



## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REFUGEES

SPECIAL DAYS

### PREPARATION

- Print out copies of *The Salvation Army's International Positional Statement: Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. You may wish to print it out in sections. Provide pens or highlighters.
- Visit the [Refugee Week website](#) and choose an activity (or selection of activities) to use in the session and gather any appropriate resources.
- Consider the question prompts below and see if there are any others you think may be helpful for your group.
- Provide Bibles or prepare to share the Bible reading on screen.

Be sensitive, as members may have personal experience of being a refugee or asylum seeker. Not everyone is comfortable or ready to share their story.

Be aware that members may hold strong views on the issue of refugees, asylum seekers and policies relating to them. It may be helpful to highlight this at the beginning of the session and encourage people to please bear this in mind when sharing their thoughts and opinions.

### INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Refugee Week is held in June with the UN International Day of Refugees falling in the second half of the month every year.

In this session we will be considering the current world refugee crisis and, by exploring some of the foundational stories of the Israelite people, considering what this may teach us about how we may respond to this crisis today.

Currently, forcibly displaced people in the world number over 100 million people<sup>1</sup> or around 1.3 per cent of the entire global population. To put this in some context, this is larger than the estimated population of the entire world at the time of Moses, and larger than the total population of the UK and Ireland today. This is the largest number of displaced people in history, and the numbers seem set to continue to rise.

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<sup>1</sup> [UNHCR - Mid-Year Trends 2022](#)

# Connect



The people of the UK and Ireland have demonstrated a mixed response to this ongoing refugee crisis. During the first year of the conflict in Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, 160,100 Ukrainians were welcomed to the UK<sup>2</sup>. The majority were welcomed into the homes of generous hosts, with more than 62,000 Ukrainians seeking sanctuary in Ireland<sup>3</sup>. More than 30 of our corps and centres in the UKI Territory have programmes that have welcomed and supported more than 1,400 individual Ukrainian refugees. Clearly, the people of the UK and Ireland can be extremely welcoming, generous and compassionate! This is a truly remarkable achievement.

At the same time, many other people from across the world seeking refuge in the UK have not found themselves welcomed in the same way, but instead vilified in the media and ostracised by many in our communities. Many asylum seekers have been dismissed as economic migrants; and while some are indeed that, the majority are granted asylum, their claims being assessed as legitimate. For example, of those crossing in small boats in 2022, 60 per cent will be allowed to stay as refugees<sup>4</sup>. Some UK Governments have even had well-documented policies creating a 'hostile environment' in an attempt to make the UK so unwelcoming that people seeking asylum will choose to leave<sup>5</sup>.

With an increasing global population of people displaced by war, climate change and other humanitarian crises, these incredibly vulnerable people will not be going away any time soon. How will we choose to respond?

This is a complex area, and many of us will have mixed feelings on the subject. In the next part of the session we will consider together how the Bible and the related position of The Salvation Army may speak into our thinking and wrestling with this subject.

## ACTIVITIES

### READ

Look together at *The Salvation Army's International Positional Statement: Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Share copies of the first three sections:

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<sup>2</sup> [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> ['Extraordinary' response: 62,000 Ukrainians in Ireland \(rte.ie\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Refugee Council Report](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The UK's hostile environment: Deputising immigration control \(sagepub.com\)](#)



# Connect



- \* Statement of position (page 1)
- \* Background and context (page 2)
- \* Grounds for the position of The Salvation Army (page 3)

You may wish to do this together, or you may want to form smaller groups and give each group a section each. Ask members to highlight passages that stand out to them.

## DISCUSS

After members have had a chance to read these sections, invite people to share what stood out to them, or use some of the questions below to help start a discussion. This could be in one group, or in smaller groups who then feed back their thoughts to the rest.

### Question prompts

- \* What stood out to you from what you have read, and why?
- \* 'The Salvation Army believes human life is created in the image of God and is a gift to be cherished, nurtured and redeemed (Genesis 1:27).' What does this mean to you?
- \* Have you ever been part of refugee or asylum response? What was the experience like? What did you learn? How were you changed?

The fourth section of the Positional Statement is called 'Practical responses' (page 4). The first point states:

'Inspired by the love of God for all humanity, The Salvation Army calls Salvationists to respond to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Acceptance, assistance and advocacy should be offered without discrimination.'

What might this look like?

## WATCH

Watch [Bohdana's testimony](#) (4 mins 30 secs) shared at *The Salvation Army Carol Concert* in 2022 (beginning at 48:38). In it Bohdana shares how important it was for her, and others like her, to find community and welcome at The Salvation Army. It brought her hope.

# Connect



## ACT

Choose an activity (or selection of activities) from the [Refugee Week 'Simple Acts' section](#) which provides a range of activities across two themes which you could use to respond in this area. Alternatively, you could use this time to plan your own action to respond to the current refugee crisis in your own way.

## LISTEN

At points during your meeting let your group listen to and reflect on some of the lyrics from these two songs.

### 'A Safe Place to Land'

by Sara Bareilles featuring John Legend.

Watch the [live performance video](#) or [with lyrics](#).

These are some of the lyrics:

'Don't need room for your bags, hope is all that you have  
So say the Lord's Prayer twice, hold your babies tight  
Surely someone will reach out a hand  
And show you a safe place to land

'Be the hand of a hopeful stranger  
Little scared, but you're strong enough  
Be the light in the dark of this danger  
'Til the sun comes up.'

### 'Safarna ala Europa'

[Our Journey to Europe] by Ndal Karam.

Listen [to the music](#).

This is a song composed and sung by Ndal, a Syrian refugee, living in the Netherlands. Composed at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, and at the time known and sung by many of the Arabic-speaking refugee world, the lyrics translated are:

'We suffered so much, so much, on our journey to Europe  
We entered many countries  
I can't count them all  
I can't count them all  
From one train to another, the eyes did not rest  
My journey was all on loans, I can't pay it back





'I lived in Syria, at the edge of my nerves, my brother,  
Afraid of a bomb that would fall and kill us ...  
This one wants Belgium; this one wants Germany; I am going to  
Sweden  
Oh Syria, gather us, we're tired of exile  
It's our fault, we will repay your debts'

## BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

### Fear the Lord

'And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

'To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations - as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.'

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

This passage occurs just after Moses receives the tablets with the commandments during the Exodus of the Israelites. It reminds us of their origin story as a nation. Where they have come from (v19), as well as the spectacular way they left (v21). How might the early Israelites' experience up to this point have helped form their understanding of God or of refugees?



# Connect



These commands were given to the Israelites, not when they were in the Promised Land but while they were still wandering in the wilderness. Despite being homeless wanderers and displaced people themselves, the Israelites were commanded to make strangers welcome in their community, even to love them!

Let's consider our own church and community. Place yourself in the position of the Israelites. How could you love, welcome and serve the refugees and asylum seekers in your community?

Now let's put the refugee and asylum seeker in the position of the Israelites - they truly are strangers in a foreign land after all! How could you enable them to love, welcome and serve your community?

## SONGS

- ♪ SASB 1011 'They shall come from the east ...'  
Watch [the lyric video](#) from Woody's video channel featuring the International Staff Songsters.
- ♪ SASB 1010 'Peace in our time, O Lord'  
Watch [the lyric video](#) by The Salvation Army.
- ♪ 'Way Maker' by Sinach  
Watch [the lyric video](#) by LyricsFeverReborn.

## WEBSITE AND CONTACT DETAILS

- Connect website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect)
- Family Ministries website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families)
- Emails: [familyministries@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:familyministries@salvationarmy.org.uk)
- Facebook: @sarmyfm
- Twitter: @ukifamily
- Instagram: safamily\_ministries



### Family Ministries

Having faith in the family

Providing intergenerational support, training and resources for

Children | Adults | Everyone



Family  
Ministries  
Having faith in the family