really Happening at the US-Mexico Border -- and How we can do Better
At the US-Mexico border, policies of prolonged detention and family separation have made seeking asylum in the United States difficult and dangerous. In this raw and heartfelt talk, immigration attorney Erika Pinheiro offers a glimpse into her daily work on both sides of the border and shares some of the stories behind the statistics -- including her own story of being detained and separated from her son. It's a clear-eyed call to remember the humanity that's impacted by policy -- and a warning: "History shows us that the first population to be vilified and stripped of their rights is rarely the last," she says.

What it's Like to be a Parent in a War Zone
How do parents protect their children and help them feel secure again when their homes are ripped apart by war? In this warm-hearted talk, psychologist Aala El-Khani shares her work supporting -- and learning from -- refugee families affected by the civil war in Syria. She asks: How can we help these loving parents give their kids the warm, secure parenting they most need?

A Young Poet Tells the Story of Darfur
Emtithal "Emi" Mahmoud writes poetry of resilience, confronting her experience of escaping the genocide in Darfur in verse. She shares two stirring original poems about refugees, family, joy and sorrow, asking, "Will you witness me?"

Let's Help Refugees Thrive, Not Just Survive
Today's refugee crisis is the biggest since World War II, and it's growing. When this talk was given, 50 million people had been forcefully displaced from their homes by conflict and war; now the number is 65.3 million. There were 3 million Syrian refugees in 2014; now there are 4.9 million. Inside this overwhelming crisis are the individual human stories -- of care, growth and family, in the face of lost education, lost home, lost future. Melissa Fleming of the UN's refugee agency tells the refugees' stories -- and asks us to help them rebuild their world.

How can we Bring Mental Health Support to Refugees
The global refugee crisis is a mental health catastrophe, leaving millions in need of psychological support to overcome the traumas of dislocation and conflict. To undo the damage, child psychiatrist and TED Fellow Essam Daod has been working in camps, rescue boats and the shorelines of Greece and the Mediterranean Sea to help refugees (a quarter of which are children) reframe their experiences through short, powerful psychological interventions. "We can all do something to prevent this mental health catastrophe," Daod says. "We need to acknowledge that first aid is not just needed for the body, but it has also to include the mind, the soul."

My Desperate Journey with a Human Smuggler
Photojournalist Barat Ali Batoor was living in Afghanistan -- until his risky work forced him to leave the country. But for Batoor, a member of a displaced ethnic group called the Hazara, moving home to Pakistan proved dangerous too. And finding a safer place wasn't as simple as buying a plane ticket. Instead, he was forced to pay a human smuggler, and join the deadly tidal wave of migrants seeking asylum by boat. He documents the harrowing ocean trip with powerful photographs.
Escaping the Khmer Rouge
TED Fellow Sophal Ear shares the compelling story of his family’s escape from Cambodia under the rule of the Khmer Rouge. He recounts his mother’s cunning and determination to save her children.

The Refugee Crisis is a Test of our Character
Sixty-five million people were displaced from their homes by conflict and disaster in 2016. It’s not just a crisis; it’s a test of who we are and what we stand for, says David Miliband -- and each of us has a personal responsibility to help solve it. In this must-watch talk, Miliband gives us specific, tangible ways to help refugees and turn empathy and altruism into action.

Why I Fight for the Education of Refugee Girls (like me)
After fleeing war-torn South Sudan as a child, Mary Maker found security and hope in the school at Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp. Now a teacher of young refugees herself, she sees education as an essential tool for rebuilding lives -- and empowering a generation of girls who are too often denied entrance into the classroom. “For the child of war, an education can turn their tears of loss into a passion for peace,” Maker says.

Refugees Want Empowerment not Handouts
The prevailing image of where refugees live is of temporary camps in isolated areas -- but in reality, nearly 60 percent of them worldwide end up in urban areas. TED Fellow Robert Hakiza takes us inside the lives of urban refugees -- and shows us how organizations like the one that he started can provide them with the skills they need to ultimately become self-sufficient.

My Immigration Story
In 2010, technologist Tan Le took the TEDGlobal stage to demo a powerful new interface. But now, at TEDxWomen, she tells a very personal story: the story of her family -- mother, grandmother and sister -- fleeing Vietnam and building a new life.

Refugees Have the Right to be Protected
António Guterres thinks that we can solve the global refugee crisis -- and he offers compelling, surprising reasons why we must try. In conversation with TED's Bruno Giussani, Guterres discusses the historical causes of the current crisis and outlines the mood of the European countries that are trying to screen, shelter and resettle hundreds of thousands of desperate families. Bigger picture: Guterres calls for a multilateral turn toward acceptance and respect -- to defy groups like ISIS’s anti-refugee propaganda and recruiting machine.

My Father the Forger
Sarah Kaminsky tells the extraordinary story of her father Adolfo and his activity during World War II -- using his ingenuity and talent for forgery to save lives.

On Humanity
Chris Abani tells stories of people: People standing up to soldiers. People being compassionate. People being human and reclaiming their humanity. It’s “ubuntu,” he says: the only way for me to be human is for you to reflect my humanity back at me.

My Escape from North Korea
As a child growing up in North Korea, Hyeonseo Lee thought her country was “the best on the planet.” It wasn’t until the famine of the 90s that she began to wonder. She escaped the country at 14, to begin a life in hiding, as a refugee in China. Hers is a harrowing, personal tale of survival and hope -- and a powerful reminder of those who face constant danger, even when the border is far behind.
Our Refugee System is Failing: Here is how we can fix it

A million refugees arrived in Europe this year, says Alexander Betts, and "our response, frankly, has been pathetic." Betts studies forced migration, the impossible choice for families between the camps, urban poverty and dangerous illegal journeys to safety. In this insightful talk, he offers four ways to change the way we treat refugees, so they can make an immediate contribution to their new homes. "There's nothing inevitable about refugees being a cost," Betts says. "They're human beings with skills, talents, aspirations, with the ability to make contributions -- if we let them."

What Refugees Need to Start New Lives

Every minute, 20 people are newly displaced by climate change, economic crisis and political instability, according to the UNHCR. How can we help them overcome the barriers to starting new lives? TED Resident Muhammed Idris is leading a team of technologists, researchers and refugees to develop Atar, the first-ever AI-powered virtual advocate that guides displaced people through resettlement, helping restore their rights and dignity. "Getting access to the right resources and information can be the difference between life and death," Idris says. Every minute, 20 people are newly displaced by climate change, economic crisis and political instability, according to the UNHCR. How can we help them overcome the barriers to starting new lives? TED Resident Muhammed Idris is leading a team of technologists, researchers and refugees to develop Atar, the first-ever AI-powered virtual advocate that guides displaced people through resettlement, helping restore their rights and dignity. "Getting access to the right resources and information can be the difference between life and death," Idris says.

The Fundamental Right to Seek Asylum

Refugee and immigrants rights attorney Melanie Nezer shares an urgently needed historical perspective on the crisis at the southern US border, showing how citizens can hold their governments accountable for protecting the vulnerable. "A country shows strength through compassion and pragmatism, not through force and through fear," she says.

The Psychological Impact of Child Separation at the US-Mexico Border

How does psychological trauma affect children's developing brains? In this powerful talk, social worker Luis H. Zayas discusses his work with refugees and asylum-seeking families at the US-Mexico border. What emerges is a stunning analysis of the long-term impact of the US's controversial detention and child separation policies -- and practical steps for how the country can do better.