

IFRC Statement
UNHCR High-Level Officials Meeting
December 2021

Mr/Madam Chair,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies welcomes and commends the inclusive approach by UNHCR in organizing this High-Level Officials Meeting, in particular their outreach and engagement with civil society organizations and refugees.

This is why I am speaking here on behalf of IFRC. My name is Nuraa, I am an international relations student at Ege University of Izmir and a Turkish Red Crescent volunteer based in Izmir and I am a refugee from Syria.

I have lived in Turkey since 2014 with my family. We decided to move from Syria to Turkey when I was 13 years old after one major event. One day, I was at school and we had an exam, and they dropped a bomb on our school while we were having the exam. I was so scared and my heart was beating so fast. I could have died on that day... Not only me but all students in our school. I cannot forget this day and the feelings which I felt. After this day, my father decided that we will move to Turkey.

When we got to the borders of Turkey, I felt a strange feeling. I thought it was a dangerous moment for us. I was afraid, sad and confused.

When we first arrived in our new country, it was not easy. I had to work at a young age, because we needed money. Those days were very bad for me because I wanted to go to school. But I did not give up... I learned two languages, Kurdish and Turkish, and in 2016 I was able to go back to school and complete my education. Today, I have a very different life.

In 2018, when I was at high school, a Turkish Red Crescent community center opened and one group of Red Crescent workers visited our school to give us information about the centre.

The Turkish Red Crescent is one of 192 National Societies that are members of the IFRC. Each national society provides life-saving humanitarian aid, including to refugees and migrants and other displaced people, through a total of 14 million volunteers working locally in their communities. In 110 countries, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are supporting people on the move, on a needs-based approach and the largest group supported are asylum seekers and refugees at the local level. And at that meeting, I decided to become one of these volunteers.

I receive training on volunteering, and since this day I have done a lot of things in the Centre. We made wonderful things together.

I organized seminars about the 'foreigner students exam' in Turkey which is a very important exam for students who want to study at Turkish universities. I also supported different activities as a translator for refugees who cannot understand Turkish. Also, I supported giving information about COVID-19 and access to vaccines, and social cohesion activities.

I wanted to raise 2 points today:

My first point is about **promoting refugee participation in decision-making processes - including international meetings like this one - but also within organizations providing services to refugees**. Refugees have so much to offer and we need to recognize the vital contributions that refugees themselves can make to society. For me, volunteering is very important for me because it makes me feel that I am an effective person that can make a difference in society. As a refugee I think volunteering is kind of giving back and it also helped me to be part of the social and cultural life in Turkey, and to improve my Turkish. If I had a chance to say something to other refugees, I will tell them to become volunteers if they can because we should make a difference for this world and for people who need help.

My second point is about the **vital role of local organizations, including refugee-led and host-community-led organizations, and their valuable role in meeting the needs of refugees and ensure that their rights are respected**. The Global Compact on Refugees recommends *"support to strengthen institutional capacities... at the local level, including through funding and capacity development."* As a refugee, from my perspective, I think that local organizations and institutions play a big role in refugee lives. Especially when it comes to giving information about rights or offering long-term solutions.

My dream is making myself useful in the world, and for all people who need help, especially refugees like me. I want to stand for them to have a peaceful and improved way of life and to integrate into society.

On behalf of IFRC, thank you, Mister/Madam Chair.

Nuraa Cavus is a Syrian refugee. She arrived in Turkey in 2014 with her family. She is an International Relations student at Ege University of Izmir. Since 2018, she has volunteered with the Turkey Red Crescent in the Community Centre of Izmir. She is offering support to refugees, particularly through translation, information and support to integrate in the Turkish school and university system.