



United Nations Association of Australia  
WA Division

NOV/DEC 2013

# UNAAWA Newsletter



## Seasons Greetings!

Thank you to all our members for your support in 2013. You have helped us achieve another very active, productive year.

You are invited to our Planning Day on **Saturday 1 February 2014** from 10am—2pm at the Office in which we will reflect on our past achievements, consider our priorities and plan future activities. We would welcome your involvement—just let the Office know for catering purposes if you would like to come.

On **Wednesday 29 January**, we are co-hosting the screening of ‘A Story of Survival’ at the Maccabi Community Hall in Yokine for the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (details on flier inside). All are welcome to attend.



Please note that our Office will be closed until Monday 6 January. The UNAAWA Executive team wishes everyone a wonderful festive season and a healthy and happy 2014.

*[Carolyn Gatward, President UNAAWA]*

## WFUNA Remembers Nelson Mandela, Global Citizen

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), including its Officers, Executive Committee and member UNAs was deeply saddened by the death of Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s first black president and Nobel Peace Prize winner for his fight against white minority rule. We would like to send our wholehearted condolences to Nelson Mandela’s wife Graca Machel and his family.

A truly global citizen, Nelson Mandela has since decades **served as the Honorary President of WFUNA**. Elected President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999, he dedicated his efforts to dismantling apartheid and tackling institutionalized racism, poverty and inequality. We commend his tireless support to fostering racial reconciliation in spite of 27 years of imprisonment. Described as the “father of the nation”, he has received international recognition for his anti-colonial and anti-apartheid position through over 250 awards including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

WFUNA joins the international community in commemorating Nelson Mandela’s devotion to democracy and equality and we honour his role as an exceptional leader and inspiration to those fighting oppression and deprivation.

*[Bonian Golmohammadi, Secretary-General WFUNA, 6 December 2013]*

## Australia for UNHCR / UNAAWA Briefing– Syrian Crisis

The briefing with UNAAWA and Australia for UNHCR was held on 26 November 2013 at the Constitutional Centre of WA in West Perth. This initiative was in response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis as a means to update the public on the magnitude of this situation.

Special guests were Naomi Steer, National Director of Australia for UNHCR (photo bottom right), who talked about her experiences during a recent visit to the Syrian border and Thomas Mukoya from Reuters Nairobi, who is an award-winning photojournalist with over 15 years experience documenting events from the frontline in Africa. We also had a special message from our UNAAWA's President, Carolyne Gatward concerning the work of the UNAA to build a people's movement to support the UN.

In an effort to address concerns around humanitarian crises including Syria, UNHCR provides dignity in refugee camps, by enabling a sense of relief once displaced people become more settled. However, the level of minimum required calories per refugee is 2,900 but in the Kakuma camp in Kenya this figure is being reduced to only 1,600. This is due to increasing demands on rations and refugee overpopulation in this campsite.

The biggest concerns that the UNHCR is trying to address are providing better shelter, education, improved livelihoods and water and sanitation in the camps. Moreover, there is a particular focus on pregnant women i.e. allowing them to give birth in a safe environment. A recent initiative is the Refugees United Service, which is an online system that allows people to post their whereabouts and helps them locate other family members displaced by war. The system works much like Facebook through internet cafes onsite.

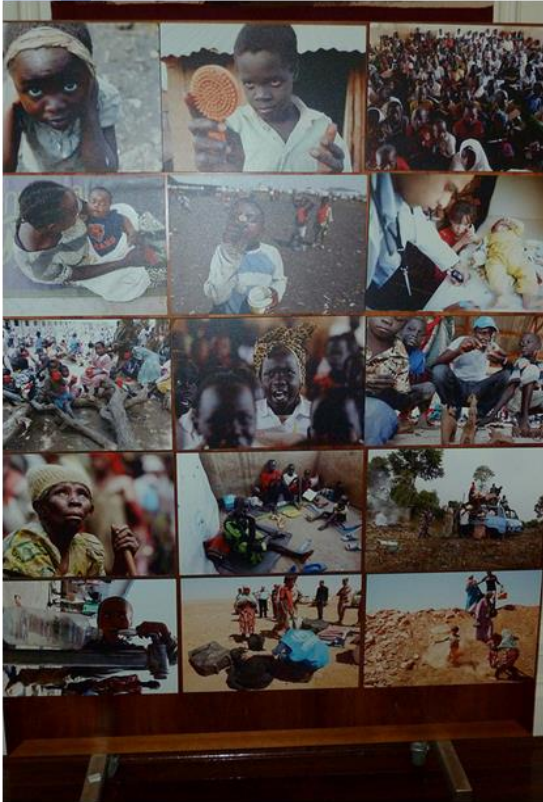
Carolyne Gatward commented that Australia still feels rather removed from global crises when they occur. Our influence is now becoming more widespread due to the emergence of the social media era. In approaching how to best communicate our message, we can assess how our government is performing. For instance, the Report Card recently issued by UNAA is a means to assess how the government is performing over various parameters, including the treatment of refugees. The President added that the UNAAWA needs donations and support from the public to help fund the work of our organisation.

We were presented with an impressive photographic gallery of works by Thomas Mukuoya. He displayed samples of photos from refugee camps in Africa and military operations. We were left with no doubts as to the outstanding quality of his work.

In his closing remarks, he pointed out that in the Congo, people have to flee from their own military. He also alluded that no one can walk barefoot because rocks are quite sharp. They even puncture vehicle tyres! He explained that he wanted to take photos that capture the reality of war. His interest lies in using mobile phones to capture and widely spread his journalistic project, using this technology across Africa.

*[Niloha Mendoza, UNAAWA Treasurer]*







## Remembrance Day 2013

It is with special privilege that I continue to attend this poignant ‘sacred day’ a distant world in Perth from the killing fields, in laying a UNAAWA wreath surrounding the ‘flame of remembrance’ to recall the time and place of Armistice and the end of World War I.

On a much closer front at the real battlefields of the Western Front, I vividly recall my invited visit several years ago with Minister Stephen Smith to the Villiers– Bretonneux Dawn Service. As daylight broke, the sight of fields with so many white crosses was daunting for on this very soil our Australian and allied French armies defeated the enemy. The year was 1918 - just three years previously in 1915, our young ANZAC troops were defeated at Gallipoli in the aborted landing, with the tragic loss of many young lives.

This spirit of ANZAC (1915) also continues, although the Remembrance Commemoration of today is that of three years later to ANZAC. In these battlefields of war, thousands of men’s lives were lost, lives injured physically and mentally and in the end we must question what has been achieved? Has the world learnt lessons from the conflicts?

Let us spare a moment remembering our gallant soldiers.

*[Joseph Caruso, UNAAWA Global Representative]*

## United Nations - Important Dates

### December 2013

- 1 Dec—World AIDS Day
- 2 Dec—International Day for Abolition of Slavery
- 3 Dec—International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 7 Dec—International Civil Aviation Day [ICAO]
- 9 Dec—International Anti-Corruption Day
- 10 Dec—Human Rights Day
- 18 Dec—International Migrants Day
- 20 Dec—International Human Solidarity Day

### International Year 2014

- International Year of Small Island Developing States
- International Year of Crystallography
- International Year of Family Farming

### January 2014

- 27 Jan—International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

### February 2014

- 4 Feb—World Cancer Day [WHO]
- 6 Feb—International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation [WHO]
- 13 Feb—World Radio Day [UNESCO]
- 20 Feb—World Day of Social Justice
- 21 Feb—International Mother Language Day [UNESCO]



## UN Day 2013

On 24 October, the United Nations Association of Australia (WA) Inc celebrated UN Day with about sixty people on a sunny afternoon at Grace Vaughan House in Shenton Park. The theme of the event this year was Australia's foreign aid and how it is helping to implement the UN's 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Our event supporters included the Department of Health WA and AusAID.

Following the opening address by the UNAAWA President, Carolyn Gatward, we saw a video message from UNSG Ban-Ki moon. Shane Kempton, President of the Military Brotherhood Motorcycle Club of Perth (photo right), took to the stage to address the gathering and observe a minute's silence for all the servicemen and women that have been killed or injured in providing overseas peace-keeping assistance on behalf of Australia. A special wreath was laid in their memory (photo bottom left).



Our special guests were Davina Hunter, Chair of UN Young Women Australia Perth; Michael Sheldrick, Global Policy and Advocacy Manager from the Global Poverty Project and Akram Azimi, Young Australian of the Year 2013. Due to prior commitments overseas, Michael and Akram sent through a video especially recorded message for our celebration. The event concluded with music from the Great Nile Musical Group.

Overall, the audience were entertained and interested in the diverse topics that were presented, and we received lots of positive and encouraging feedback.

*[Ricardo Hernandez, UNAAWA Communications Officer]*

*[Photo above: Neesha Seth, Vice President UNAAWA.]*





# International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

Organised by the Holocaust Institute of WA, UNAAWA, NCJWA (WA)  
and the Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of WA

**On Wednesday 29th January 2014**

at 10:30 am for 11:00 am start

## ***“A Story of Survival”***

*screening of interview with Mr Henk Piller*

"WHOEVER SAVES A SINGLE LIFE SAVES THE WORLD ENTIRE" - *Talmud*

**The Maccabi Community Hall - 61 Woodrow Avenue, Yokine**

10:30 am display of books and DVDs on the Holocaust

Light refreshments will be served

inquiries NCJWA WA [wa@ncjwa.org.au](mailto:wa@ncjwa.org.au) or UNAA WA [office@unaa-wa.org.au](mailto:office@unaa-wa.org.au)



## Human Rights Day 2013

This year we celebrate the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' 20 years of achievements. Today, OHCHR is the leading institution charged with implementing international human rights and a crucial partner to WFUNA and UNAs worldwide. I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the role of WFUNA and United Nations Associations in advocating for the establishment of the Office in the lead up to its creation in 1993.

This has been another eventful year for human rights at the UN. The Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted 107 resolutions, decisions and statements. Landmark resolutions included strong condemnation of violence in Syria, the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on DPRK, protection of human rights defenders (HRD) - including a resolution on protection of women HRDs, and improved access for persons with disabilities. Mandates for Belarus, DPRK, Eritrea, Iran and Myanmar were extended.

The second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) began successfully with 42 States reviewed - including Israel, which returned to the UPR in October - and over 2000 recommendations accepted.

In November, fourteen new members were elected to join the Human Rights Council in 2014. On that occasion, WFUNA joined civil society organizations in encouraging them to uphold the highest human rights standards as they serve their terms.

Many challenges remain, most notably a worrisome drift in cuts to human rights funding, despite a steady increase in demands to the Office. Human Rights is one of the UN's main pillars, yet OHCHR currently receives less than 3 per cent of funding from the UN's regular budget. Concerned about this trend, the European UNAs who met in Brussels in November issued an Appeal to their Governments encouraging them to increase both regular and un-earmarked voluntary contributions to the Office.

As funding dwindles, the role of civil society becomes increasingly relevant to ensure that human rights policies are translated into national laws and stay relevant to challenges faced by individuals and local communities worldwide. Building civil society's capacity to implement human rights standards remains crucial to the fulfilment of the UN's human rights goals.

To this end, WFUNA continues to strive towards building stronger UNA engagement with the UN Human Rights system. This year, we launched a successful capacity-building program: Civil Society in Action for Human Rights, which empowers UNAs to engage effectively with the UN Human Rights system. Twelve UNAs from all regions of the world are already participating in this program -- I encourage you to join them in 2014!

*[Bonian Golmohammadi, Secretary-General WFUNA, 11 December 2013]*



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