ICMC, Caritas, JRS & UN Refugee Agency Mark 75 Years of the UN Refugee Convention in Rome

https://www.icmc.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/75-Years-UN-Refugee-Convention_12-November.pdf

Rome (12 November 2026) Today in Rome ICMC, Caritas Internationalis, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) co-host 'Celebrating 75 Years of the UN Refugee Convention: Faith Perspectives and Moral Commitments'. The event explores the relationship between refugee protection, religious traditions, and the shared values embodied in the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The **1951 Refugee Convention** is rooted in values that have been shared and upheld by religious traditions for centuries. These are not merely legal principles, but moral and spiritual values that resonate across the world's major religious traditions.

As the international community marks the **75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention**, at a moment where it faces increasingly often hostile and significant challenges, the co-organizers are joined by refugee leaders, ecumenical and interreligious representatives, and the private sector to explore concrete ways to keep alive the promise made in 1951: to ensure protection, uphold human dignity and create the conditions for refugees to rebuild their lives and shape their futures.

Speakers include **Ms. Francesca Bonelli** (UNHCR Representative to Italy, the Holy See, Malta and San Marino), **Mr. Davide Bernocchi** (Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission), **Dr. Victor Genina** (Director of Integral Human Development, Caritas Internationalis), and **Br. Michael Schöpf SJ** (International Director, Jesuit Refugee Service).

During the event, ICMC, Caritas Internationalis, JRS, and the Committee of students of the University Corridors for Refugees (UNICORE) programme signed The Promise, the UN Refugee Agency's global statement of solidarity with refugees launched in July 2026.

***

Ms. Benitha Nzayanga Mugisha, Bocconi University graduate and UNICORE alumna: "The Refugee Convention has a concrete meaning in my life. Its principles concern the very things my family and I needed: protection and the chance to rebuild. Finding safety and continuing my education showed me why these commitments matter. Their value is felt in the opportunities people have to shape their futures."

Ms. Francesca Bonelli, **UNHCR:** "75 years ago, adopting the Refugee Convention, the world made a promise: that no one fleeing war or persecution would be left to face it alone. Over these years, that promise has allowed millions of people to reach safety and never be sent back to danger, to have their rights recognized, and to build pathways to autonomy and dignity, through school, as UNICORE students show us today, through work, as Deltha Pharma's presence here demonstrates, and through a place in hosting communities. Today, that promise is being tested as rarely before. Yet its principles endure; what must now evolve is our collective ability to turn them into action. With ICMC, JRS, Caritas Internationalis, and refugees, we renew that promise – and choose, once again, to keep it."

Dr. Victor Genina, Caritas Internationalis: "75 years after the adoption of the Refugee Convention, Caritas reaffirms its solidarity with refugees and the communities that welcome them. Our member organisations bear witness to this solidarity through their daily work around the world, accompanying refugees and offering support and protection as they rebuild their lives. At the heart of the Convention lies the principle of *non-refoulement*: no one should be returned to a place where their life, freedom or fundamental rights are at risk. This is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral imperative, rooted in the firm conviction that human dignity knows no borders and is never negotiable. At a time of increasingly restrictive borders and weakening multilateral cooperation, Caritas joins ICMC, UNHCR and JRS in calling for a renewed commitment to upholding refugees' rights and keeping the promise of protection."

Mr. Davide Bernocchi, ICMC Secretary General: "Both ICMC and the UN Refugee Convention were born in 1951, into a post-war Europe characterized by massive levels of displacement. Our origins lie in a shared recognition of the need for a coordinated response to the situation of people forced to flee their homes, and a shared commitment to the fundamental rights and inherent dignity of every person. 75 years later, in a global environment of eroding multilateralism and backsliding on human rights, the Convention's values and principles are increasingly called into question in the same international fora where this cornerstone of international law was established. Welcoming and protecting asylum seekers and refugees has been a concern of believers for centuries. As part of a faith community, today we are called to defend and strengthen - as an integral part of our moral heritage - the legal framework for protection that the Convention provides. We must fight the temptation to value human dignity only within our borders. In communion with the rest of the Catholic Church, ICMC made this promise in 1951, and we keep working every day to make it a reality for all."

Br Michael Schöpf SJ, JRS International Director: "We are called to work for justice and for reconciliation. The call is evident both in countries stricken by war, which fuel forced displacement, and in the increasingly divided societies where refugees find themselves at the centre of polarised debate and politics. We are called to foster the creation of just and peaceful communities that seek the common good in the dignity, hope and flourishing of all and especially those who are most marginalised."

***

Press enquiries:
EN: Ms. Rachel Westerby (westerby@icmc.net / +44 7990 580868)
ES, IT: Ms. Mercedes de la Torre (mercedesdelatorrec@gmail.com / +39 334 276 5701)
FR: Ms. Oumou Diallo (diallo@icmc.net / +41 789616390).

Event photos https://www.flickr.com/gp/53070064@N04/0vo2tY3uV1