



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## UNHCR Office in Japan in Partnership with FilmAid International Launches the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Refugee Film Festival in Tokyo, Japan on June 20<sup>th</sup> - World Refugee Day

(Tokyo, Japan ) June 12, 2008 - UNHCR Office in Japan and Japan for UNHCR in partnership with FilmAid International announce the launch of the third annual Refugee Film Festival, starting on World Refugee Day, June 20, in Tokyo. "Refugees – the human side" is the theme of both World Refugee Day and the festival.

Following the success of the second festival last year, which received more than 7,000 visitors, the Refugee Film Festival 2008 showcases an expanded line-up of over thirty award-winning documentaries, features, and short films.

This year's festival, taking place between TICAD and the G8 Summit, will focus on the situations in Africa, and the ongoing conflict in Iraq. The festival opens with the Academy Award nominated film WAR DANCE, which portrays the lives of displaced children in a Ugandan refugee camp as they energetically prepare for the National Music Competition. Other internationally acclaimed documentaries, fiction films and a diverse selection of short films portraying stories of resilience and inspiration of people forced to leave their homes due to war and persecution will be presented.

FilmAid International will be presenting a series of short films as part of the festival titled "Kakuma Camp Films", free of charge, on Monday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:30pm at Instituto Cervantes de Tokio. FilmAid International's series of short films were produced by refugee youth in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp. The films are a byproduct of FilmAid's Refugee Filmmaking Project, program that puts video cameras in the hands of refugee youth and teaches them basic camera and editing skills in an effort to help them tell their own stories through video. Through the project, refugee youth improve self-esteem while receiving hands-on skills training and a means of communicating within their community.

Among several Japan Premieres of the Film Festival is *The Heart of Fire*, feature film from Berlin Film Festival whose cast members themselves are Eritrean refugees. Special retrospective of films by *Rabah Aimeur Zaimech*, Algerian filmmaker who brings his latest film from this year's Cannes Film Festival, will focus on the issues of integration. All of the films tell personal stories - emotional journeys of individuals experiencing forced migration.

The Refugee Film Festival is part of UNHCR's year-round commitment to raising awareness of the plight of the world's ever-increasing 33 million refugees. It is the festival's aim to give a voice to seldom-heard stories of hope, despair, and courage, and to inspire involvement of the public in making a difference.

Sadako Ogata, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has expressed her support stating: *"The Refugee Film Festival screens films which portray refugees, not as people of misery, but as human beings with rights and dignity. I hope these films will deepen our understanding of people who come to Japan to seek asylum and protection."*

Films will be screened free of charge at five venues: L'Institut Franco-Japonais de Tokyo, Goethe-Institut Japan, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Tokyo, Institute Cervantes de Tokio, and NHK Fureai Hall. Film screenings will be followed by Q&A sessions. Several film directors from overseas and Japan will be present.

The films from RFF will be travelling to Kyoto in June, Nagoya in September, and are also shown in Hong Kong, Bahrain, Australia, and France.

**For further information on UNHCR and RFF, please contact:**

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**For a complete list of films, screening times, and special events, please visit the official Refugee Film Festival website, [www.refugeefilm.org](http://www.refugeefilm.org)**

## **ABOUT REFUGEE FILM FESTIVAL**

In celebration of World Refugee Day on 20th June 2008, UNHCR and Japan for UNHCR proudly present the 3rd Annual Tokyo Refugee Film Festival. The Tokyo Refugee Film Festival is becoming a vital component of UNHCR's year round action plan to raise awareness of the plight and triumphs of the world's 33 million refugees and internally displaced persons. A select array of films from across the globe gives voice to seldom-heard stories of hope, despair and resilience. In line with World Refugee Day's theme for this year, the festival draws attention to the human side of refugees.

Building on the success of the first two festivals in Tokyo, this year's festival will showcase a promising new lineup of award-winning features and documentary films.

Film screenings will be followed by discussions and Q&A. Come and witness stories of strife, courage and human resolve! [www.refugeefilm.org](http://www.refugeefilm.org)

## **ABOUT FILMAID INTERNATIONAL**

FilmAid International is a nonprofit humanitarian aid organization that uses the power of film to educate, entertain and inspire refugees uprooted by violent conflict throughout the world. Through strategic use of film and video, FilmAid communicates life-saving information to refugee audiences on critical health concerns and issues such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, conflict resolution, sexual and gender based violence, women's rights and repatriation. By creating a cinematic event that crosses cultural, literacy and gender and age barriers, FilmAid is able to reach out to every member of the refugee community, resulting in messaging that has reached over 30,000 refugees in a single night. By conveying educational messages in an entertaining format, FilmAid also aims to engage the minds and imaginations of those who have suffered the effects of war and poverty, stimulating physical well-being and alleviating psychological trauma. [www.filmaid.org](http://www.filmaid.org)

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