

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

EVERY YEAR ON JUNE 20, PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD RECOGNIZE WORLD REFUGEE DAY. This date was designated by the United Nations to honour the strength and resilience of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, persecution, environmental disasters and human rights violations. It is also an opportunity to recognize the contributions refugees make to the communities where they rebuild their lives and to reflect on our collective responsibility to create safe and inclusive societies.

Global displacement continues to rise at an unprecedented rate. Ongoing genocides, conflicts, wars and humanitarian crises in countries such as Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, Lebanon, Iran, Syria and other regions continue to force millions of people from their homes. These crises are deeply interconnected and have significant impacts across borders, affecting healthcare systems, economies, education and housing on a worldwide scale.

Canada has long been a destination for refugees seeking safety and stability. Refugees strengthen communities through knowledge and lived experiences, including within healthcare systems across the country. Many physicians, healthcare professionals and healthcare workers in Nova Scotia and across Canada have refugee backgrounds or have provided care in regions affected by conflict and displacement. Refugees and newcomers may continue to face barriers after arrival, including language access challenges, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, housing insecurity, employment barriers and difficulties navigating healthcare systems. These realities can significantly affect people's health outcomes and overall well-being.

Connection to Doctors Nova Scotia

At Doctors Nova Scotia, we recognize that equitable and culturally responsive healthcare includes understanding the realities of forced displacement and migration. Refugee patients may require trauma-informed care, interpretation services, culturally safe healthcare environments and assistance navigating unfamiliar systems. Physicians also play an important role in advocating for policies and practices that reduce barriers to care and support the dignity and well-being of all their patients.

We also recognize the important contributions internationally trained physicians (ITPs) and healthcare professionals, including many who arrive in Canada after experiencing displacement themselves, make to Nova Scotia's healthcare system. Their expertise, resilience and commitment strengthen healthcare delivery and improve access to care for people in communities across the province.

As global conflicts continue to rise, World Refugee Day reminds us that healthcare, human rights and global events are deeply interconnected. The impacts of war and displacement are not confined by borders; they ultimately shape the lived experiences of patients, colleagues and communities here in Nova Scotia as well.

Resources:

- UNHCR – un.org/en/observances/refugee-day
- Government of Canada's Support for Refugees – canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees.html
- Help for Refugees in Halifax – halifax.ca/about-halifax/diversity-inclusion/immigration-services/help-refugees-halifax
- Newcomer Clinic – nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/newcomer-health-clinic
- ISANS Programs and Services – isans.ca/explore-our-programs/
- Canadian Council for Refugees – ccrweb.ca



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