



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

World Refugee Day

Raising Awareness among High School Students

Every day, children are forced to leave their houses and flee their countries to save their lives. Some of them arrive in Alsace, where they begin or continue their education. This means that school children suddenly see other children arrive in their classes or leave, without always understanding the reasons. Refugees, asylum seekers and “illegal aliens” are terms used in the media or in colloquial conversation without always being properly understood, even by adults. In order to introduce these notions and to raise awareness among school children about how other children of their age live, the UNHCR Representation in Strasbourg, on the occasion of World Refugee Day (20 June), embarks on a programme of activities for 11-13 years old high school students from 9 to 27 June at the *collèges* Pierre-Claude in Sarre-Union, Hans Arp in Strasbourg-Elsau and François Truffaut in Strasbourg-Hautepierre, as well as at the Council of Europe.

Exhibition

For more than a week, the *collèges* are hosting an exhibition of drawings made by internally displaced and refugee children. Some of these drawings come from the refugee camp Goz-Beida in Eastern Chad; others were made in reception centres for *desplazados* (internally displaced people) in Colombia. A third set of frames presents drawings made by refugee children at the *Collectif pour l'Accueil des Solliciteurs d'Asile à Strasbourg (CASAS)*. Through their work, the children convey the violence they witnessed, their forced departure, but also their dreams. Every drawing tells its own story about what it is like to be a refugee.

Activities

The exhibition is accompanied by an interactive presentation: a boy who leaves to the North to live eternally; a girl whose first love is expelled; a mother who embraces a corpse spat out by the sea - three stories about flight and the hope to live in peace. Story teller Matthieu Epp visits every *collège* to recount the lives of refugees and migrants in a stage performance, followed by a discussion lead by a UNHCR staff member in which the students will try to reconstruct the journey of a refugee. A psychologist from *Pôle Réfugié*, a local NGO, will share with them her experiences with asylum-seeker children she worked with at CASAS. At one of the *collèges*, facilitators from the Council of Europe will lead a role play on refugees.

At the Council of Europe

Sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe, the drawings will be presented in the *Palais de l'Europe* from 20 to 27 June. The school children are invited to the exhibition on 23 June, which will be opened by Corien Jonker, Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The invited children will then have the opportunity to enter into a dialogue with parliamentarians from different countries in Europe.

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