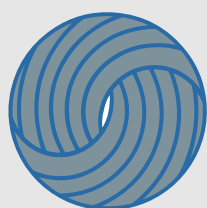


ANNUAL REPORT 2023

REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK



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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since its launch, RSN has witnessed significant transformations in the landscape of forced displacement over the past decade. While the number of displaced individuals has surged alongside inexcusable tragedies and loss of life, externalization agreements and heightened deterrence mechanisms have eroded the international refugee rights framework. At the same time, the concept of localization has gone from a niche term to a pivotal concept embraced by international organizations (IOs), donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who have pledged commitments and taken tangible steps towards its realization. Despite the political actions of various governments, advocates continue championing rights and principles, challenging and securing victories in courts worldwide.

Having maintained a central commitment to localization and principled partnerships since our founding, we were excited to create a timeline for the localization of our project with long-standing partner, RRT, with plans to handover our Department of State-funded program by 2025. This is incredibly significant for us as it serves as a culmination of our efforts to strengthen RRT's organizational capacity and ensure its self-sufficiency and sustainability. This will not mean an end to our collaboration with RRT, but it will signify a major shift in which our role as intermediary of US Government funds ends.

With this decision came an ideal opportunity for further introspection, reflection, and consideration of strategic priorities and future possibilities and directions. That process, conducted internally with critical stakeholder feedback, took into account the evolving landscape of our field and the current state of play with regard to the current funding environment. The process yielded a number of important conclusions about the directions we envision for RSN in the years ahead.

1. We are and will continue to look at how we can be innovative in securing legal protection, including through exploration of how technology such as AI/LLMs can be leveraged in the course of providing legal assistance and enabling access to information (ATI).
2. As a critical complement to securing legal protection in major host states, we will expand our work on family reunification and other complementary pathways to countries in North America, Europe and beyond. In doing so, we will ensure a focus on additionality, working with partners to build capacity, carry out research, and expand access to information on these topics.
3. We are continuing to look at the practical realities of today, where forced displacement affects many more than those displaced due to conflict, war, and persecution. In 2023, we explored what our role could be in responding to displacement due to disasters, including climate and environmental-induced displacement, and in the coming year we will begin our first project cooperation that will integrate these drivers into our work in Pakistan.



Zaid Hydari
Executive Director
at RSN

STATISTICS & CONTEXT

A Turkey hosted over 3.6 million refugees in 2023, the world's largest host country of refugees for the 10th year.

B Afghans account for the second largest refugee community in the world, after Syrians. These 2 populations alone amount to 35% of the world's refugees.

C The largest number of people displaced within their countries due to disasters in 2022 was reported in Pakistan (8.2 million) following extensive flooding across the country.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Capacity Development

01

Afghanistan Country-of-Origin (COI) event series

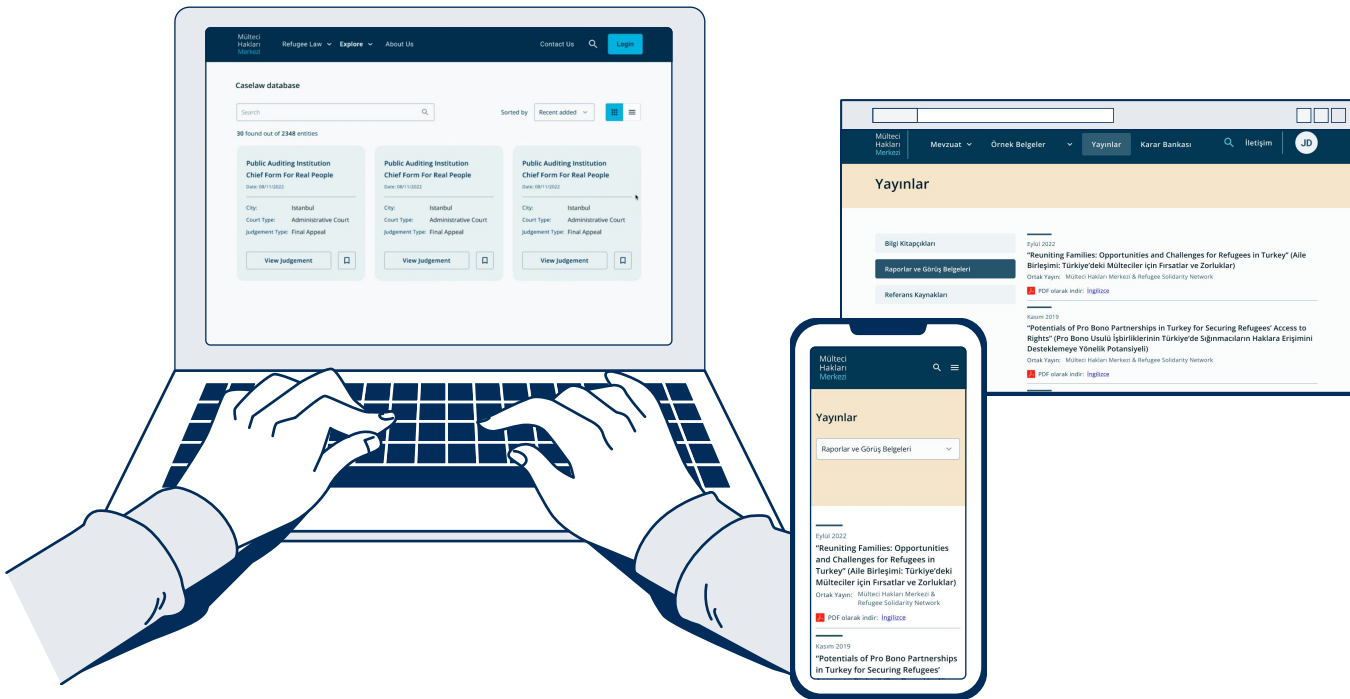
RSN and RRT co-organized an online training/learning series primarily geared towards Turkish lawyers that focused on Afghanistan and the conditions in the country. The series sought to bring expert opinion to bear on who is at risk of persecution under the Taliban government. This is critical information for lawyers representing Afghan asylum-seekers given that many country reports on AFG, including those in the Turkish language, are often not specific with regard to who is at risk under the Taliban (a critical component of what asylum and refugee adjudicators look for in making decisions). This series was designed in response to requests made by Turkish lawyers during RSN's 2022 Regional Convening on Afghan refugees.

02

Re-launched Information Platform for Lawyers in Turkey

During the summer of 2023, the redesigned and expanded Refugee Law Information Platform was officially re-launched. This informational resource platform is aimed primarily at a Turkish legal practitioner audience, and is entirely in Turkish language.

First-of-its-Kind Searchable Database of Positive Refugee Caselaw Precedent



The relaunched Platform includes a brand new resource: a searchable database of more than 70 judgements issued by Turkish courts which set positive precedent regarding the protective and progressive implementation of asylum law. This caselaw database is the first platform to offer users access to first instance administrative court decisions from Turkish courts. By providing access to these positive precedent-setting judgements, Turkish lawyers representing asylum applicants and refugee clients will be able to form stronger case strategies to defend the rights of their clients.

User-Friendly Redesign: In addition to new features, the Information Platform has received a full-scale redesign including full-site search, the ability to sort and bookmark documents, and other modifications aimed at improving users' experience in finding and using the platform's resources.



03

GRF Localization

As part of the 2nd Global Refugee Forum, RSN was featured as a speaker in an official side event focused on localization. The event not only provided an opportunity for RSN to showcase its approach to localization through the RSN-RRT partnership, but allowed for RSN to learn from others in the field about the latest efforts to ensure that international support for refugee response is rooted in local institutions.

04

RMTeam external evaluation

In the fall of 2023, RSN commissioned an external evaluation of the RSN-RRT partnership. Carried out by RMTeam, the evaluation and its corresponding report take stock of the impact that RSN's partnership has had on RRT as a unique, national organization and protection actor in the world's largest refugee host country. The evaluation applied the NEAR Localization Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF) as part of the methodology and approach of the evaluation.

Awareness-Raising

In early Summer in the lead up to World Refugee Day 2023, RSN held its Third Annual Walkathon, a participatory event that helps build awareness and community while enabling us to raise funds for our work. We were thrilled to see members of our network wearing our shirts and spreading solidarity.



WALKATHON

Research & Advocacy



***Undoing Precarity* Launch with Professor Tendayi Achiume**

RSN, in partnership with Global Strategic Litigation Council, held an event to explore the effects of colonialism on refugee protection, with a focus on South Asia. RSN shared insights from its report *Undoing Precarity* and arranged for two partners to speak, one from Pakistan and one from India.

Family Reunification panel event in Istanbul

RSN and partner, Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT), co-hosted a panel event to discuss present challenges and opportunities of family reunification for refugees in Türkiye. The invite-only event—that took place in Istanbul on July 20th—brought together civil society organizations, and international organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) for an informative discussion on the complementary pathway. The event also served as an opportunity to share and build on findings from RSN and RRT's report, *Reuniting Families*.



Amazon Web services grant expands RSN's Access to Information work

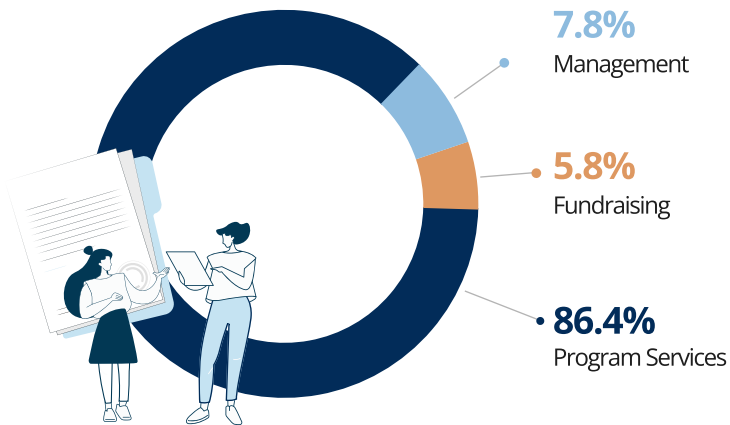
RSN received support from AWS to conduct a research project exploring the potentials and current limitations of AI and Natural Language Processing (NLP) applications aimed at expanding asylum-seekers' access to information regarding their rights and obligations. This research project leverages the legal informational materials produced through the RSN-RRT partnership as a factual knowledge base and explores both the opportunities and pitfalls introduced by these emergent technologies.

UNHCR ExCom NGO side-event in Geneva

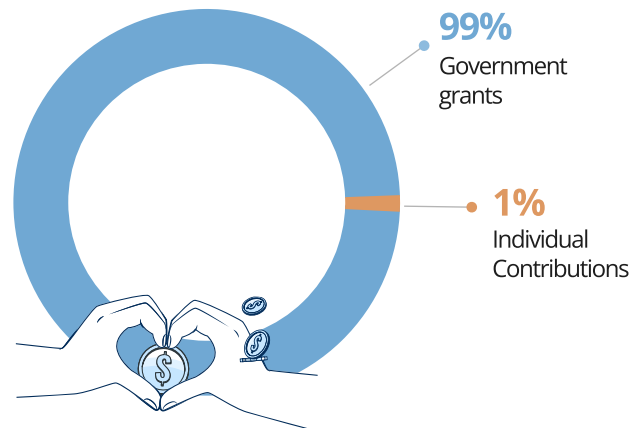
RSN was featured as a speaker in the official NGO side event to the 74th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee. The event explored third country solutions and the connection between legal protection and self-reliance. RSN's intervention championed the work of national NGO partners in helping make more accessible third country placements.

FINANCES

01 Expenses



02 Income



BOARD MESSAGE

Friends and Supporters,

Ten years ago, RSN began by collaborating with Refugee Rights Turkey to aid refugees in what was then the country hosting the largest population of refugees in the world. 2024 marks RSN's 10th year in action, and Turkey remains, as it did in 2014, the holder of that record. RSN's work is as relevant today as it was then, and in 2023, RSN continued its support of partners working to assist the needs of refugees and asylum seekers globally.

Notable actions in 2023 included the creation of an online learning series for Turkish lawyers to better understand risks of persecution in Afghanistan. In addition, the Turkish language Refugee Law Information Platform was officially re-launched. The revitalized platform includes a searchable case law database that will bolster legal efforts helping asylum and refugee clients.

We were delighted to welcome Lubna Ghanayem to the team in 2023 as Head of Operations. Her extensive field experience has been and will continue to be a great boon for RSN.

The Board is proud of RSN's work in 2023 and throughout the last decade. We look forward to 2024 and the contributions to come.

Sincerely,
RSN Board of Directors

Acknowledgments

RSN thanks the US Department of State for its ongoing financial support as well as the support of each and everyone of the more than 75 individuals that generously supported our work through individual donations.

RSN also thanks White & Case LLP for generous in-kind assistance.



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