

Forum: Second General Youth Assembly

Issue: The question of protecting the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons

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Introduction

The refugee crisis has always been a perplexing global issue as there isn't a clear answer for this tragic problem. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), an estimated 281 million people, approximately 3.6% of the world's population, live outside their country of origin. Meanwhile, the majority of their migration is caused due to different degrees of compulsion.

Human rights violations against migrants can include a denial of civil and political rights such as arbitrary detention, torture, or a lack of due process, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights such as the rights to health, housing, or education. The refusal of migrants' rights is often profoundly connected to discriminatory and exclusive laws and deep-permeated attitudes of xenophobia or prejudice. To obtain a harmonious society, the robust promotion of both equality and protection is extensive for refugees currently in vulnerable situations who are most looked upon and at risk of experiencing human rights violations.

However, some of the asylums where displaced personnel sought safety and protection are no longer fulfilling their original goal of housing refugees. For example, the Syrian crisis has caused 5.6 million people to become refugees, not including the extra 6.2 million displaced internally in 2018. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has appealed for USD \$369 million on this case but has received only 31% of the necessary funds. The lack of finance resulted in a limited education system, health services, and livelihood activities, which ultimately contributed to the migration of many refugees in precarious situations within overcrowded camps.

In fact, efforts to rehabilitate refugees have already been made. Today, there are 43.4 million refugees worldwide, and the majority of them want to return home once it is safe enough for them to do so. 6 million Palestine refugees are also some of those currently supported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was set up in 1949 to care for displaced Palestinians.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugees

The term refugee refers to a person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. They are given refugee status, which is given to the applicants by the United Nations or by a third-party country.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

Internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution, or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country. The UNHCR has been supporting IDPs since the 1970s. According to UNHCR, there are 68.3 million IDPs globally.

Asylum seekers

The asylum seekers are refugees who haven't been officially recognized by their fled country and are seeking international protection. The asylum-seeker process is long and hard, and many struggle through it. Approximately 6.9 million people around the world waiting for a decision on their asylum claims at the end of 2023.

Stateless persons

Stateless persons refer to individuals who are not considered as nationals by any State under the operation of its law. This is either because they never had nationalities, or because they lost them without acquiring new ones. Not all stateless persons are refugees, but they may qualify as such if they are unable or unwilling to return to their habitual residence due to the fear of persecution or other threats. Their statelessness can lead to pivotal restrictions when it comes to accessing rights and services.

Migration

The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals is named migration. The word migration is often used as a general term for the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals or within a State.

International protection

International protection is the protection that is accorded by the international community to individuals or groups who are outside their own country, who are unable to return because they would be at risk, and whose own country is unable or unwilling to protect them. The possible risks include those of persecution or other threats to life, freedom or physical integrity arising from armed conflict, serious public disorder, or different situations of violence.

Persecution

Persecution can be considered to encompass serious human rights violations, including a threat to life or freedom, as well as other kinds of serious harm. What amounts to persecution will depend on the refugee's individual circumstances, including their age, gender, opinions, feelings, and psychological make-up. Persecution can be related to action by the authorities of the State, but may also emanate from non-state agents, such as armed groups, criminal or organized gangs, family members, or the general population, where the State is unable or unwilling to provide protection.

Background Information

The number of refugees grew to a record high of 36.4 million by mid-2023, and the internal displacement reached its highest level at the end of 2022, with 71.1 million IDPs globally. While the ascending number of refugees and IDPs is a concern, protecting the rights of these people is also a question to be discussed. Progressing with the annual theme of “*Going beyond borders to achieve sustainability and lasting peace*”, the United Nations is responsible for seeking ways to aid the displaced persons globally.

Overview of the Status of Refugees and IDPs

Currently, refugees and IDPs are respectively on the return trend of 404,000 refugees and 2.7 million IDPs. The numbers of both refugees and IDPs are increasing exponentially not only due to the refugees' own decision to leave their countries but also due to forceful reasons such as persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.

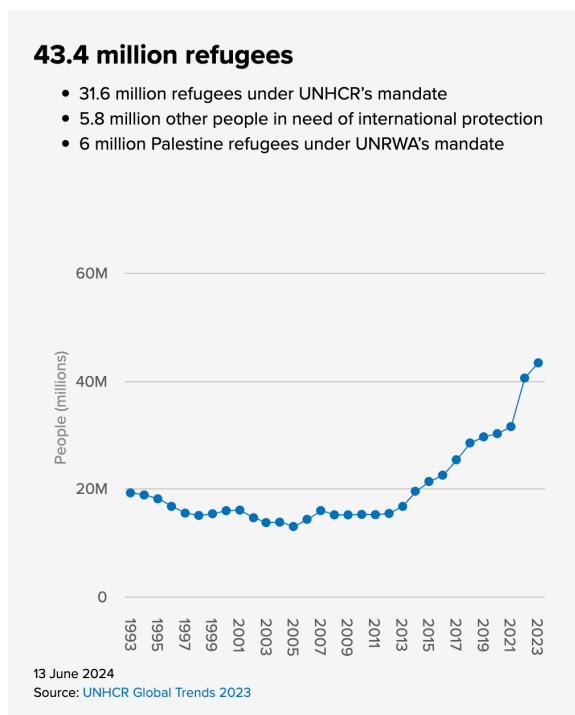


Figure 1: The Number of Global Refugees from 1993 to 2023

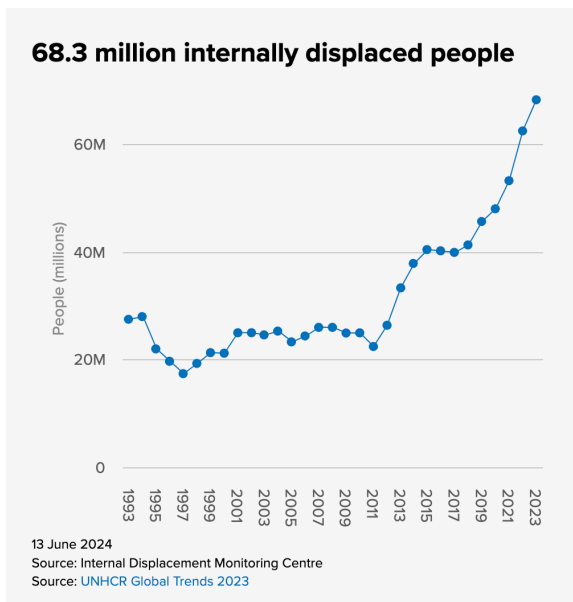


Figure 2: The Number of Internally Displaced People from 1993 to 2023

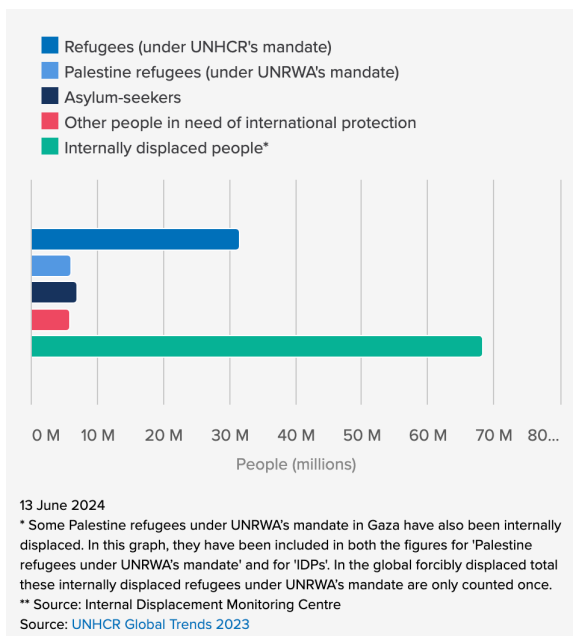


Figure 3: The Distribution of 117.3 Million Refugees Worldwide at the End of 2023

Challenges Faced by Refugees and IDPs

Refugees and IDPs face a few challenges as they are forced to flee their homes due to factors such as political conflicts, persecution, and disasters. There are different types of difficulties regarding legislation and laws, protection and safety, basic supplies and services they need, and mental health.

Legal and Administrative Challenges

Refugees often have a hard time establishing legal status and documentation issues in host countries. They may not have stabilized occupations which leads to the missing of nationally recognized identity

documents. Hence, this can limit their access to services and rights. In the cases of IDPs, they may also face struggles with legal recognition of their displaced status. If refugees or IDPs cannot obtain identification methods, they face multifaceted troubles that are directly relevant to their lives and well-being such as increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, challenges in asylum processes, and lack of access to educational or medical care services.

Security and Protection

Both refugees and IDPs are highly exposed to the environment of physical attacks, sexual assault, and abduction. As mentioned above, their missing of legal identification can lead to the lack of adequate protection and may furthermore expose them to exploitation or human rights abuses. For instance, IDPs may be caught in the crossfire or used as human shields in conflict zones.

Basic Needs and Services

The basic needs and services the displaced people lack include shelter, food and water, healthcare, education, economic challenges, and more. Many displaced personnel lack adequate shelter, often ending up living in either overcrowded asylums or makeshift homes as announced by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP).

Social and Psychological Challenges

Refugees can face difficulties integrating into host communities due to language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. Many displaced people have experienced traumatic events and face ongoing stress, leading to mental health issues. Finding a long-term solution, including safe return to their homes, local integration, or resettlement, stays as an ultimate objective for both refugees and IDPs.

Major Parties and Organizations Involved

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the primary international agency responsible for protecting and assisting refugees and IDPs. It coordinates international advocacy efforts to provide humanitarian aid, legal protection, and durable solutions for displaced individuals globally. The international organization aims to promote the rights and protection of vulnerable populations, especially displaced personnel. UNHCR offers financial support and facilitating funding initiatives such as the Refugee-led Innovation Fund, which supports organizations led by displaced individuals.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

OHCHR is another key department of the United Nations Secretariat regarding the refugee crisis, established to promote and protect human rights, including the prevention of human rights violations, securing of respect for all human rights, promotion of international cooperation to protect human rights, coordination of related

activities throughout the UN, and strengthening and streamlining of the UN system in the field of human rights. OHCHR may seem similar to UNHCR, but UNHCR focuses on its specific refugee mandate while OHCHR works more broadly on human rights issues.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM is an intergovernmental organization established in 1951 that cooperates with governments, international organizations, and NGOs to provide assistance to refugees and IDPs. Through collaboration with different governments or organizations, IOM provides displaced people with migration management, humanitarian assistance, policy development and advocacy, and capacity building. IOM facilitates and regulates migration, assisting both the refugees and governments in managing migration effectively. It offers direct assistance such as food, shelter, medical care, and psychosocial support at migrant reception centers and helps the migrants who wish to return to their country of origin or their home countries safely and with dignity. IOM also works with governments and non-governmental partners to develop migration policies and promotes international cooperation on migration issues. Last but not least, it works with local governments to build their capacity to manage migration effectively, addressing the root causes of displacement such as climate change, conflict, and other factors.

Refugees International (RI)

RI is an independent organization focusing on advocating for the rights and protection of displaced personnel globally. Unlike other common organizations, the RI refuses to accept funding from the UN or governmental sources. This allows it to maintain a critical stance and advocate for the refugees freely without any external influence or suppression.

World Bank

World Bank is a major funder of climate investments in developing countries, setting a finance target of 35% for FY (financial year) 21-25. It provides financial and technical assistance for host countries, which indirectly benefits refugees and IDPs. There is an innovative financing mechanism that the World Bank is involved in, aiming to support middle-income countries that host large numbers of refugees called the Global Concessional Finance Facility (GCFF). As of 2023, the program has directly benefitted approximately 15.8 million people, including 6.3 million refugees. This facility has also allowed over 2.5 million refugees to gain the ability to work in their host countries, thereby strengthening refugees' self-sufficiency and economic integration.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Primary Solutions by UNHCR

The UNHCR has been focusing on three primary solutions for refugees, which are voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. These three points explain how the UNHCR encourages refugees to return to their home countries when conditions allow, how they facilitate the integration of refugees or the reintegration of

IDPs into the host countries or their country, and if not those two cases, moving refugees to a third country that has agreed to accept them. However, these solutions grow extremely difficult to implement due to the overwhelming number of displaced individuals and a decrease in successful repatriations, with less than 10% of refugees returning to their home countries in recent years.

Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

In 2018, the UN adopted the GCR, which aims to increase international cooperation and provide a framework for addressing refugee or IDP crises. The four key objectives consist of easing pressures on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions, and supporting conditions in countries of origin for refugees to return safely and with dignity. Three of these objectives concentrate on conducting solutions, mostly by expanding the use of existing pathways for refugees. Yet, after five years since the UN adopted the GCR, no dramatic increases in the number of refugees reaching the desired results are seen.

Possible Solutions

The current treatment of refugees and IDPs is not sufficient. The world needs stronger and safer policies, legislations, and frameworks regarding these people in vulnerability to protect the displaced individuals and advocate for better change. Nations should come up with various solutions such as immediate assistance for the displaced personnel and the establishment and reformation of policies, along with long-term integration strategies through cooperation and collaboration between countries, international organizations, NGOs, and communities. It will be easier to come up with a possible resolution if nations first research some organizations or agencies particularly related to their delegation and look for the policies those organizations focus on. The nations should come up with solutions such as but not limited to:

1. Immediate humanitarian assistance

International organizations or governments should provide the refugees and the IDPs with direct support, such as needed supplies and services. This may require aid from financing and resource agencies such as UNHCR, World Bank, and IOM. This approach can significantly improve the quality of the refugees' temporary shelter lives, contributing to accelerating their smooth habilitation or rehabilitation.

2. Establishment and reformation of policies

Policies or legislation regarding the displaced people are considered weak for now. As this policy establishment or reformation may directly have an impact on the rights of the refugees and IDPs, robust legal protections for the displaced should be secured. This includes ensuring access to asylum procedures, legal representation, and protection from forced returns. Refugees and IDPs should be safe from the danger of human rights abuse and exploitation.

3. Seeking for long-term integration strategies

While the rights and freedom of the refugees and IDPs are guaranteed, the UN is responsible for seeking durable solutions to integrate refugees into host communities and reintegrate IDPs into their home countries. The refugees should have access to education, employment opportunities, and social services. Nations should look for ways to foster a community spirit between displaced populations and host communities, leading them to build mutual understanding and support. This will ideally help loosen the tensions in between and promote social cohesion.

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