



**NANSEN  
REFUGEE  
AWARD**



**2024  
PROGRAMME**  
UNHCR NANSEN REFUGEE AWARD  
CEREMONY

MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2024 • THE FAIRMONT GRAND HOTEL • GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



# The Award

Since 1954, UNHCR has recognized the extraordinary service of individuals and groups working to protect and assist forcibly displaced and stateless people.

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award is a prestigious humanitarian honour with a rich history. The Award is named after Fridtjof Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations. This year, we recognize Sister Rosita Milesi for the extraordinary dedication and leadership she has shown in advancing the rights and inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants, and those in need of international protection in Brazil. She has provided vital legal and social assistance to displaced individuals for nearly 40 years, while also shaping laws and policies that protect and uplift the vulnerable.

Sudanese refugees show off the henna designs they learned to make during a skills workshop led by the Rouh Initiative in Alexandria, Egypt.

Cover photo: Sister Rosita Milesi, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2024 Global Laureate, meets Venezuelans and Colombians at a sustainable agriculture project led by refugees and migrants in Boa Vista, Brazil.

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# Programme

## UNHCR NANSEN REFUGEE AWARD CEREMONY

<b>Welcome</b> by the Master of Ceremonies	Nomzamo Mbatha
<b>Film</b>	<i>Unsung Heroes</i>
<b>Celebrating the Regional Winners</b>	Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>Honourable Mention</b>	The People of Moldova
<b>Musical performance</b>	Valentina Nafornița
<b>Africa</b>	Maimouna Ba
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	Deepti Gurung
<b>Europe</b>	Jin Davod
<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>	Nada Fadol
<b>Honouring the Global Laureate</b>	Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>Film</b>	<i>2024 Global Laureate</i>

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### Presentation of the 2024 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award

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<b>Acceptance speech</b>	Sister Rosita Milesi
<b>Musical performance</b>	Special guest
<b>Close of ceremony</b>	Nomzamo Mbatha





Sister Rosita Milesi visits a sustainable agriculture project at a UNHCR area between shelters for refugees and migrants in Boa Vista, Brazil.

# UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award 2024 Global Laureate

## Sister Rosita Milesi

BRAZIL

“If there's something that needs to be done, I will take it on.”

Sister Rosita Milesi, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award’s 2024 Global Laureate, is a Brazilian nun, lawyer, social activist and movement builder who has championed the rights and dignity of people on the move for more than 40 years.

“I’m inspired by the growing need to help, to assist, to welcome, to integrate refugees,” she says.

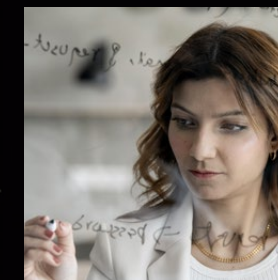
Drawing on her Catholic faith and leading by example, she has personally assisted

thousands of migrants, refugees and others in need of international protection – helping them access shelter, food, health care, language training, jobs and legal documentation in Brazil. She not only directs a frontline humanitarian agency (the Migration and Human Rights Institute, or IMDH) but also publishes and compiles scholarly articles on displacement and migration and coordinates a national network (known as RedeMIR) of 60 organizations taking action to strengthen solidarity among people on the move and the communities hosting them.



# UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award 2024 Regional Winners

Recognizing the extraordinary humanitarian efforts of four regional winners giving hope away from home.



Brazil. Sister Rosita Milesí speaks with Venezuelan refugee Maria Alejandra at a bus terminal in Boa Vista where Alejandra sells her homemade ice creams.

© UNHCR/MARINA CALDERON

Sister Rosita's policy insights and powers of persuasion were instrumental in shaping Brazil's 1997 refugee law – ensuring that it does more to protect, include and empower people forced to flee and aligns with international standards like the 1984 Cartagena Declaration.

By bringing together a wide set of stakeholders and mobilizing parliamentarians, she played a similarly pivotal role in crafting the nation's 2017 migration law.

Since 2017, the Selection Committee has also recognized several regional winners. This year each one will receive a certificate of recognition for their outstanding service and dedication as well as financial or material support for their programmes to help sustain and strengthen the work for which they are being recognized.



2024 Regional Winner  
Africa

# Maimouna Ba

BURKINA FASO



Maimouna Ba, 28, stands for a portrait at the UNHCR country office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Maimouna Ba, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2024 Regional Winner for Africa, is a grassroots activist in Burkina Faso who has helped more than 100 displaced children return to the classroom and empowered 400 displaced women to gain financial independence.

Born in the country's Sahel region, Ba comes from the first generation of women in her family to get a formal education. Overcoming numerous obstacles, she earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and management. She was still a teenager when conflict erupted in 2016 but began marshalling support for displaced women and children seeking refuge in her community. She collected donations, secured sponsorships, and became a vocal advocate for their rights and well-being.

Convinced that education and financial autonomy are indispensable tools for addressing the devastating consequences of the humanitarian crisis, Ba co-founded an organization that trains women to be entrepreneurs, combats gender-based violence and fosters peaceful conditions. A scholarship program she set up for orphaned children offers educational opportunities, psychosocial support, and protection from exploitation.

Now 28, Ba has earned the affectionate title of "Maman Sahélienne," or "Mother of the Sahel," in recognition of her leadership and impact. Her deep commitment to peace and empowerment was further acknowledged at the 2023 Young Activists Summit in Geneva, where she was honoured as one of five laureates.

*"A good intention followed by action can change the world."*



2024 Regional Winner  
Asia and the Pacific

# Deepti Gurung

NEPAL

Deepti Gurung (right) looks at a family photo album with husband Diwakar Chettri (left) and younger daughter Nikita (centre) at their home in Godawari, Nepal.

Deepti Gurung, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2024 Regional Winner for Asia & the Pacific, is a Nepali activist who campaigned to reform her country's citizenship laws after learning that her two daughters had become stateless.

The problem arose because the girls' father had abandoned the family, and Nepali law did not let mothers pass on their nationality to their children. As a result, the girls were likely to encounter some of the many barriers facing stateless people, like the inability to get birth certificates, access health care or education, open bank accounts or get a SIM card for a mobile phone. What's more, they would not be able to vote or inherit land, get a passport or even a driving licence.

In 2012, Gurung started a Facebook group, hoping to connect with others facing this predicament, and soon realized there were "tens of thousands of Nepali mothers like me". She then left her career as a marketing director and began organizing rallies, petitions and weekly sit-ins to raise public awareness and put pressure on policymakers.

Working alongside other grassroots campaigners, they won significant victories in the courts and secured major legal reforms – including a 2015 amendment that allowed children to acquire Nepali citizenship through their mothers. To date, the measure has enabled more than 100 individuals to obtain citizenship, including Gurung's daughters, and helped 1,000 others get birth certificates and other legal documents.

*"Citizenship is the door to everything."*



2024 Regional Winner  
Europe

## Jin Davod

TÜRKIYE

Jin Davod, 26, writes the code of her platform "Peace Therapist" that she wants to make public so more people can use it.

Jin Davod, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2024 Regional Winner for Europe, is a young social entrepreneur who drew on her own experience as a refugee to create an online platform that provides mental health support to trauma survivors, including refugees and local communities.

Born in Raqqa, Syria, Davod fled with her family to Türkiye in 2014 to escape the conflict. She eventually resumed her education, finishing high school and embarking on a degree in computer engineering. As a second-year university student, she designed and built Peace Therapist, an online platform that matches licensed therapists with people struggling to heal and recover from traumatic events. Crucially, it helps break down language and cultural barriers that often prevent refugees from accessing mental health services.

Peace Therapist now has a roster of over 100 psychologists providing therapy in Arabic, English, Kurdish and Turkish, making it uniquely accessible to the refugees it was designed to serve. After the devastating earthquakes in February 2023, the platform expanded its reach, offering free services and partnering with international organizations to support thousands of people from the host community who were also impacted by the disaster. Users say it has helped them regain confidence, return to school, find work and contribute to social cohesion.

*"I've been working on Peace Therapist since 2018.  
It's the passion of my life."*



2024 Regional Winner  
Middle East and North Africa

Nada Fadol  
EGYPT



Nada Fadol laughs with a friend at the Rouh Initiative in Alexandria, Egypt.

Nada Fadol, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2024 Regional Winner for the Middle East and North Africa, is a Sudanese refugee who has mobilized essential aid for hundreds of families fleeing to Egypt in search of safety.

When Sudan erupted in conflict in April 2023, Fadol was among the first responders providing food and water to refugees arriving in Aswan, Egypt. She had been living in Egypt for several years already and drew on her personal connections to rally volunteers and connect philanthropists with refugees in need.

To date she enlisted nearly 100 people – refugees from Sudan, Yemen and Syria as well as Egyptians – to provide vital assistance in

Aswan, Cairo and Alexandria. They have worked with the local community to secure housing for newly arrived refugees, set up safe spaces where refugee children can learn and play, and organized workshops to help refugees of various ages gain skills and earn an income. Additionally, Fadol has mobilized a group of Egyptian doctors who have provided pro bono health care to more than 120 patients.

To fund this work, Fadol has gathered donations from generous Egyptians as well as from within the refugee community. She is dedicated to helping others rebuild their lives in Egypt until Sudan is safe enough for them to return.

*“It would be a beautiful thing if we were able to help as many people in need as possible wherever they are.”*



2024 Honourable Mention

# The People of Moldova

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



Refugees from Ukraine head to a transport hub after arriving in Moldova.

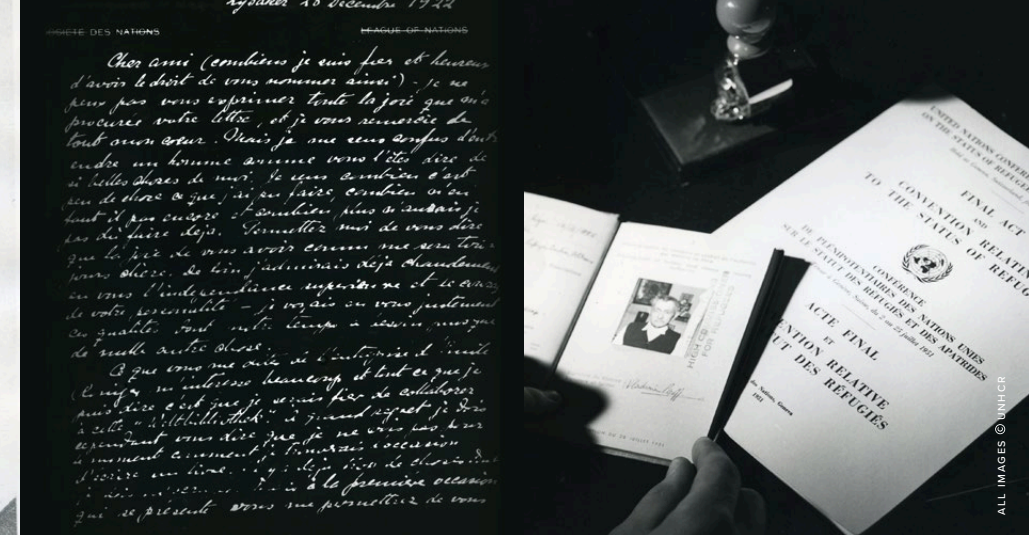
There is no greater testament to the strength of the human spirit than the collective actions of a nation in the face of overwhelming crisis. After a massive escalation of war in Ukraine since February 2022, forcing millions of people to flee across borders in search of safety, the people of the Republic of Moldova stepped forward with open hearts and homes. In a country of just 2.5 million, over one million Ukrainian refugees found safety, with 124,000 still hosted in the country.

From the first days of the war, ordinary Moldovans transformed their schools, churches and homes into sanctuaries. Thousands of volunteers, driven by a deep sense of compassion, worked tirelessly, often for 14 hours a day, to provide food, shelter and comfort to those fleeing unimaginable horrors. This spontaneous outpouring of support gave rise to Moldova for Peace, a civic initiative that united grassroots organizations, government bodies and citizens in a shared mission of refuge and inclusion.

The commitment of the Moldovan people goes beyond emergency response. It is a long-term project of inclusion and community building, where refugees are not just welcomed but also given the tools and opportunities to contribute to their new society. Moldovan citizens and civil society organizations work hand-in-hand to ensure that these new members of their community have access to education, employment and social services, fostering a sense of belonging in a foreign land.

Moldova, despite its own domestic challenges, stands as a beacon of humanity. The country hosts Europe's highest proportion of refugees to host population, a powerful indicator of its deep solidarity. The People of Moldova have not only provided refuge but have also laid the foundation for a more inclusive society, embodying the spirit of global compassion and resilience.





C E L E B R A T I N G

# unsung heroes

GIVING HOPE AWAY  
FROM HOME

In 1922, the Norwegian humanitarian, scientist, explorer and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for his leading role in the repatriation of prisoners of war, in international relief work and as the League of Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees”. It was a citation that illustrated the range of causes to which Nansen had devoted himself, and would continue to do so until his death in 1930.

But this man of many talents could easily have taken his career in other directions. Nansen’s first vocation, as a scientist, led him to new and brilliant insights into the nervous system (he was one of the first people to propose the theory of neurons). A love of adventure, a passion for skiing and sense of national pride took him away from his microscope and towards polar exploration, which brought him great fame and a small fortune.

Diplomacy became his third, and most impactful, calling. A spell as Norway’s ambassador to Britain was his springboard to wider international engagement after the First World War. Popular, famous and admired for his honesty and integrity, Nansen was entrusted with roles that more partisan figures could not have taken on.

One of Nansen’s enduring legacies is the spirit of humanitarianism evident in the work of unsung heroes working against great odds to find solutions for displaced and stateless people. Around the world today, these individuals and organizations exemplify his selflessness, determination and deep commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable. Their work provides hope and practical solutions, giving displaced people the

opportunity to rebuild their lives in dignity – even when they are far from home.

Nansen was an idealist willing to find pragmatic solutions. His vision, vigour and compassion live on through the work of the individuals and organizations that are awarded “the Nansen”.

**“Nothing great and good can be furthered in the world without cooperation.”**

—Fridtjof Nansen



# Continuing the Nansen Legacy

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award (originally the 'Nansen Medal') was established in 1954 and aims to extend the legacy of Fridtjof Nansen. Individuals, groups or organizations are recognized each year for their outstanding work to help refugees, internally displaced or stateless people.

Since its first laureate, Eleanor Roosevelt, the Award has celebrated the humanitarian contributions of more than 60 people and organizations all over the world. To demonstrate the truly global scale of the nominees, the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award also recognizes several regional winners each year.

UNHCR's Hope Away from Home campaign calls for renewed solidarity and firm commitments from States to uphold the rights of people seeking safety from war, violence and persecution.

The campaign was launched in 2023 amid record global levels of forced displacement and concerns over increasingly restrictive policies and shrinking options for long-term solutions and resettlement in many parts of the world, threatening the fundamental right to seek asylum.

Our campaign is calling for urgent action now to ensure that people fleeing war, violence and persecution can find safety, live in dignity with the communities hosting them and enjoy their basic human rights.

Solidarity with refugees and the communities that host them is needed now more than ever. Together, we can help protect the rights of people seeking safety so they can live without fear and thrive wherever they may be.



Take action, visit:  
[www.unhcr.org/hope](https://www.unhcr.org/hope)

Fridtjof Nansen, pictured in 1908. Nansen became the first-ever High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations in 1921 and shortly after developed the "Nansen Passport."





# Featured voices

(In order of appearance)



## Nomzamo Mbatha

Master of Ceremonies

South African actress, TV personality and humanitarian Nomzamo Mbatha is best known for her roles in the South African series *Isibaya* and the American movies *Coming 2 America* and *Assassin*.

Nomzamo served as a LuQuLuQu high-profile supporter for several years and became a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR in 2019, visiting refugee camps in Malawi and South Sudan. She also travelled to Kenya, where she spoke at TEDxKakumaCamp, the first ever TEDx event to be hosted in a refugee camp.



## Valentina Nafornița

Musical performance

Valentina Nafornița is a Moldovan opera singer and humanitarian who has grown into one of the most in-demand European sopranos of her generation, winning Singer of the World in 2011. She has appeared at the Vienna State Opera, Opéra national de Paris, and the State Operas of Hamburg, Berlin and Munich. Her first album, *Romance*, was released in 2020 to critical acclaim.

Valentina became a UNHCR high-profile supporter in 2023, and on World Refugee Day this year she sang in a recital organized in partnership with the UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg and the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the Council of Europe.





**Special Guest**  
Musical performance



**Cuisine Lab**  
Refugee chefs

Cuisine Lab is a Geneva-based social enterprise whose team of passionate refugee chefs offer catering and event services and operate a restaurant. Its staff includes hospitality industry professionals who provide training to help under-employed refugees achieve economic independence.

Cuisine Lab's programmes are designed to empower asylum seekers and refugees through opportunities to develop their skills, gain valuable experience, and secure meaningful employment to foster their social integration into their new community.



## MADE51

MADE51 is UNHCR's flagship livelihoods initiative and global brand which connects refugee artisans with local social enterprises to design, make and market home décor and accessories across the world. Through MADE51, which is the world's first ecosystem that delivers a viable route to market for refugee-made artisanal products, refugees have an opportunity to achieve economic independence by making use of their valuable skills, traditions, and heritage.

MADE51 is currently working with 35 social enterprises in 23 countries and is supported by an ecosystem of partners. Among these partners are the World Fair Trade Organization, as well as numerous private-sector companies that contribute their expertise to help include refugees in the creative economy.

We invite you to check out the display at tonight's reception, shop for refugee-made products, and explore ways in which your company could support refugee artisans by sourcing products from MADE51 or offering expertise as an ecosystem partner.



A group of women in Juba, South Sudan, assemble and finish products made by internally displaced people and refugees.

© UNHCR/ALA KHEIR



Coasters handmade by artisans in South Sudan as part of the MADE51 initiative.

© UNHCR/ALA KHEIR



A refugee crafts a beaded star in Cairo as part of a MADE51 initiative in Egypt.

© UNHCR/JAIME GIMENEZ



## Help us find the next hero

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award recognizes extraordinary individuals or groups whose work transforms the lives of refugees, internally displaced or stateless people.

The monetary prize, generously donated by the governments of Switzerland and Norway, enables recipients of the award to continue their life-saving work.

Human rights advocate and peace builder Elizabeth Moreno Barco, who is the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award's 2023 Regional Winner for the Americas, helps prepare food in her home village of Togoromá in Quibdó, Chocó Department, Colombia.



## How can you nominate?

**Nominations for the 2025 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award open in January 2025.**

Visit [unhcr.org/nansen](https://unhcr.org/nansen) for details

Anyone can submit a nomination.

We are looking for people, groups, and organizations who have gone above and beyond the call of duty and taken extraordinary action to deliver protection, assistance, and solutions for forcibly displaced or stateless people.





Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

*“The courage, dedication and spirit of solidarity that guided the humanitarian efforts of Fridtjof Nansen live on through this year’s extraordinary laureates. Norway is proud to be a longstanding partner to the UN’s oldest and most prestigious humanitarian award.”*

—Ambassador Tormod C. Endresen,  
Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN in Geneva



*“Hope comes from passionate changemakers who are closest to the challenges we face. The IKEA Foundation is proud to support the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award, honoring those who step up to help others and uplift entire communities. Their stories inspire us to keep standing with those forced to flee their homes.”*

—Jessica Anderen,  
CEO, IKEA Foundation



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

*“Switzerland is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Nansen prize, as it recognises year after year the work of unsung heroes who have often dedicated their lives to the cause of displaced and stateless people. This is a glimpse of hope in a troubled world. We are particularly pleased to honour this year the endeavours of five extraordinary women who are leading and effecting change in their local communities. Through them, we pay tribute to the power of women across the world. They are often the principal agents of social cohesion, reconciliation and peace.”*

—Ambassador Jürg Lauber,  
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva



*“Protecting the human dignity of people escaping conflict and persecution became a core concern of the international community in the 20th century. The two World Wars had forced millions to flee their homelands. As Fridtjof Nansen said it, ‘no future can be built on despair, distrust, hatred and envy’. May we never forget history, and our common duty to ensure refugees are safe and protected. The Republic and Canton of Geneva is proud to be associated with an event that duly honours the people who concretely commit to go beyond this call of duty.”*

—Nathalie Fontanet,  
President of the State Council





# NANSEN REFUGEE AWARD

With generous support from



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra



REPUBLIQUE  
ET CANTON  
DE GENEVE

POST TENERIAS LUX



VILLE DE  
GENÈVE

UNHCR Global Strategic Partner



IKEA Foundation