

# Biography of speakers

## Opening Remarks



**Ms. Gillian Triggs** is a UN Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection with UNHCR, taking up her appointment in September 2019. She is a public international lawyer who has held a number of appointments in service to human rights and the refugee cause, including as President of the Australian Human Rights Commission. Gillian oversees UNHCR's protection work in support of millions of refugees, asylum-seekers, those who have been forcibly displaced within their own country and stateless.

A dual national of Britain and Australia, Gillian has held a number of leadership roles, including as Director of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law in London, President of the Asian Development Bank Administrative Tribunal, Chair of the UN Independent Expert Panel of Inquiry into Abuse of Office and Harassment in UNAIDS, Dean of the

Faculty of Law and Challis Professor (Emerita) of International Law at the University of Sydney, and Professorial Fellow of the University of Melbourne. Gillian has supported many not-for-profit groups, including most recently as Chair of Justice Connect, that connects 10,000 lawyers to provide pro bono advice to asylum-seekers and others needing legal support. She is also the author of many books and papers on international law, including 'International Law: Contemporary Principles and Practice, (2nd ed. 2011) and Speaking Up (2018). In July 2021 Gillian was awarded a Ruth Bader Ginsberg Inaugural Medal of Honour in recognition of her fight for the rule of law and gender equality.



**Mr. Mohammad Abbas Karimi** has been supporting UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency since May 2021. Abbas Karimi grew up in Afghanistan, where he faced discrimination and bullying for his disability. Abbas started kickboxing as a child to protect himself as much as to keep active and channel his emotions. It was not until he jumped into a pool for the first time that he realised swimming was his true calling. At his first ever national swimming competition in Afghanistan, he became a champion. In 2013, Abbas fled from Afghanistan. After a long and arduous journey he arrived in Turkey, where he spent four years as a refugee before

being resettled to Portland, USA by UNHCR in 2016. Since then, Abbas has won eight medals, including silver in the Mexico City 2017 World Para Swimming Championships. He now lives and trains in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he's preparing for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games to compete as a member of the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) Refugee Paralympic Team. Competing along with five other team members, Abbas wants a place on the podium, which he believes will bring further hope and inspiration to the millions of displaced people around the world he trains to represent.

## Moderator



**Ms. Najeeba Wazefadost** is a refugee woman who fled Afghanistan and sought asylum from Australia by sea. She has spent several months in mandatory immigration detention before being recognised as a refugee. She has graduated with a Bachelor of Medical Science. Najeeba has been mentoring other young refugee women in effective advocacy. Najeeba has been active in documenting refugee stories and voices through regular community roundtables and consultations and presenting these concerns at key regional and international advocacy forums. She attended the "train the trainer" training on Gender and Human Rights and since then has been providing training to different groups on gender

and the empowerment of women, gender equality, women's rights and violence against women and leadership. Najeeba has been actively involved in the development of refugee-led networks at both regional and global level, which focusses on bringing together refugee-led organizations and refugee change-makers from around the world to further discuss their lived experiences and propose solutions for more effective and sustainable refugee policy. Najeeba is the founder of impactful refugee led networks including GRN (Global Refugee Led Network) and APNOR (Asia Pacific Network of Refugees) focusing on refugee leadership and participation and their engagement in policy discussion. Since her advocacy journey Najeeba has been awarded for her work on number of times " Human rights medal award, Local Citizen Award, Young Women of the west award and finalist NSW women premier award etc.

## Panelists



Development from the University of Edinburgh.

**Ms. Andhira Kara** is the Kenya Lead Researcher for a collaborative research project by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) and the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC), University of Oxford, examining the nature and impact of refugee-led organizations in East Africa and the Middle East. Andhira is originally from South Sudan but lives in Kenya as a refugee. This experience has emboldened her to stand-up for the rights of displaced people, including as a member of the Youth Advisory Committee for the Displaced and Refugee Youth Enabling Environment Mechanism (DREEM) project. She holds an MSc in International



**Mr. Hannes Einsporn** is a Senior Project Manager in the Robert Bosch Stiftung, where he is leading the Foundation's engagement on the "Future of Protection" in its Migration Programme. Previously, he worked for UNHCR and CARE, mostly in the Middle East. He holds a M.Sc. in Refugee & Forced Migration Studies from the University of Oxford and a B.A. in Political Science from the Freie Universität Berlin.



**Ms. Shaza Alrihawi** is a Human rights activist, Syrian refugee based in Germany. Co-founder, Steering committee member and Chairwoman of Global refugee led Network [GRN](#) Shaza Also a board member of the [New Women Connectors](#) . Co-founder of Global Independent Refugee Women Leaders (GIRWL). Member of the Gender Audit team for UNHCR. And former member of European Migrant Advisory Board [EMAB](#), an initiative of the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees the [Urban Agenda](#) for the EU. Shaza was deeply involved in human rights issues and have first-hand experience dealing with refugees and women's crisis as

she previously was working on SGBV cases in UNHCR Syria. Prior to that, she worked with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Centre for Strategic Studies in Syria. She holds a Bachelor's degree and a postgraduate degree in sociology and a Master in psychosocial work. In addition to political science from Maxwell school-Syracuse University. Currently Shaza Alrihawi is working as a research assistance in Lifbi Institute on a ReGES project (Refugees in the German Educational System) [LIFBI](#)



**Ms. Marriët Schuurman** is Director Stability and Humanitarian Aid in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously, she acted as the Human Rights Ambassador of the Ministry and coordinated the Dutch membership of the UN Security Council, in 2018. Between 2014 and 2017, she served as NATO's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, and until 2014, as the Dutch Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia.



**Mr. Mohamed Mukhtar Mohamed Ahmed**, is the Director of Programs, St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS), Egypt. Mohamed Ahmed is from Sudan, and has been in post as the Director of Programs at StARS for over two years. Mohamed has a bachelor degree in biomedical science from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Mohamed came to Egypt as a refugee in 2016 and joined StARS as a teacher in the same year. Mohamed was quickly and repeatedly promoted before taking up his current position. As the Director of Programs, he is responsible for coordinating and administering all aspects of programming at StARS, operating 30 teams across five programmatic areas (psychosocial, legal, education, unaccompanied children and youth, and community outreach). Mohamed says: 'StARS is my home; there's no place like it. It is time for refugees to have control over their own lives, and I will do all that I can to make this happen across the world.'



**Ms. Liliane Mukidi** is the founder of UMOJA , an organization, who supports young women. Liliane is a refugee herself in South Africa from DRC, she has a degree in management and wrote a book "IMANI" which mean Faith, about her story on her displacement. Liliane first started supporting refugee women with interpretation to clinics and hospital, then served as volunteer at Refugee Forum in Wymberg Cape Town.





**Ms. Alix Devillers** has been working in the development and humanitarian sectors for over 10 years, designing and implementing innovative solutions to improve the self-reliance of the most hard-to-reach populations in cities and camps. As Executive Director of Urban Refugees, she has been driving internal and external change to promote equal partnerships and meaningful participation of refugee leaders in the humanitarian sector. This led to the union of Urban Refugees with another organisation, the Xavier Project, to become a single organisation as of January 2022, to ensure that more focus and funding can go to RLOs work instead of international organisations, thereby paving the way for change in the sector.



**Ms. Rez Gardi** is an international lawyer and human rights activist. Rez sought to use her difficult start in life as motivation to succeed, becoming New Zealand's first female Kurdish lawyer. She graduated as a Fulbright Scholar with a Master of Laws from Harvard Law School. She is the first Kurd in history to graduate from Harvard Law. Prior to joining R-SEAT, she worked in Iraq as a Harvard Human Rights Fellow. Rez is the founder of 'Empower' – a youth and refugee-led organisation aiming to address the underrepresentation of refugees in higher education. Rez represented New Zealand in the first ever Global Refugee Youth Consultations in 2016 and helped form the Global Youth

Advisory Council to the UNHCR. She helped establish the Refugee Steering Group to the UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and currently leads as one of its representatives. She was awarded the Young New Zealander of the Year in 2017 for her services to human rights. She was a Women of Influence Finalist and NEXT Woman of the Year Finalist in 2018. In 2019 she was awarded the Outstanding Youth Delegate Award at the UN Youth Assembly and selected as an Eisenhower Youth Fellow. In 2020 she was awarded a Global Impact Award for her work fighting for justice and in 2021 she was selected as a Peace Ambassador for the One Young World Summit.



**Ms. Seyran Khalili** is an organisational psychologist working in the field of inclusion and social justice. She is active in civil society as a youth advocate working on empowering refugee and migrant youth with inclusion in civic space through the project Young Connectors at New Women Connectors. Her work in civil society revolves around creating a generation of young people who can be supported to interact with decision-makers and be the voice of the youth of their communities. Seyran graduated from King's College London with an MSc in Organisational psychiatry and psychology, earned the Associateship of King's College London and worked as a research consultant for the past 3 years within psychosis research.



**Ms. Noella Bidikukeba Ilunga**, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo, is a DAFI Scholar and 4<sup>th</sup> year student in Mass Communications. She is the president of DAFI Club in Zambia that facilitate student support and fundraising.



**Ms. Hafsar Tameesuddin** is a former Rohingya Refugee from Myanmar based in New Zealand. She has been an advocate for the rights of refugees, stateless people and gender equality for more than a decade. While she was in Malaysia as a refugee, she worked with Rohingya and other refugee communities from Myanmar in responding and prevention of SGBV including child marriages. She is a steering committee member of APNOR and New Zealand country coordinator of Free Rohingya Coalition [FRC] and acting Chair of APRRN. She also consults and works with the grassroot Rohingya refugees

from Bangladesh, Malaysia and Myanmar.