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LOCAL CELEBRATIONS TO MARK WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Amnesty International Toronto Mural Celebrating the Freedom of Movement to be Unveiled in October

Toronto - On Sunday, June 20th, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will celebrate World Refugee Day events in cities across the globe. Established in 2001 by the United Nations, World Refugee Day raises public awareness of the estimated 16 million refugees worldwide. Local celebrations are being held across Toronto, including youth poetry readings at Nathan Phillips Square.

In its annual report, the High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, highlighted the importance of this year's events, noting that violent conflicts in 2009 saw the highest number of people uprooted by conflict and persecution since the mid-1990s.

“As there is an ever-growing number of people searching for safety, the global community is increasingly finding new ways to prevent people from exercising their right to seek asylum,” said Gloria Nafziger, Refugee Program Coordinator, Amnesty International. “Freedom of movement, protected by Article 13 of the UNDHR, is vital for protecting the rights of refugees and internally displaced peoples who flee persecution and conflict.”

Amnesty International Toronto (AITO), which advocates for the rights of refugees, will unveil a mural celebrating freedom of movement this October. The mural is part of **AITO's Project: Urban Canvas**, an effort to create one outdoor mural in Toronto for each of the 30 articles in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). The mural, designed by Susan Rowe Harrison, will be painted by William Lazos and features poetry from the **Governor General Award recipient, Dionne Brand**. The mural was made possible through the partnership of Arts Etobicoke and PS Group of Companies.

Amnesty International is a worldwide grassroots organization working towards the observance of all human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international law conventions. Among other human rights issues, Amnesty International calls on all states to share responsibility for the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and migrants and to adhere to their state obligations under international law.

To see the colourful murals that have already been completed and view the brief videos describing the community groups and mural artists who created them, visit www.aito.ca/urbancanvas.

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