

# Untold Story of 20,000 Polish Refugees in Africa - Uganda's Forgotten WWII Solidarity Examined

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In the early 1940s, while Europe was consumed by war, a quiet, monumental act of solidarity unfolded in East Africa. The 'NEVER AGAIN' Association is now forcefully resurfacing this little-known history: Up to 20,000 Polish refugees, predominantly women and children, found sanctuary in Uganda and neighboring East African nations between 1942 and 1952.



These were not economic migrants; they were survivors. Victims of Stalinist repressions, they were forcibly deported to the Soviet Union before being evacuated following the Nazi invasion of the USSR. They arrived in Uganda to find a reception diametrically opposed to the brutality they had escaped.

The local Ugandan communities welcomed them warmly. This historical footnote is not merely a curiosity; it is a critical lesson in international empathy, now being deployed as a weapon against modern xenophobia.

## **Restoring Memory, Building Empathy**

The campaign to restore this memory is led by the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association, co-founder Dr. Rafal Pankowski, in cooperation with the Rotary Peace Centre at Makerere University. Their primary tool is a multi-lingual mobile exhibition, 'Building Bridges – Inspire Peace,' designed to drive "intercultural understanding."

"Our project aims to restore memory of an important page of shared Polish and Ugandan history. By highlighting this story, we hope to build a social climate of openness and intercultural empathy," Pankowski stated.

The project is actively connecting this history to contemporary issues. In a poignant ceremony on November 1, 2025, members of 'NEVER AGAIN' from both Poland and Uganda gathered to light candles at a Polish refugee graveyard in Koja, Mukono district, Uganda.



## **The Global Push for Solidarity**

The 'Building Bridges' narrative is being weaponized globally. Pankowski presented the project at the annual Capstone conference at Makerere University in Kampala (October 23, 2025) and delivered lectures across Africa and Europe, including Chisinau, Moldova, and Warsaw, focusing on genocide and the core message of "NEVER AGAIN."

The initiative is built on an interactive foundation: workshops encourage participants to reflect on the issues of migration, refugees, and the urgent need to counteract racism and discrimination in the 21st century.

By juxtaposing Uganda's historical generosity, which sheltered a displaced European population for a decade, against today's harsh global asylum policies, the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association is demanding immediate accountability and renewed solidarity with vulnerable refugee populations worldwide.

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<https://thetellpad.com/Polish-Refugee-Crisis%3A-Ugandan-History-Inspires-Global-Refugee-Solidarity%2C-NEVER-AGAIN-Project-The-%3A>