11-1-1999

Speaker from United Nations to Discuss Refugee Situation During Distinguished Speakers Event

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/8344

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.
SPEAKER FROM UNITED NATIONS TO DISCUSS REFUGEE SITUATION
DURING UD DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS EVENT

DAYTON, Ohio — Most of Karen Koning AbuZayd's career has been devoted to caring for refugees like those who were forced to flee Kosovo to the tent cities in Macedonia and Albania earlier this spring.

AbuZayd, regional representative to the United States and the Caribbean for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), will speak at 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom at the University of Dayton. Her speech, which is part of UD's Distinguished Speaker's Series, is free and open to the public.

Her speech will focus on current refugee crises in Chechnya, East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone and was timed to coincide with the anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, which were signed on Nov. 20, 1995.

From 1993 to 1995, AbuZayd served as chief of mission in war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina. She said the job was one of the two most challenging positions of her career. “We faced a unique situation for a refugee agency, functioning in a war zone with war-affected people, negotiating access with three parties and dependent on peacekeepers,” she said.

AbuZayd said the other challenging assignment came in the 1980s when she was serving as chief of mission in Sierra Leone where she was responsible for settling 100,000 Liberian refugees in 600 border villages.

Following her field work, AbuZayd served at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, where she was deputy director of the division of program and operational support and Chef de Cabinet to High Commissioner Sadako Ogata from 1996 to 1998.

-over-

OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
330 College Park   Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679
(937) 229-3241   (937) 229-3063 Fax
www.udayton.edu
She took her current post in Washington, D.C., in September 1998. In addition to keeping the Congress and the State Department informed about UNHCR to insure that “we continue to receive one quarter of our billion dollar a year budget,” AbuZayd is charged with enhancing public awareness about refugees and the United Nations in general. She also deals with the legal and domestic issues of asylum-seekers, “especially that of prolonged detention,” she said. “I also cover the Caribbean and deal with the individual refugees who show up on several of the islands.”

Prior to joining the UNHCR, AbuZayd was a lecturer in political science at Juba University in Sudan and Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. “I started with the UNHCR on a temporary basis during one summer holiday in Khartoum (from teaching at University of Juba). I was asked to help in processing Ethiopian refugees for university scholarships in Egypt.”

In the 18 years that she has been with the UNHCR, AbuZayd said “it has become more involved in complex regional, multi-sectoral, inter-agency emergencies. We’ve begun to work in conflict zones and with the military, so we have developed a heavy interest in security for refugees and humanitarian workers.” AbuZayd said that asylum has become more restrictive, so the organization’s responses have had to become much more imaginative.

AbuZayd, who is a U.S. citizen, earned her bachelor’s degree from DePauw University and her master’s degree from McGill University.

-30-

For media interviews, call Karen Koning AbuZayd at (202) 296-5582 or e-mail abuzayd@unhcr.ch.