



## What is the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award?

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award honours individuals, groups and organizations who go above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees, internally displaced and stateless people.

Since the Nansen was first presented in 1954, more than 60 individuals, groups and organizations have received the award for their extraordinary service to people fleeing war, persecution and human rights abuses. Prominent winners include Eleanor Roosevelt, who had served as first Chair of the UN Human Rights Commission, as well as US Senator Edward Kennedy, opera singer Luciano Pavarotti, humanitarian Graça Machel, Médecins Sans Frontières, and the People of Canada.

However, the award is often given to a grassroots organization or individual whose exceptional yet largely unheralded work deserves both financial support and a higher profile. Since 2017, UNHCR has also recognized several regional winners each year. See more on [past winners](#).

Through its recipients, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award showcases the values of perseverance and commitment in the face of adversity exemplified by Fridtjof Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees under the League of Nations.

## Who was Fridtjof Nansen?

Fridtjof Nansen was a celebrated explorer, scientist, diplomat, humanitarian, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Norway. From 1920 to 1930, under the League of Nations, he served as the world's first High Commissioner for Refugees. Recognizing that one of the greatest challenges they faced was the lack of internationally recognized identification papers, he introduced a document that came to be known as the 'Nansen passport'. It was the first legal instrument to bestow international protection to refugees.

Nansen's pioneering efforts helped hundreds of thousands of refugees to return home – and enabled many others to become legal residents and find work in the countries where they had found refuge. Exactly a century ago, in 1922, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his leading role in the repatriation of prisoners of war, in international relief work, and in support for refugees. Today, his legacy carries on through the recipients of the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award.



### **How is the winner honoured?**

The global laureate for the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award is traditionally honoured at a ceremony in Geneva in front of an audience from across the globe. At the height of the COVID pandemic, in 2020 and 2021, the ceremony was held online. This year will feature a hybrid format, with a livestream of the physical ceremony.

### **When is the winner announced?**

The global laureate for 2022, along with four regional winners, will be announced on 4 October. The ceremony, to be held on 10 October, coincides with the first day of the UNHCR's annual Executive Committee Meeting, and will be attended by stakeholders, policymakers and other partners. As in past years, it will feature renowned and up-and-coming artists who support the cause of people forced to flee.

### **Who are the partners for the award?**

The Swiss and Norwegian governments, the IKEA Foundation, and the City and Canton of Geneva all provide support for the Nansen programme.

### **Media opportunities**

Media packages about the 2022 global laureate and regional winners will be made available with the announcement on 4 October. Arrangements to cover the work of the regional winners, as well as one-to-one interviews, can be facilitated upon request pending availability.

**For more information, please contact [Nansen@unhcr.org](mailto:Nansen@unhcr.org).**