

WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

I WELCOME

**A 'HOW TO' GUIDE FOR
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISTS
ON CREATING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES**

**AMNESTY
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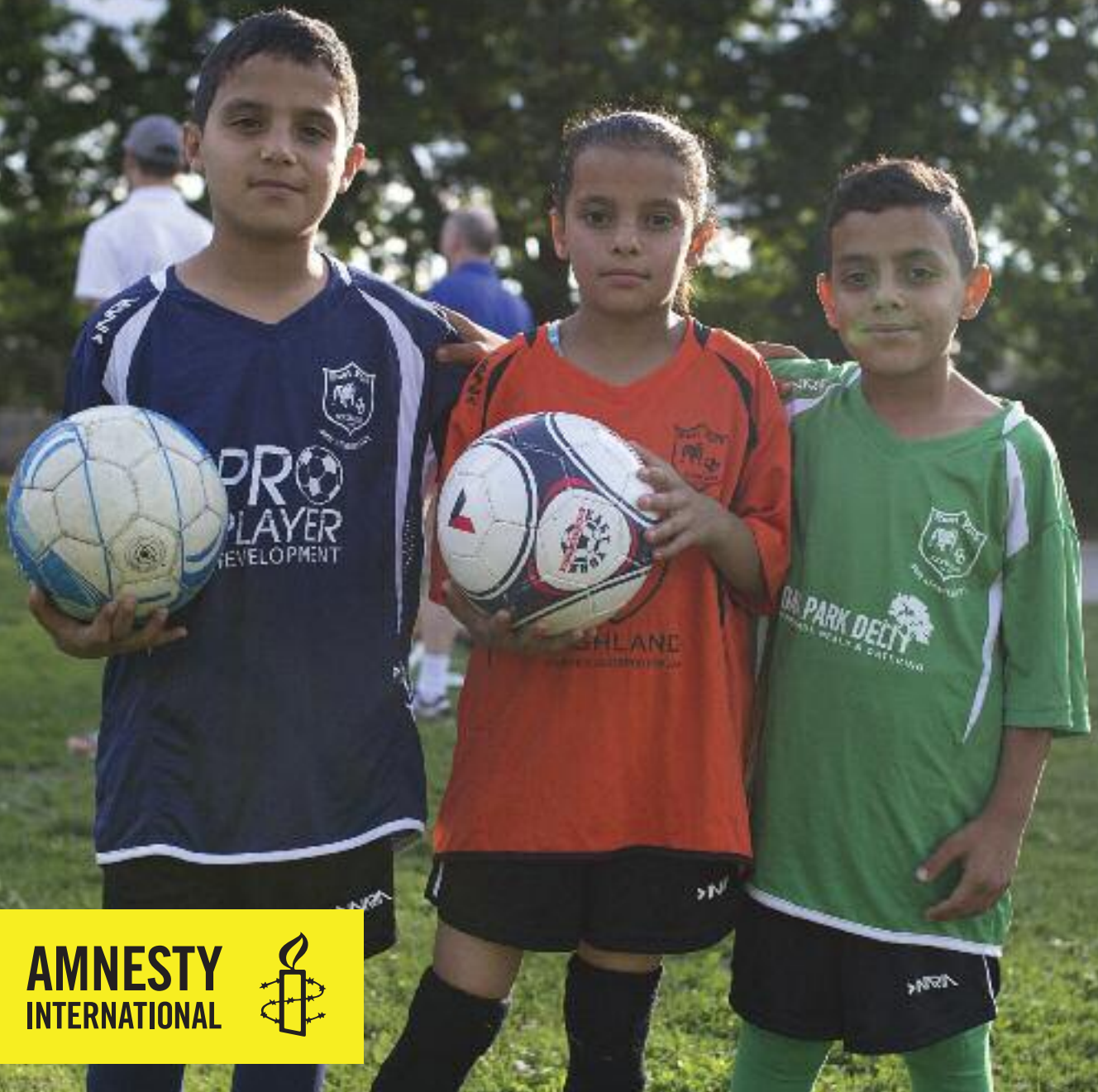
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INTRODUCTION

JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO WELCOME REFUGEES

GREAT THINGS HAPPEN WHEN PEOPLE COME TOGETHER. AROUND THE WORLD, INDIVIDUALS ARE DOING SIMPLE THINGS TO MAKE NEWCOMERS FEEL WELCOME IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE HAVE NO OPTION BUT TO FLEE THEIR HOMES AND COUNTRIES – AND RELY ON THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS TO HELP THEM START AGAIN. GOVERNMENTS AREN'T DOING ENOUGH. MANY ARE HOLDING THESE REFUGEES IN UNSAFE CAMPS ON BORDERS, AND REFUSING HELP TO MILLIONS OF OTHERS.



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BUT THERE IS SO MUCH THAT WE CAN STILL DO

'Welcoming Communities' is a core part of Amnesty International's **I Welcome** campaign, and is about encouraging a movement of people uniting to welcome refugees in their own ways. Whether it's by adding your voice to a petition, taking action locally, or something unique to you: we'd love to stay in touch about what we can do together.

Because together, we are powerful.

Join the **I Welcome** Community.

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Over 22 million people worldwide are refugees right now. The vast majority of the world's refugees (84% according to UNHCR figures) are hosted in low and middle income countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency) considers that in 2017 more than 1 million people were vulnerable and urgently in need of resettlement. Yet, global leaders are failing to meet resettlement needs, few countries are willing to champion refugees, and we are seeing ever more policies that harm refugees.

Worldwide, almost all of our leaders are turning their backs on refugees. In Mexico and the USA, they are detaining people fleeing extreme violence raging in Central America.

Many European countries are deporting people seeking asylum back to countries where they could face torture, rape – even death. Or they make dangerous deals that stop people coming at all, leaving thousands of people with no option but to risk death crossing the Mediterranean.

Australia is locking up people fleeing torture and persecution on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea and the remote island state of Nauru, where they suffer terrible neglect, abuse and further human rights violations.

The behaviour of these wealthy countries is threatening the international protection system for refugees.

Countries like Kenya, Jordan, Lebanon and Pakistan, which have historically done far more than their fair share to protect refugees, now have little incentive to do so. Unsurprisingly, these countries are also implementing increasingly restrictive policies towards refugees. In Kenya, for example, they are forcing Somalis who have lived in exile for years, even decades, to go back to a dangerous conflict zone.

All of this needs to change, now. And it's up to each and every one of us.

THE I WELCOME COMMUNITY

Even when the political environment can feel deeply hostile, Amnesty International remains a movement of people who believe that the things that unite us are far more powerful than those that divide us.

This is why we are promoting people-powered initiatives to welcome refugees. We don't have to wait around while governments get their act together to share responsibility for other important solutions, like resettlement.

Individual people all over the world are coming together in their own right to welcome refugees – simply because they empathise with people who have lost everything, and want to create open, friendly communities to live in.

Ireland has its own history of people emigrating and experiencing having to begin a new life elsewhere. We can live up to the ideal of Ireland as the land of a thousand welcomes.

Together, we can lead the way by doing something concrete right now – however small – to welcome refugees in our communities, from signing a petition to speaking your mind about refugees' rights, or joining a community group that supports them.

We want to create a more welcoming environment nationally and in communities for refugees and people seeking asylum. Our campaign is about solidarity with people forced by war, persecution and crisis to flee their homes and

countries. In the last year, we have witnessed the extraordinary courage of refugees and the incredible responses of ordinary people who have opened their hearts and homes to welcome them. Around the world, people want to help and they want to see their governments helping. Refugees and asylum seekers are standing up for their rights and participating in their local communities. Across the country people are doing amazing things to support refugees right now. 'Welcoming Communities' is about celebrating and adding to these acts of welcome.

Amnesty International is calling on groups across Ireland to make their communities welcoming – to show that they and their neighbours welcome people seeking asylum.

We want to encourage activists, members and supporters to work together with others in their local communities to create a more welcoming environment for refugees and people seeking asylum.

WHAT IS AMNESTY CALLING FOR?

Amnesty has championed the human rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants for decades. We work to make sure governments honour their responsibility to protect their rights, condemning any policies and practices that undermine them.

One example is making sure countries don't outsource their border controls – essentially paying another country to stop people reaching their borders. Another problem is when governments don't process people's asylum claims properly, leaving them in limbo – sometimes even in detention – for years. We also want to make sure migrants are protected from being exploited and abused by their employers or by traffickers.

REALITY CHECK

22.5 MILLION
TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN THE WORLD



84%
REFUGEES HOSTED BY DEVELOPING REGIONS

MORE THAN 50%
PROPORTION OF REFUGEES WORLDWIDE WHO ARE CHILDREN



1.2 MILLION
REFUGEES WHO NEED RESETTLEMENT RIGHT NOW

850,000
NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO SIGNED AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S PETITION TO THE U.N. DEMANDING THAT COUNTRIES DO MORE TO HELP REFUGEES





LANGUAGE MATTERS

Welcoming Communities is all about embracing those new to Ireland and creating a positive experience, including using inclusive and welcoming language. Here are some suggested words and basic phrases to use.

There are many reasons why people leave their country in search of a better, safer life. Some leave home to get a job or an education – they are usually called migrants. Others are forced to flee human rights violations, such as torture and persecution, from an armed conflict or another type of crisis. Or they might have been targeted just because of who they are or what they do – for example, for their ethnicity, religion, sexuality or political opinions. We usually refer to this group as refugees or asylum-seekers.

These people's journeys can be full of danger and fear. Some are detained by the authorities as soon as they arrive in a new country. Many face daily racism, xenophobia and discrimination, and risk falling prey to human trafficking and exploitation.

Others end up feeling alone and isolated, having lost the support networks most of us take for granted – their community, relatives and friends. For many, the fear of never seeing their families again is heartbreaking.

REPLACE ✗ 	EMBRACE ✓ 
Asylum seeker	People seeking asylum
Ireland should/must/can	We should/must/can
Fix our broken system, tackle the problem	Create a fair and efficient process, fairly examine each (person's) case
Comply with international human rights law, humanitarian and legal obligations	Treat others the way we want to be treated, do the right thing
Security, survival	Live in peace, care for children, live free from danger, safety
Be settled in Ireland	Become members of our communities
Fleeing persecution, violence and torture	Seeking safety, rebuilding their lives where it's safe, looking to set up a safe home
It is not illegal to seek asylum, not a security issue, not a threat, no need to fear, myth-busting	It is legal to seek asylum, it is an issue of basic rights, foundation of human dignity
Survive, not seeking a better life	Flourish, prosper, thrive

DEFINITIONS: WHO EXACTLY IS A REFUGEE, AN ASYLUM-SEEKER AND A MIGRANT?

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations there. Because their own government cannot or will not protect them, they are forced to seek international protection.

Our **I Welcome** campaign calls on governments worldwide to welcome their fair share of the worlds' refugees. With enough political will, our leaders can protect people fleeing conflict and persecution through a solution called resettlement. We are also pushing for other safe and legal ways for refugees to start new lives, such as reuniting family members who have been separated, community groups sponsoring refugee families to move to their country, and universities and businesses offering people study or work visas as a way to start a new life.

Governments should never force anyone to go back to a country where they are at risk of human rights violations. Instead, refugees should be offered a safe place to live and opportunities to work, a place to live and access to schooling and healthcare.

Just like everyone else, refugees shouldn't have to face discrimination. They should be allowed to move around freely, and to keep their own identity papers and travel documents.

Who is an asylum-seeker?

An asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection abroad, but hasn't yet been recognised as a refugee.

Seeking asylum is a human right, which means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum. The asylum procedure should be fair and effective, giving people access to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) if they need or want it.

Anyone who faces being sent to another country should be treated fairly and with dignity. The legal principle of non-refoulement means that no one should be forced to return to a country where their life or wellbeing would be at risk.

Who is a migrant?

A migrant moves from one country to another, often to find work. There may also be other reasons such as wanting to join relatives, or to escape natural disasters. Some move because they want to, while others feel forced to leave because of poverty or other serious problems. People can migrate 'regularly', which means they have official permission to stay in a country, or 'irregularly', which means they don't yet have this permission. Whatever their status, all migrants are entitled to have their human rights protected.

As with refugees and asylum-seekers, governments must protect migrants from racist and xenophobic violence, exploitation and forced labour. Migrants should never be detained or deported without a legitimate reason, or discriminated against.

What the law says

Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers' rights are protected by international law, regardless of how and why they arrive in a country. They have the same rights as all other human beings, plus special protections including:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14), which states that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries.
- The 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk being persecuted.
- The 1990 Migrant Workers Convention, which protects migrants and their families.

WHAT IS RESETTLEMENT?

RESETTLEMENT IS A WAY OF PROTECTING THOSE REFUGEES WHO ARE MOST AT RISK OF HARM (FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHO QUALIFIES BELOW).

Put very simply, this is how it works: You're forced to flee your home and escape to another country. There, you are recognised as a refugee by either the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, or the local authorities. But you still face threats, abuses like sexual violence, or problems getting life-saving medical treatment.

UNHCR will identify whether you meet their 'vulnerability criteria' and urgently need protection in another country. This is called **resettlement**.

If you qualify, you'll be waiting anxiously to be offered a place. And if you're very lucky, you might get a phone call one day saying you can pack your bags and settle down in a third country.

Only a small number of the total 22.5 million refugees are designated for resettlement. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has designated 1.2 million of the most vulnerable refugees as in need of immediate resettlement. These include: torture survivors, people with serious medical conditions and disabilities, unaccompanied children and children at risk, people persecuted for their sexuality or gender identity, and women at risk.



DIRECT PROVISION

While awaiting a decision on their asylum claims, asylum-seekers live in hostels and other facilities owned and run by commercial companies. (Those with private means, who can afford to, may decide to live outside this system.) There they receive food and other basic necessities, and access local health services and schools. They receive just €21.60 each week. This institutionalised type of system – called ‘direct provision’ – is unsuitable for long-stay residence. This is particularly so for families, children, victims of torture or sexual violence, and other vulnerable persons.

Despite some improvements following on a 2015 Working Group report, concerns remain about overcrowding and lack of privacy in some centres. Another problem is that many direct provision centres are far from local towns, amenities and communities – this can further the sense of isolation asylum seekers experience. The effect on people who have experienced torture of living in these centres for a long time can affect their recovery.

It’s clear that direct provision can have serious negative impacts on asylum seekers’ physical and mental health, and their ability to restart their lives once recognised as refugees.

Delays on the legal end - in processing asylum claims and appeals - cause many asylum-seekers to be in “direct provision” for far longer periods of time than this system was designed for. Also, there are serious questions about whether or not the type of accommodation, living environment and access to support services direct provision offers, could ever be acceptable and appropriate to the needs individuals seeking protection.

We will be increasing our work calling on the government to respect the rights of asylum seekers to adequate housing and an adequate standard of living, for themselves and their families.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

Community sponsorship is a model for refugee resettlement developed in Canada in the late 1970s, which invites local communities to come together to support the effective resettlement of refugees.

Community sponsorship has proven enormously successful in Canada where nearly 300,000 people have been welcomed through the programme since the 1970s. These programmes bring communities together with a fantastic sense of purpose to support refugees as they settle into their new lives. They deliver positive outcomes for refugees, as well as strengthening, deepening and enriching host communities.

The Irish Government has committed to the development of a Community Sponsorship Programme for refugees. We look forward to working with everyone involved to help support its development. Ireland is a welcoming country; a programme like this will help ensure that people across the country are able to extend a welcome to those who desperately need our support.



CREATING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

“IF YOU HAVE COME HERE TO HELP ME YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME, BUT IF YOU HAVE COME BECAUSE YOUR LIBERATION IS BOUND UP WITH MINE, THEN LET US WORK TOGETHER.”

Lilla Watson
artist, activist and academic

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WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELF

LEARN ABOUT AND CONNECT WITH REFUGEE AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

To be an effective advocate and ally in this struggle for refugee justice, it's critical you take the time to educate yourself and hear from the communities affected by and working on these issues. Reach out to relevant organisations in your area, and connect with local refugee and migrant rights groups (see list of some of the main organisations in Ireland on page 17).

TAKE ACTION

Add your voice to Amnesty's online actions supporting refugees. All countries should do their bit to protect refugees, but in reality many countries – including the richest – do very little. Some even do dirty deals with unsafe countries like Turkey, paying them to “protect” refugees but in reality leaving many people in harm's way. Through our global **I Welcome** campaign, Amnesty is pushing for all countries – especially the wealthiest – to welcome refugees through a range of different solutions.

USE YOUR VOICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Spread the word about what's happening to people fleeing violence. Use social media to add your voice to the debate and tag others who you want to join you. See the Social Media Guide below.

JOIN OR START A WELCOMING COMMUNITIES GROUP IN YOUR AREA

If you know others who are keen to welcome refugees, consider starting a welcome group together. If you're already part of a local network or club, you could decide to start focusing on supporting refugees. There might already be refugee organisations or welcome groups in your area that you could join forces with, combining your skills to take action that's locally relevant – whether it's fundraising, organising awareness-raising events, or forming a community sponsorship group to welcome refugees in your area.

THINGS YOU AND YOUR GROUP CAN DO

1. ORGANISE DONATIONS

Find out if refugee organisations or people living in Direct Provision centres in your area need donations, such as clothes, furniture and toys. Many amazing organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum depend on generous donations, including quality second-hand clothing, toys and furniture. Search online for local projects that need donations. You could also encourage friends, family and neighbours to contribute – particularly before and after birthdays and seasonal/religious celebrations, or when people move house and might be getting rid of unwanted gifts and items. Why not put together welcome packs for refugees and asylum seekers containing basic essentials and gifts? Make sure that donations are what refugees and the organisations working with them need, and make sure to donate good quality things.

2. SPREAD THE WORD

Raising awareness about the issues refugees face and how to overcome them is a vital part of creating a welcoming community. Why not host awareness-raising events? Invite a refugee speaker, or a professional working with them. Link up with other groups in your area to share resources and information. Research local projects working with refugees and people seeking asylum, and encourage your members, supporters, friends, family and colleagues to support them.

3. TARGET DECISION-MAKERS

Governments – national and local – should welcome refugees through a range of solutions. But most countries are either turning their backs completely, or doing very little. Your group has an important voice in showing public support for welcoming refugees, and demanding that decision-makers do more. Some groups work with their local authority to welcome newcomers. Others have invited government representatives to refugee-related events and urged them to represent their views in parliament. Start by discussing a course of action that works for you, and explore ways to put it into action. Amnesty International can provide lobbying training for your group in our Dublin office or your local community.

4. BECOME COMMUNITY SPONSORS

Sponsorship involves groups of people raising funds to welcome individuals or families, and supporting them over a period of time with finding housing, learning the language, finding a job and schools, etc. Sponsorship started in Canada in the 1970s, and has been shown to be a vital way for refugees to integrate into a new culture. Sponsors and refugees might end up becoming friends, and reshaping their communities in the process.

5. PROVIDE A SERVICE

The support refugees need and the help on offer differ from place to place. Your group might have important skills that can help fill a gap. Organisations working with refugees often need volunteers. Compile a list of resources you can offer, such as befrienders, language classes, well-being services by registered practitioners, housing and home repairs, career or legal advice, etc. Your community might already offer activities, support groups or social events that could benefit refugees. Volunteering can be a great way to get to know newcomers to your area and help them integrate. Local community facilities could possibly be used to host events or schemes designed to welcome people to the area. Draw up safeguarding policies to protect the people you work with and link up with organisations that already have experience of supporting refugees.

6. HOST AN INFORMATION TABLE AND COLLECT PETITION SIGNATURES

Raise awareness in your schools and communities about the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum, so they can take action. Organise a tabling on one of our **I Welcome** actions in community gatherings such as your library, campus, or local farmers' market. Email us to let us know you're interested, and we'll send you information and materials to distribute at your table.

7. SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Write a letter to the editor (LTE), or ask the board of your school or local newspaper to write an editorial. See Tips for Letters to the Editor below.

Tips for letters to the editor (LTE)

- Best chance of getting an LTE run is when it's in response to something that has been printed
- Keep VERY short; 150-200 words (papers have guidelines, so always check)
- Best to have one author
- Include name and contact information
- If you are writing in your capacity as a local group member, identify yourself as such
- If the outlet is interested, they may write back asking to verify your identity and confirm that the letter is exclusive to their publication

8. WRITE OR COLLECT SOLIDARITY CARDS

Design and write a solidarity card to parents in Direct Provision for seasonal occasions such as Mother's Day and Father's Day. Email us for guidelines and more information.

How to do it

- Write messages of hope and encouragement on paper, construction paper, or holiday cards. Avoid mentioning religion or politics.
- Be creative! Draw, colour, decorate with stickers, cut shapes, and share a quote or poem.
- Sign with your first name, city and country.
- **Optional:** Take a photo of you and your card(s), and post it on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram! Use the hash-tags #WelcomingCommunities and #IWelcome and tag @amnestyireland
- Send the cards to:
**Campaigns,
Amnesty International Ireland
Sean MacBride House
48 Fleet Street
Dublin 2**

9. SOLIDARITY DINNERS

[Adapted from <https://www.ramsi.info/solidarity-dinners/>]

The Solidarity Dinners have been run in Dublin by two groups called MASI (Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland) and RAMSI (Refugee and Migrant Solidarity Ireland). Solidarity Dinners are described as a gathering to share food, stories and friendship. The aim is to bring refugees and asylum seekers living in direct provision centres together with local people (Irish and non-Irish) in order to build links and connections, to get to know each other, to learn from each other and to welcome new people to the country.

It can be very difficult for people who are newly arrived in Ireland to meet local people – there can be a lot of loneliness and isolation. Organising and being part of a solidarity dinner is a great way to make people feel at home in Ireland and to learn about the cultures of new people arriving here.

Solidarity Dinners have also started in Waterford, Killarney and Mosney. If there is already a regular Solidarity Dinner running near you. Why not see what you can do to help?

If you would like to start a Solidarity Diner in your own area, below are a few pointers on how to get started.

- Solidarity dinners can be run in a local function room, hall or community centre. Sports clubs or churches might have halls you could use. You could even have it in a house.
- Talk to your friends, family and colleagues and ask them to help out.
- Invite people using social media, posters, flyers and word of mouth.
- Ask people to volunteer to cook on the day or in advance, and encourage attendees to bring food with them.
- Volunteers might also be needed to give people living in direct provision centres lifts to the dinner.
- In order to get in touch with direct provision residents, get in touch with the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI). MASI activists will know many of the people living in direct provision centres, and can spread the word in centres. Activists from RAMSI may also be helpful in this respect. Website addresses for these groups are on page 20.
- Decorate the space and ensure there are enough tables, chairs, plates and cutlery.
- Encourage people to mix. Food is great for bringing people together and if people are going to centres to give people lifts to the dinner, this can be a great way of making friendships and developing relationships. Another idea might be to organise a seating lottery to mix people around.
- Remember, your first Solidarity Dinner is likely to start small. Don't be discouraged – any Solidarity Dinner is successful if you bring people together to get to know each other over some nice food.
- For more tips and information, please see: <https://www.ramsi.info/solidarity-dinners/>



10. HOLD A FILM SCREENING

Screening a film is a great way to use a popular form of entertainment to reach out to people who are concerned about a particular issue.

An AI film night—including film, discussion and action opportunity— is even better, allowing you to educate and inspire others, giving them the opportunity to take concrete action, and to promote action for human rights.

Selecting Your Film

There are plenty of human rights-themed feature films out there to choose from. There are also excellent documentaries available. If you need more help please feel free to get in touch with iwelcome@amnesty.ie

Hosting the Event

Choose a well-known and accessible location, and publicise the event well in advance through email, flyers, posters and newspaper calendars. Be sure to ask people to sign in when they arrive, and always give people an opportunity to join your group and become part of the Amnesty International movement in Ireland.

Decide how you want to introduce the film's theme (don't forget to mention AI's position on the subject!). Include time after the screening for discussion, an introduction to AI and your group's work, and a concrete action opportunity— preferably one that relates to the film just shown.



REACH OUT TO YOUR LOCAL TDS OR POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Write a letter to your TD explaining why you personally support refugees.

Pointers for meeting with decision makers:

- Before meeting your TD, make sure to do some research to find out their position on the issue, as well as the positions of their party.
- Decide what you want to achieve – what is your aim? Do you have something specific you want them to do, such as attending an event, or making a supportive public statement?

During your meeting make sure you:

- Have stated your name, contact information, and your school, college, group name, or organisation if relevant
- Keep your presentation brief and to the point
- Make your reason for contacting them clear
- You state the specific action (ask or demand) you want the official to take and ask for a time specific response
- The reason for why the politician must take the action is made clear
- Tell a brief version of your own story to illustrate why action is so necessary
- You be polite but firm in your “ask”
- Thank the official/staff member
- Leave documentation including a short summary of what you are asking them to do (no more than 2 pages)
- Follow up your meeting with a thank you email or letter, in which you reiterate your ask.



REFUGEES WELCOME RESOLUTION

Does your city or school welcome refugees? Show it with a **Refugees Welcome resolution**.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the scope of the world's refugee crisis. Here is one concrete step you can take right in your own community.

WHAT

Refugees Welcome resolutions are official, nonbinding declarations of support for refugees that you can pass in your city or school.

Together we can create welcoming communities demonstrating local support for refugees across Ireland. People cannot say that Ireland does not welcome refugees if we can put hundreds of city and school officials on the record declaring their support.

Pass a student or local resolution, or get a school figurehead or local leader to make a public statement in support of refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum.

Whichever tactics you choose, amplify your action by live-tweeting, using FB Live, and capturing photos and videos.

Tag **@amnestyireland** on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and use **#IWelcome**

Share with **iwelcome@amnesty.ie** what you're doing (who, what, when, where), and stories of why you and other activists are acting in solidarity with those creating a new life in Ireland. We will share and celebrate the welcoming activities around the country to communicate how many people are working to create welcoming communities in Ireland.

For questions; requests for Amnesty-branded materials like shirts, signs, etc. or to let us know you're interested in taking action, email us at **iwelcome@amnesty.ie**

EASY HOW TO GUIDE:

- Step 1** Identify your local county councillors. Find out when and where their advice clinics are held. If you do not know them or how to contact them just let us know. We can pull the list together for you.
- Step 2** Visit their advice clinic to advise them about the Welcoming Communities initiative and ask for their support in bringing a cross-party motion to the County Council. Perhaps you and/or members within your group already have relationships with some of the councillors? If you do, use the opportunity to have an informal conversation with the councillor about the action.
- Step 3** Identify the date, time and location of your local county council's meetings. Contact the council to find out how members of the public make representations to the council. It may be that only councillors can bring motions before the Council. In this case you will need to solicit cross-party support for such a motion.
- Step 4** Put in a written request to the county council to speak at its next meeting. Again, staff in the office can help with this process.
- Step 5** Once a date is set please let the office know as soon as possible. We will work to prepare you to brief the council about the action and will try to be on hand to attend the meeting with you for moral support. Circulate briefing paper to all county councillors (the office will provide this paper).
- Step 6** Build grassroots support for the resolution by reaching out to churches, mosques and other groups active on refugee and human rights issues.
- Step 7** Publicity: when you succeed in getting a commitment from the local council the Communications Team in the office will help you publicise it and the Campaigns Team will help you celebrate the success. The Campaigns Team is here to facilitate your work as human rights activists and we are happy to support you in any way we can.

HOLD A VIGIL

You could hold a vigil to mark the anniversary of a particular event, or an international day like World Refugee Day. Vigils are typically silent and solemn gatherings held in a public space. Vigils can be a powerful means to raise awareness on an issue, while engaging members of your community in a meaningful act of solidarity. Consider inviting not only students and community members but other organisations as well. Vigils can also draw attention to broader campaign events you have planned.

Some points to remember when organising a vigil:

- **Obtain permission** from local authorities or your school or university administration. Allow enough time to obtain a permit as it can take weeks for it to be issued.
- **Plan your program.** Set the length of the vigil by determining how it will start, how it will end and what will happen in between. Some vigils begin with a few words about the purpose, a reading about a case or a poem that demonstrates the importance of the issue or situation. During the vigil, participants may either maintain a silent focus or choose instead to read names or statements relevant to the issue. To wrap up, give a call to action, and make sure everyone is asked to join AI Ireland.
- To get your message across, be sure to have **clearly worded signs** that demonstrate your purpose. Incorporate photos if possible (i.e., a giant photo of the person or issue you are focusing on).
- Bring lots of **candles**.
- Use wax-paper cups to prevent candles from dripping or blowing out.
- Use the candlelight to create a pattern - a line or a circle - that can easily be seen by others.
- Don't block entrances, sidewalks or passages.
- Designate two **spokespersons** to stand apart from the vigil line or circle to distribute action materials and talk to passers-by who want to know more about your action. The vigil itself should be as free from distraction as possible.
- As with any event, **bring a sign-up sheet** and clipboard to pass around or to greet people with. Make sure everyone joining the vigil has a good understanding of the purpose of the vigil. Remember to follow up with newcomers afterwards.
- Remember to schedule a candle-lit vigil for a time when it is sure to be dark.



SPORT WELCOMES

Sports teams and clubs are at the heart of many communities in Ireland and can be very influential. Sport is often viewed as a ‘universal language’, and those involved can speak to a completely different audience from Amnesty’s traditional supporter base. Local sports teams and clubs have a key role to play in helping refugees feel welcome, in promoting community cohesion, enabling people to get together and in amplifying a positive message about refugees to challenge negative attitudes and hostile media coverage and political rhetoric.

Sport Welcomes is a way for sports teams and clubs to celebrate the contribution refugees have made, and continue to make, with the aim of creating opportunities for refugees, people seeking asylum and others in their communities to get together. Our long-term vision is for sports clubs to show welcome to and solidarity with refugees and people seeking asylum on a regular basis as part of the season. Sport Welcomes also gives sports teams and organisations the chance to develop or strengthen their community links, in line with **I Welcome**.

HERE ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS TO MAKE SPORT WELCOMES A SUCCESS:

1. The message

Make sure you have a simple, non-political, positive message. Stay away from making a financial or traditional campaign request. Sports clubs receive hundreds of requests from charities asking them to support this or that cause, but Sport Welcomes is about celebrating the contribution refugees make and the important role sports clubs have in promoting community cohesion and integration.

2. Approaching teams/clubs/organisations

Identify the teams and clubs in your area which are most likely to take part. Do you already have any links with local teams or clubs? Are there any local teams that have or have had refugee players or that run community projects for refugees and asylum-seekers? Tell the clubs a compelling story about why they should be involved (maybe a refugee player had been a fans’ favourite or scored a winning goal, but even if they hadn’t they were/are still part of the team).



3. Engage other organisations and work in partnership

If there are well-respected organisations in your area working on discrimination in football, engage with them early. Tell them about Sport Welcomes, ask them if they will support it, in an official capacity and with any ideas or contacts and promotion. Building up trust with these organisations can help to get the leagues on board, if they have a historical relationship with each other. Amnesty International will work with the larger national organisations.

4. Amnesty International will be working to get the larger organisations on board

Please let us know if you have any success. Once a few local clubs are on board, we will ask the national structures to support it – again officially to boost the profile of the initiative, and to help with contacting clubs and promoting it on social media.

5. Approach your networks

Find out if colleagues, other activists, friends, relatives and supporters have useful contacts they'd be happy to share, or even better to follow up themselves.

6. Keep the activities simple

Make sure the activities you suggest to clubs are things they already do so they don't need to create anything new, but just ask that they do them specifically for refugees over a particular weekend – a tournament for young people, free tickets, a tour or player visit, for example. Clubs benefit from taking part with good PR and improved community links.

7. Local media

Once you have a local club or two on board, make contact with local sports journalists who will be interested and let them know about it. Sport Welcomes lends itself well to human-interest stories and journalists might be interested in visiting the community project of a club working with refugees and meeting some of the participants. We can provide support when you are at this stage.

8. Get some players on board

Journalists are also likely to want to speak to footballers, hurlers, rugby players, etc. with a refugee background, and these players can also help you to promote Sport Welcomes.

9. Make it easy to publicise

Make it as easy as possible for teams, clubs and organisations to publicise and celebrate Sport Welcomes, by doing as much of the work for them as possible. We can provide a template press release for clubs to send to their local media, copy for match day programmes and club websites and social media graphics for them to use.

And finally...



10. Don't give up!

The hard work and persistence is worth it!

AI Ireland is happy to help with any suggestions or ideas wherever you think we could be helpful, and can co-ordinate a phone meeting for participating activists to share updates and ideas.

5 THINGS YOU CAN ASK BUSINESSES TO DO IN YOUR LOCAL AREA

1. BECOME A REFUGEE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

Research any existing government advice about employing refugees. Could you partner with organisations helping refugees to find work? Find examples of best practice from other companies in your area who are already doing this or preparing to do so. Draw up a plan for how your company could encourage refugees to join your workforce and how you will get them the right support to thrive. In return, your business could benefit from the range of skills and experiences that newcomers can bring.

2. ENABLE YOUR EMPLOYEES

If your staff is open to supporting refugees, create opportunities to make it happen. You could set up a corporate volunteering scheme for staff to join during working hours. Or brainstorm fundraising ideas, such as donating a day's pay. If community sponsorship is available in your country, offer your staff the space, resources and support to form a sponsorship group.

3. USE YOUR COMPANY'S PURPOSE TO CREATE SOCIAL IMPACT

Many businesses are using their resources and business model to help tackle the challenges refugees face. For example, a social networking giant could partner with non-profits to improve access to jobs; an internet provider could expand coverage to refugee camps or a local bakery offer trainee programmes. Connect with local refugee organisations in your area to find out how your specific expertise can fill gaps and make a difference.

4. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Many refugees have a high level of education and skills, but can often struggle to access jobs because of government policy, discrimination, etc. Employers can also face challenges in recruiting refugees because of the documentation needed, costs, etc. Companies could potentially push for changes in laws and policies to make it easier to employ refugees. Good employers will provide fair and decent work for any refugees they hire, including paying the minimum wage and safe working conditions and making sure their hiring practices don't discriminate against anyone.

5. HELP REFUGEES REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

Training and a decent job often come top of refugees' wish list in a new country. By offering people work experience, placements, training and workshops, your company could help ignite someone's career by strengthening their CV and helping them gain new skills and qualifications. You could also look for opportunities to invest in refugees' own business ventures by offering start-up advice, loans and grants, mentoring and networking opportunities.

5 THINGS YOU CAN ASK UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS TO DO

Many refugees miss out on an education. The chance to study abroad in peace and safety can represent a very rare chance to realise their dreams and full potential.

1. PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships can help refugees to continue their education somewhere safe, learn a new language, and prepare for one day rebuilding their home country. Scholarships often cover course and maintenance fees, accommodation, travel and visa costs. Students and alumni can lobby their schools and universities to offer scholarships, and help fundraise to cover the costs.

2. GIVE ADVICE AND BE FLEXIBLE

Meeting admission requirements can be very hard for refugees and asylum-seekers, who may have had to flee without academic certificates, even their passports. Schools and universities can make it easier by providing online advice and open days where refugees can learn more about available courses and support on offer, and how to meet the expected qualifications. For example, institutions could offer tests or short courses to assess competency in the absence of a diploma or transcript.

3. PROVIDE ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Academics who have been forced to flee human rights violations sometimes link up with education institutions for temporary research and teaching opportunities, remote collaboration, or to build networks and share ideas and skills. Look for initiatives you could hook up with, including learning providers running online courses, and reach out to them.

Academics and teachers are also well-placed to help raise awareness and spark debate on issues affecting refugees, by encouraging critical discussion among their students, publishing articles and producing academic research.

4. CAMPAIGN FOR STUDENT VISAS

According to the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, only 1 per cent of refugees currently attend university. Many are blocked from studying abroad because of visa restrictions and entry requirements that are difficult to meet. Students, alumni and university bodies can work together to raise awareness and take practical action, including lobbying the government to offer refugees more accessible student visas.

5. BE A GOOD HOST

Refugees might need extra support to get the most out of their studies. Identify issues that could affect their well-being and establish ways to tackle them. Many have experienced horrific events at home, or undertaken dangerous journeys to escape. Others arrive alone and can find it stressful to settle in a new country. A befriending scheme can make newcomers feel at home, as can practical support, for example, financial advice, guidance about claiming asylum and paths to employment, and language training.

ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

There are many groups and organisations at the local level doing tremendous work to welcome newcomers to Ireland. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the larger, national groups and organisations. If you need assistance locating or contacting a group or organisation in your area, please contact iwelcome@amnesty.ie and we will do our best to help you.

Doras Luimní	http://dorasluimni.org/
Immigrant Council of Ireland	https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/
Irish Refugee Council	http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/
Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland	https://jrs.ie/
MASI – The Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland	http://www.masi.ie/
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	https://www.mrci.ie/
Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre	http://www.nascireland.org/
New Communities Partnership	https://www.newcommunities.ie/
Places of Sanctuary Ireland	http://ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/
RAMSI – Refugee and Migrant Solidarity Ireland	https://www.ramsi.info/

The Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition (IRMC) is a coalition of Irish NGOs that seek to advance the rights and dignity of people on the move and those in need of international protection. <http://www.irmcoalition.com/>

For any additional questions please email iwelcome@amnesty.ie

These are all suggestions for ways to create a more welcoming environment nationally and in local communities for refugees and people seeking asylum. There may be initiatives you are already involved in, or skills and talents you can use to welcome. If you have any other ideas to share about how to create **Welcoming Communities**, we'd love to hear from. And please keep us updated on how you get on. Please email iwelcome@amnesty.ie

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black hat, a beige trench coat, black leggings, and white sneakers, is walking on a cobblestone street. She has a blue backpack. The street is lined with trees and buildings. Several rectangular mats with the word 'WELCOME' are laid out on the ground. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO WELCOME REFUGEES

**GREAT THINGS HAPPEN WHEN
PEOPLE COME TOGETHER.**

THE NEXT STEPS ARE YOURS...

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**









WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

I WELCOME

A 'HOW TO' GUIDE FOR
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISTS
ON CREATING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES



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