

PLACE

Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago

DATE

08 June 2021

UNHCR congratulates the Tokyo 2020 Refugee Olympic Team

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, celebrates today's announcement by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of the Tokyo 2020 Refugee Olympic Team. After years of training, **29 refugee athletes** will head to Tokyo in July to participate at this summer's games. They will compete in 12 Olympic sports in the Games, sending a powerful message of solidarity and hope to the world this summer, bringing further awareness to the plight of over 80 million displaced people worldwide.

"I am thrilled to congratulate each of the athletes who have been named in the Tokyo 2020 Refugee Olympic Team," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, who is also Vice Chairman of the Olympic Refugee Foundation (ORF).

"They are an exceptional group of people who inspire the world. UNHCR is incredibly proud to support them as they compete at the Tokyo Olympics. Surviving war, persecution and the anxiety of exile already makes them extraordinary people, but the fact that they now also excel as athletes on the world stage fills me with immense pride.

"It shows what is possible when refugees are given the opportunity to make the most of their potential. These athletes embody the hopes and aspirations of the more than 80 million people around the world who have been uprooted by war and persecution. They serve as a reminder that everyone deserves the chance to succeed in life."

Venezuelan refugee boxer's Olympic dreams come true

Among those 29 extraordinary refugee athletes is Eldric Sella, a Venezuelan refugee boxer living in Trinidad and Tobago. Eldric's dream since he was a young boy first stepping into the boxing ring was to compete one day in the Olympics. When he first sought asylum in Trinidad and Tobago in 2018, he thought he would be leaving his Olympic dreams behind.

"We are delighted to see Eldric's passion, determination and hard work so wonderfully rewarded," said Miriam Aertker, UNHCR's Head of Office in Trinidad and Tobago. "As one of his unwavering supporters, we understand the immense challenges he has overcome to make his dreams come true. His perseverance and optimism in the face of all his obstacles are inspirational and we believe he will be a symbol of hope to all those who are forcibly displaced, especially the more than five million Venezuelans who have left their country."

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**UNHCR
congratulates the
Tokyo 2020 Refugee
Olympic Team**

Second ever Refugee Olympic Team

This will be the second time a Refugee Team has participated in the Olympic Games, following the first at the Rio Olympic Games in 2016.

As part of its more than 25-year partnership with the IOC, UNHCR works with the IOC and the ORF to harness the power of sport to help create a world where every person forced to flee can build a better future. Together with the IOC, the ORF, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and other partners, UNHCR is leading the global call for a world in which all displaced people, including those with disabilities, can equally access and participate in sport.

ENDS**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- The refugee team members, as announced by the IOC can be found [here](#).
- For profiles of all athletes, [click here](#).
- For a selection of press artwork, [click here](#).
- For [The Journey](#) video, depicting the stories of the Refugee Team, [click here](#).
- For UNHCR's profile of Eldric Sella, [click here](#).

For all media enquiries about today's announcement by the IOC, please contact pressoffice@olympic.org

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