

Raouf Mazou

On June 18, 2014, Mr. Raouf Mazou, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Country Representative, gave a key note presentation on 'Asylum Space in Kenya: Where We Are and Where We Are Heading?'

In his presentation, Mr. Mazou noted that for refugee population, Kenya tops the list in Africa and ranks fifth in the world. However, Kenya has been facing challenges as refugees have been seen as a threat to Kenya's national security. He called on stakeholders to find solutions to the plight of refugees in the country and that there is need for cooperation between government and other stakeholders and awareness creation so as not to criminalize every asylum seeker.

Speaking on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha, the Principal, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prof. Enos Njeru noted that the topic of discussion was relevant to the University since UoN's core responsibility is to conduct research, generate knowledge and create awareness with a view to inform policy. Issues of asylum seekers and refugees fall under this responsibility. He said that it is important to study and research on the circumstances facing refugees both in their countries of abode and residence and that efforts to evict them should be done diplomatically.

The forum is part of activities scheduled for the 2014 World Refugees Day organized by the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS) partnership with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Department of Refugees Affairs (DRA).

The discourse mainly focused on the current state of refugees in Kenya with deliberations on how best refugees can be diplomatically persuaded to go back to their countries as well as the criteria to be employed to distinguish between a genuine refugee and one that is not.