

# 1947 partitionarchive: Preserving Memories of Partition in India

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# What is Partition?

- The Partition of India was the process of dividing the subcontinent along sectarian lines, which took place in 1947 as India gained its independence from the British after 350 years of presence.
- Partition of India is the separation of India on Aug. 14, 1947 and Aug. 15, 1947 into the states of the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India, respectively.
- India was separated on the day of gaining independence from British, due to tensions between the **Hindus/Sikhs and the Muslims living in the country.**

# The Painful Separation of India, 1947

- Partition on **communal grounds of India** and new country named Pakistan (which was part of India)
- **Largest movement of population in the world**, an estimated 14 million people were displaced at the time, as Muslims in India fled to Pakistan and Hindus in Pakistan fled to India.(UNHCR, p59). India is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol, nor does it have a legal framework and national refugee status determination system. As a result, UNHCR processes claims for refugee status in India
- **Estimated 10-18 million people migrated on both sides. Estimated dead persons 2 million and more than 10 million displaced in a few days**

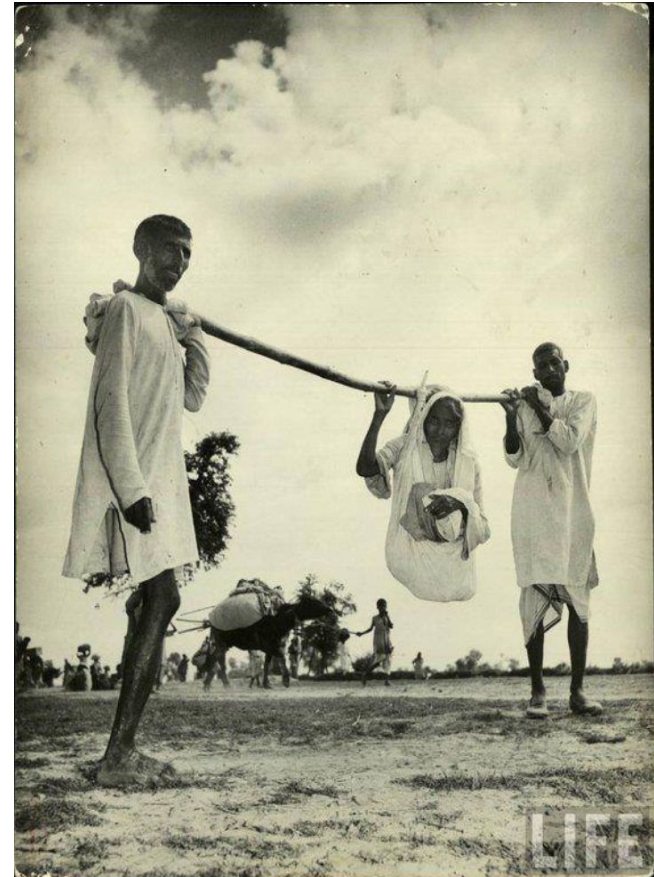
# Women: the Worst Sufferers

- ⦿ Communal riots in Punjab (the border State) at a large scale and the State was cut into two parts.
- ⦿ Partition in India was manmade and worst sufferers were women.
- ⦿ “In any refugee population, approximately 50 percent of the uprooted people are women and girls.” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).
- ⦿ Women became victims of molestation, kidnapping, rape, forcible marriages and mass scale suicide at places during partition of India.

## Women: the Worst Sufferers (Contd.)

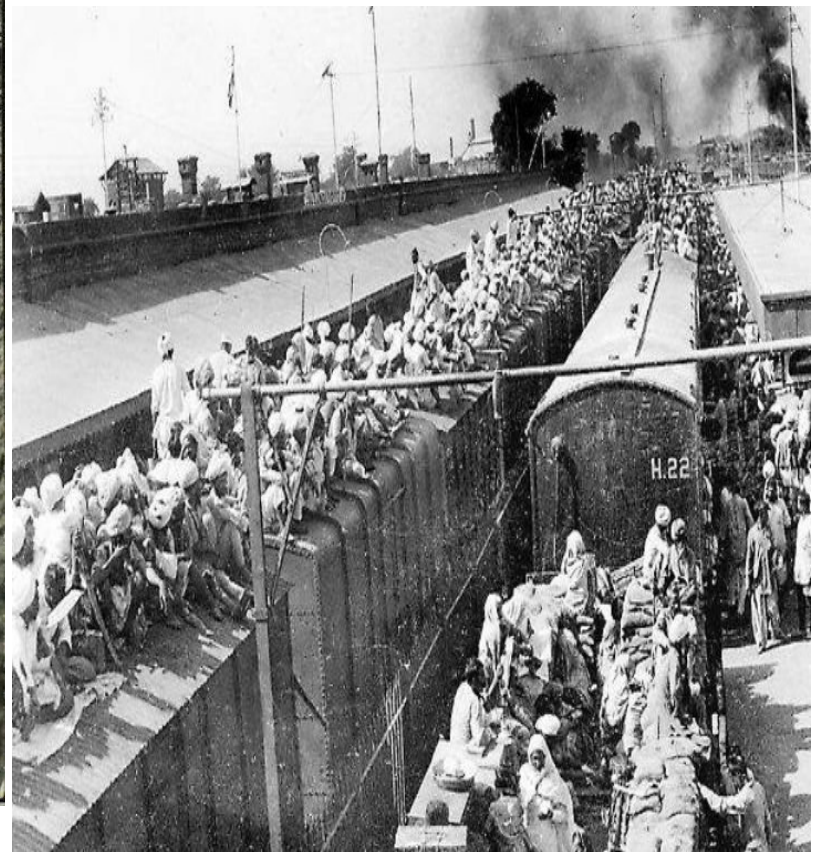
- A large number of women were abducted, their breasts were cut off, and bodies were tattooed, separated from their families and even from their communities.
- **Honour killing to prevent exploitation by other communities.**
- Jumped into wells in groups and threw themselves and their girl children in fires to save their honour.
- Recovery programmes of Governments of India and Pakistan.

# Migration of Muslims from India to Pakistan

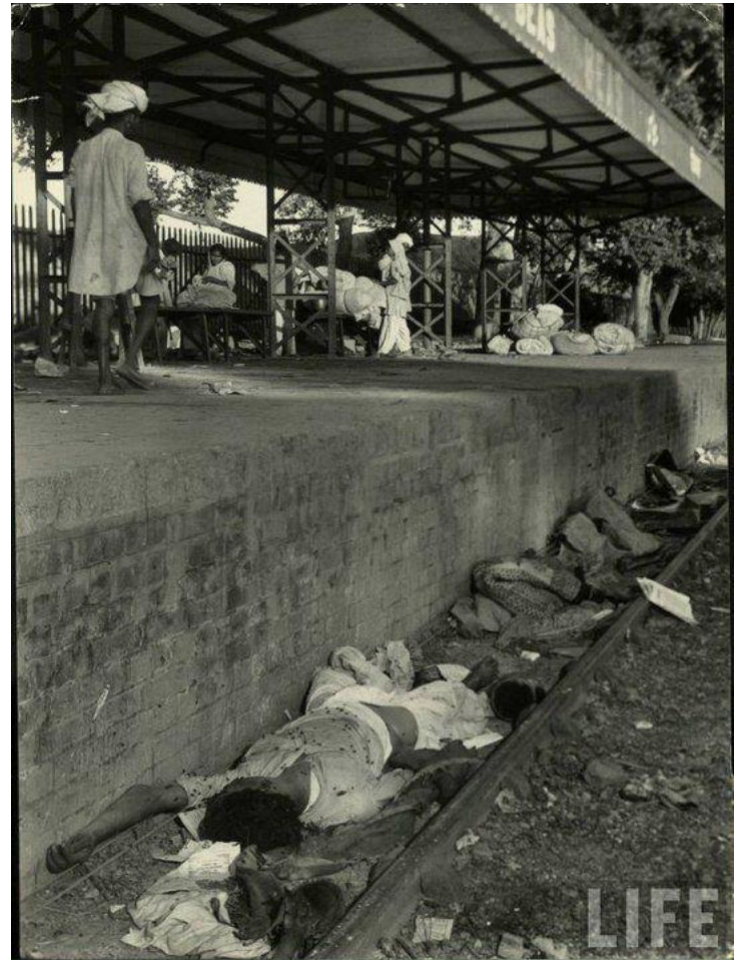
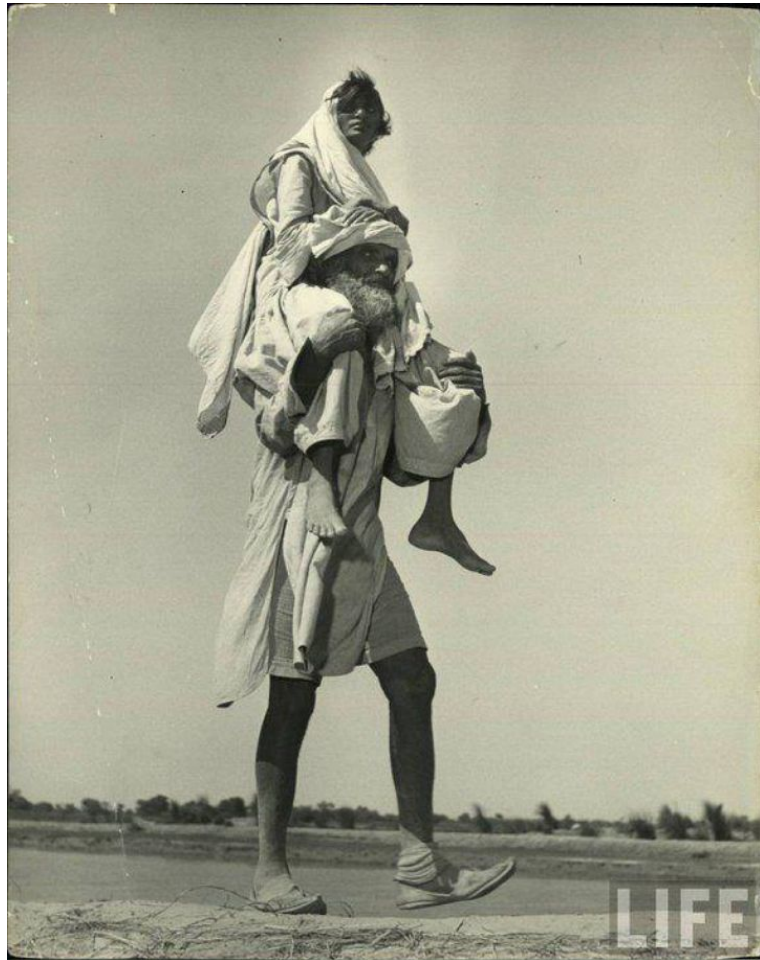




# Mass graves and mass movement

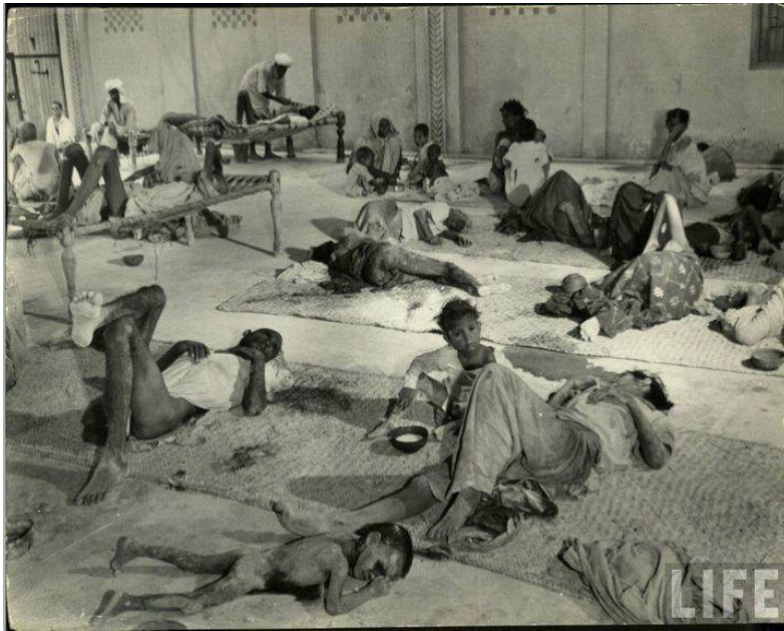


# Painful images





# Long tireless journey



## Pain still remains

- ◎ Our generation has grown up listening to stories of partition from parents and grandparents.
- ◎ Memories bring pain, some remember the drum beats still , the cries, parting from loved ones, sense of loss, transformation from kings to paupers.
- ◎ Re-building life gain. My grandmother, my father are witness.
- ◎ Many family members visited Pakistan again and went to their ancestral villages and once there own houses. Still loved and remembered.

# Pain of Partition reflected in

- ◉ In literature in different languages-Drama, Fiction, Poetry...
- ◉ Films, Documentaries, T.V. Serials (Soaps)
- ◉ Biographies
- ◉ Doctoral Research ,Research papers, Others
- ◉ Publications and programmes on anniversaries.
- ◉ But a concerted effort to preserve these memories have not been made at a Govt. level.
  
- ◉ The generation that still remembers the birth of modern India and Pakistan are now elderly men and women, and it's a race against time to record as many stories as possible.
- ◉ “That segment of the population is disappearing really, really fast,” said Guneeta Singh Bhalla, the Berkeley, Calif.-based executive director and driving force of the archive, ... “Within the next five years the vast majority of what's remaining is going to be gone.”

# Dr. Guneeta Singh Bhalla (Founder)

- Guneeta Singh Bhalla currently serves as Executive Director at The 1947 Partition Archive. Previously, she was an experimental condensed matter physicist and completed her tenure as a post-doctoral researcher at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the University of California at Berkeley, in December 2012. She studied quantum confinement at interfaces that include oxide heterostructures and domain walls in multiferroics.
- After a 2008 visit to the oral testimony archives at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial she was inspired and began interviewing Partition survivors in 2010.
- In 2011 The 1947 Partition Archive was born. She has personally interviewed over 100 Partition survivors and rallied volunteers to join in building the grassroots foundations of this people-powered organization.
- In 1947 her father's family migrated from Lahore to Amritsar on August 14.

# 1947partitionarchive

- <http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/>



# MISSION OF 1947 PartitionArchive

**It is a non-profit non-governmental organization dedicated to institutionalizing the people's history of Partition through:**

- 1) Documenting, preserving and sharing eye witness accounts from *all* ethnic, religious and economic communities affected by the Partition of British India in 1947. *To do this, we have created a digital platform for anyone anywhere in the world to collect, archive and display oral histories that document not only Partition, but pre-Partition life and culture as well as post-Partition migrations and life changes.*
- 2) Collecting, preserving and sharing personal items and artifacts associated with the people's memory of the 1947 Partition.

## Guneeta with Partition witness



# Mission

- 3) Bringing knowledge of Partition into widespread public consciousness through i) creative and scholarly expression including but not limited to literature, film, theater, visual arts, other creative medium, and academic research ii) proactive world-wide primary education curricula, iii) traveling exhibits as well as physical 'Centers for Learning' designed to memorialize the people's history of Partition and serve the public for research and educational purposes.
- *Interviews are conducted in the language that the interviewee is most comfortable with, such as English, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Sindhi, Kashmiri and others.*

# Preserving Memories

- ◎ The 1947 Partition Archive, "The Archive" has been preserving oral histories of Partition witnesses since 2010. Over **3000 stories** have been preserved on digital video from **320 cities in 12 countries** across the world in different languages. Plan to record 10,000 stories by end of 2017.
- ◎ A tiny staff of four supported by twelve interns work tirelessly behind the scenes to support the **40 Story Scholars** who are contributing oral histories, and over **500 Citizen Historian volunteers** who have devoted an estimated **30,000 hours** in volunteer labor towards recording stories.
- ◎ The Archive is truly a labor of love, built for people, by people from diverse backgrounds.

# Story Scholars

- ◎ “To become a Citizen Historian, you must successfully complete and submit an oral history interview within one month of completing an Oral History Workshop. As a Citizen Historian you will gain permanent access to the Citizen Historian portal online, as well as access to Citizen Historian discussion groups online, and a number of other opportunities within The Archive. Becoming a Citizen Historian is also a prerequisite to apply for our Story Scholars program.”



# Partition Museum [http:// www.partitionmuseum.org/](http://www.partitionmuseum.org/)

- ◎ The Partition Museum Project (TPMP) was initiated by The Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust (TAACHT) in October 2016 to have a world class, physical museum in Town Hall of Amritsar city, dedicated to the memory of the Partition of the sub-continent in 1947 — its victims, its survivors and its lasting legacy.
- ◎ The present Museum exhibition has been set up in the restored portion of Town Hall. The Town Hall is currently under restoration, and work on the second and last phase of the Museum will be finished by early 2017, in time for the 70th year of the Partition of India, and as soon as the rest of the wing of the historic Town Hall allotted to TAACHT to set up the Museum .

# Museum of Peace

<http://www.museumofpeace.com/>

- Museums of Peace are the “non-profit educational institutions that promote a culture of peace through interpreting, collecting and displaying peace related material. They inform the public about peace and nonviolence using illustrations from the lives of individuals, the work of organisations, campaigns and historical events” (The International Network of Museums of Peace)
- Located at Wagah (Amritsar): a road link between India and Pakistan. Efforts of the Society for Information and Media Studies (a non-profit NGO of Chandigarh)
- This is more to do with the preservation of architecture and culinary art of both the countries.

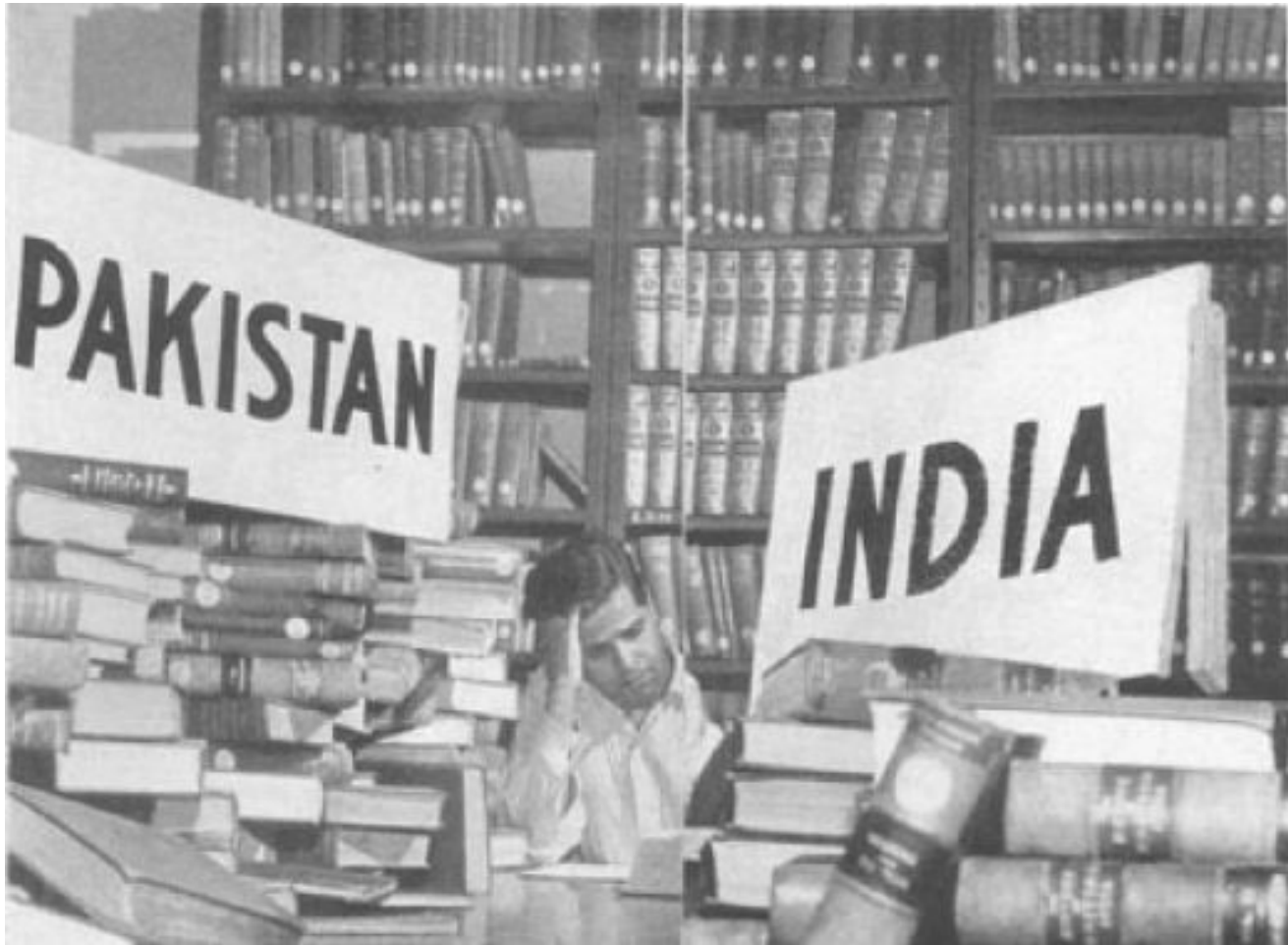
## Role of Institutions and their libraries: Premises served as temporary homes

- ◉ Khalsa College Amritsar, and DAV College, Jalandhar, Punjab (India) a premier institution was a home to more than one lakh people during partition who were camping in its big lawns.
- ◉ All the leaves on plants, hedges etc had been soon eaten by hungry refugees who had no food to eat for days and had walked for days to reach a safer place.
- ◉ Food, water, shelter, security were the basic needs at that moment.

## Beginning of LIS Education

- ◎ The history of LIS education in India is more than a century old. In 1911, W. A. Borden, an American student of Melvil Dewey started a library school at Baroda (Maharashtra) under the royal benefaction of Shivaji Rao Gaikwad II.
- ◎ Asa Don Dickenson, another disciple of Dewey was the founding father of LIS education at university level. He started a library school at Punjab University, Lahore (now in Pakistan) in 1915 to impart certificate course in LIS. After the library school of Columbia University, “The training school at Punjab University was considered to be the second known library school in the world”. LIS Education is 100 year old in India and Pakistan.

## A Library being Divided





## Libraries before Partition

- At the time of partition, Lahore had three very well stocked and properly managed libraries, two in the private sector and one set up by the University of the Punjab. In the private sector, there were the Punjab Public (1884) and the Dayal Singh Trust (1908) libraries, in addition to a small municipal library.
- In the national five-year plans, education and libraries were placed at the lowest rung of national priorities by the feudal-dominated governments. Consequently, a handful of public libraries, which Pakistan inherited in August, 1947, especially those located in Lahore, suffered much due to lack of adequate financial support, both from the public as well as private sectors.

# United Nations High Commission for Refugees, India

- The UNHCR Office in India works closely with the Government of India.
- UNHCR places great emphasis on every child's right to primary education and access to health care for all people of concern as a basic human right.
- UNHCR offers its support for all refugee and asylum-seeker children to attend public schools since the government allows them free access. **This has recently been corroborated by the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 under which every child between the ages of 6 to 14 years has the right to free and compulsory education.**

# Efforts of Volunteer Agencies

- In India UNHCR supports income generating activities to help refugees lead a life with dignity. Koshish, a popular line of traditional clothing made by refugee women is one of them.
- The Gandhi National Memorial Society in Pune assists refugees and asylum seekers in Pune, the Confederation of Voluntary Agencies is UNHCR's partner in Hyderabad and Development And Justice Initiative (DAJI) supports refugees and asylum seekers in Jammu, Mewat and Jaipur.
- Moreover, women protection is high on UNHCR's agenda.
- There are Tibetans, Afghans, Myanmarese in India and it has maintained an open door policy for all. India has a generous approach in relationship to all people and a proof of that is the granting of long term visas and work permits to refugees.

# Role of libraries

- Libraries can play a significant role in preserving the memories of refugees.
- Local history of the cities or villages in both the countries should be preserved as part of the healing touch.
- Libraries can help locate/ find family members of the refugees. (As done by Google site during Nepal earthquake).
- Basic information about volunteers, housing, education, medical care, job opportunities, NGOs can be given in the form of telephone numbers, addresses etc.

# Last word...

- Libraries are gateway of information and that is what refugees would want in a new place- information.
- Information about everything.
- Local history, culture, and other aspects to follow.
- LIS educators can play a vital role in sensitizing future library and information professionals to plan and provide library services to refugees and asylum seekers.
- Last word is we need to Welcome them.



Thank You For your kind attention

