



\*\*\*For immediate release:

## LGBTI refugee groups unite under **The Refugee Coalition of East Africa**

KAKUMA and NAIROBI, KENYA –Earlier this year, several refugee groups in Kenya joined together to form the **Refugee Coalition of East Africa**. RefCEA launched in Kenya during the summer of 2018, coinciding with the first ever LGBTQI Pride celebration in the Kakuma refugee camp.

The Refugee Coalition of East Africa is a community-based organization for and by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. RefCEA was established to unite the various independent LGBTQI refugee organizations in East Africa under an umbrella organization in order to facilitate long-term planning, advocacy, and representation, and to provide fiscal management and fundraising support for its members. Additionally, RefCEA oversees research initiatives representing the LGBTQI refugee community and works toward improving conditions for refugees during the resettlement waiting period.

The coalition came about through negotiations between the largest LGBTQI refugee organizations in Kenya, consisting of: Community Support Initiative for Refugees, Natures Network, Refugee Flag Kakuma, Urban Legacy Africa, and Arise Network Africa. Currently, RefCEA represents nearly half of the known LGBTQI refugee population in Kenya and is currently accepting interest in membership from other groups in Kenya, Uganda, and beyond. The refugees currently represented by RefCEA come from multiple countries of origin including Kenya, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

With over 650 known LGBTQI refugees in Kenya, with several hundred more in other East African countries, and due to prevalent homophobia in East and Central Africa, many LGBTQI individuals are forced to flee their homes, seeking safety and anonymity. Most pursue formal refugee status through UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) with the goal of attaining resettlement in a country with legal protections and support, but that process can take up to five years, and is often slowed even further for LGBTQI persons.

The launch of the Coalition coincides with a call to mark June 27th annually as “International LGBTQI Refugee Day” during LGBTQI Pride Week and exactly one week after World Refugee Day.

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**RefCEA website (and informational video)** [www.RefugeeCoalition.com](http://www.RefugeeCoalition.com)

(Interested LGBTQI refugee groups are encouraged to contact RefCEA via the website)

**Facebook** [www.Facebook.com/RefCEA](http://www.Facebook.com/RefCEA)

**Crowdfunding page** [www.GoFundMe.com/RefCEA](http://www.GoFundMe.com/RefCEA)