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For immediate release

***Every Second Counts* for refugees, says UK for UNHCR in latest campaign for Ramadan**

[15 April 2021] This Ramadan, UK for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency’s charity partner in the UK, urges greater solidarity with millions of refugees and internally displaced people hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launching with a [powerful film](#) on social media, the charity’s ‘[Every Second Counts](#)’ campaign encourages everyone celebrating Ramadan in the UK to consider how they can ease the burden for forcibly displaced families that are away from home and their loved ones.

This year, thousands of refugees and displaced people will be observing Ramadan under incredibly difficult circumstances, as COVID-19 compounds pre-existing challenges such as poverty, food insecurity and access to livelihoods and education.

In Syria, for example, almost 60 percent of the overall population – 12.4 million people – are now classed as ‘food insecure’ meaning that families regularly do not have enough food to eat.

For Halima, an internally displaced older widow from Idlib, Syria, this means that she is not eating properly and cannot afford “proper food,” instead eating whatever she can find. Forced to flee her home seven years ago, a spike in food prices now means that she will struggle to make ends meet in Ramadan and beyond.

Thinking back to happier times, Halima says: “You cannot compare Ramadan now to how it was back then. I remember all the dishes I used to prepare, and all the gatherings. We used to sit and share our meals together. Life was good... but now there is nothing.”

UNHCR estimates that three in four refugees worldwide can only meet half or less of their basic needs. Families have cut spending on food, are no longer able to pay rent or have been forced to stop children from attending lessons, even where schools have remained open.

Emma Cherniavksy, CEO of UK for UNHCR said: “Many people who have fled conflict and violence recall vividly the instant that their lives were changed forever.

“While it took seconds for their lives to turn upside down, it also takes just moments to offer a helping hand. With your support, we can help refugees and the internally displaced have a roof over their heads, a warm meal for iftar, clean water, and hope for a better and safer future.”

The pandemic has meant that many refugees and displaced people have lost livelihoods and been thrust into extreme poverty, with disastrous and far-reaching consequences.

As well as raising funds to help provide life-saving assistance to displaced families, the charity also supports UNHCR’s calls for the needs of displaced people to be fully considered in the global response to the pandemic, saying that people forced to flee their homes must be included on an equal footing in global vaccination programmes and economic recovery plans.

‘Every Second Counts’ is the theme of UNHCR Ramadan appeals worldwide this year. To find out more about Every Second Counts and how you can get involved, visit www.unrefugees.org.uk/every-second-counts/

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For photos of Halima, additional stories or media interviews contact Sara Guy, sguy@unrefugees.org.uk, 0208 183 0121.

Watch Every Second Counts here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02gmvgKZme0&t=61s>

About UK for UNHCR

UK for UNHCR is the UN Refugee Agency’s national charity partner for the UK, building solidarity and raising funds to protect refugees worldwide through UNHCR’s work.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, leads international action to protect people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. Thanks to voluntary contributions from our UK supporters and partnerships, UNHCR teams can deliver life-saving assistance like shelter, food and water, help safeguard fundamental human rights, and ensure people have a safe place to call home where they can build a better future. UNHCR also works to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality.

UK for UNHCR is a registered charity in England and Wales (registered charity number 1183415). Learn more at www.unrefugees.org.uk