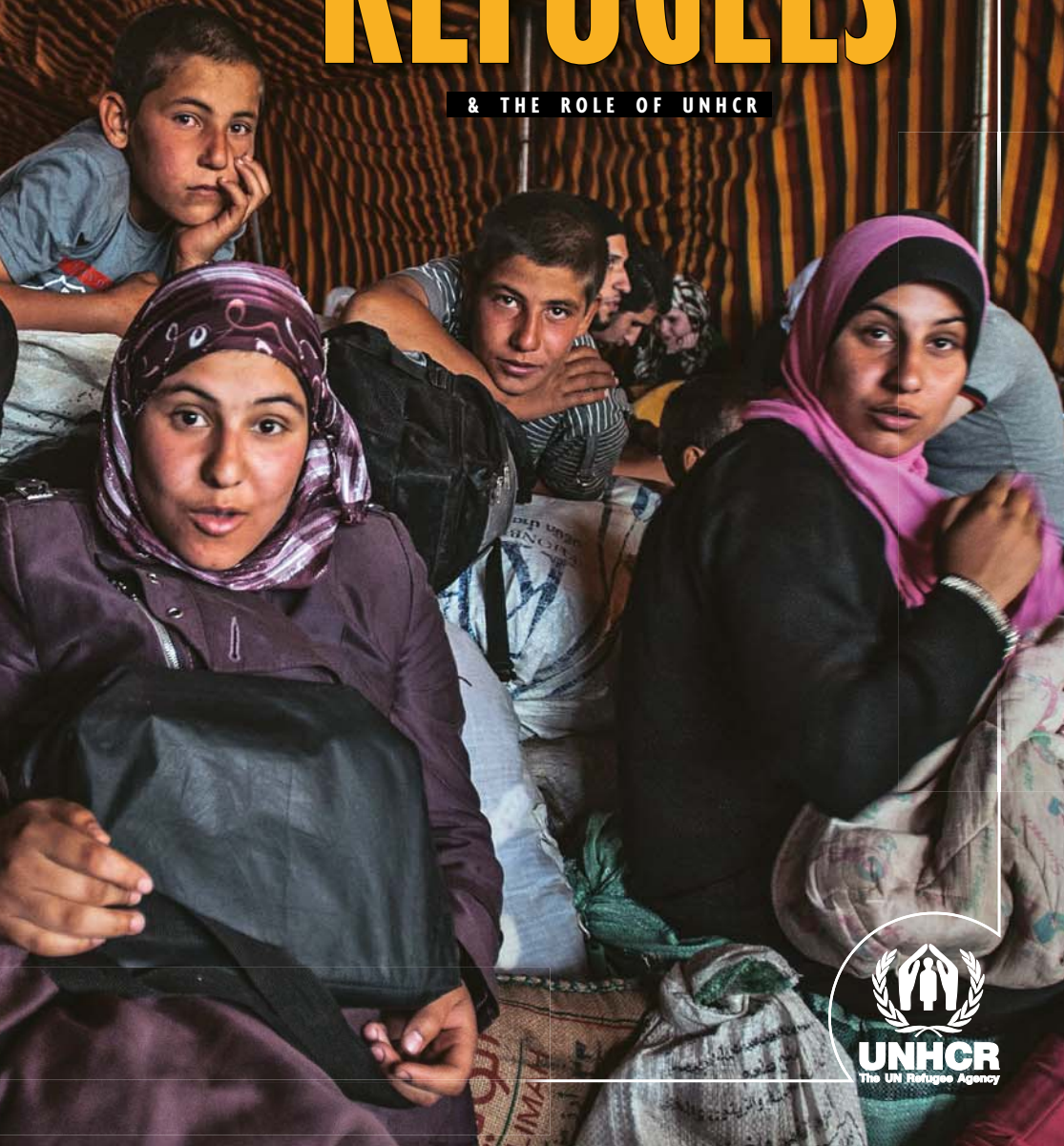


# PROTECTING REFUGEES

& THE ROLE OF UNHCR







**Congolese refugees** arrive by truck at the Kyangwali Settlement in Uganda where a plot of land is given to each family.

# PROTECTING REFUGEES

& THE ROLE OF UNHCR

Cover:

**Syrian refugees** who have crossed into Jordan wait to be registered and then housed at Za'atari refugee camp.



UNHCR / S. RICH

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# WHO IS A REF

A REFUGEE IS SOMEONE WHO “OWING TO A WELL-FOUNDED FEAR OF BEING PERSECUTED FOR REASONS OF RACE, RELIGION, NATIONALITY, MEMBERSHIP OF A PARTICULAR SOCIAL GROUP, OR POLITICAL OPINION, IS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY OF HIS NATIONALITY, AND IS UNABLE TO OR, OWING TO SUCH FEAR, IS UNWILLING TO AVAIL HIMSELF OF THE PROTECTION OF THAT COUNTRY...”

1951 UN Convention  
relating to the Status  
of Refugees  
Art. 1

UNHCR / S. RICH



Sudanese refugees in a safe play area created in the Doro refugee camp



# UGEE?



in South Sudan.

**F**ROM THE MOMENT HUMANS began living together in communities, some of their number were forcibly expelled from those first towns and villages on ethnic, religious or other grounds.

The practice of helping such people fleeing persecution became one of the earliest hallmarks of civilization and there are references to such assistance in texts written 3,500 years ago during the blossoming of the great Babylonian, Hittite, Assyrian and Egyptian empires of the Middle East. Many other examples were to follow down the centuries. And in the twentieth century, notably within the context of the United Nations, the international community took steps to codify this assistance.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 with a core mandate to protect “*refugees*”. This is a legal term referring to displaced people meeting certain criteria. But in today’s complex world there are other similarly uprooted groups or people on the move, known variously as *asylum-seekers*, *internally displaced persons* (IDPs), *stateless persons* or *migrants*.

This booklet addresses some commonly asked questions. Who qualifies as a refugee and what rights do they enjoy? Who is an asylum-seeker, an IDP, a stateless person, or a migrant? What is UNHCR, and how has its role evolved in legally and physically helping and protecting these vulnerable groups, alongside governments and humanitarian partners?

# THE BROADER



**Thousands of Syrian refugees** flooded across the border into Iraq's Kurdish region in a few days in August 2013.

**B**ECAUSE OF the constant movement of so many people on a global scale, often in mixed migration patterns, the body of international law designed to protect refugees is under pressure as never before. Stricter and stronger border controls are often applied, as gov-



# PICTURE



ernments respond to political, economic and security concerns. In this fraught environment refugees are increasingly confused with migrants and treated with mistrust, suspicion and outright rejection.

Understanding the complexity of the problem and being able to accurately as-

sess each claim is important to ensure not only that some of the world's most vulnerable people receive the assistance they need, but also that the entire global protection system can function effectively. The following definitions aim to help this understanding.

**Persons of Concern to UNHCR**, are those whose protection and assistance needs are of interest to UNHCR. They include refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, some internally displaced people and returnees.

**Refugees**, as outlined in the preceding section, are persons - sometimes entire villages and towns - fleeing armed conflict, religious or other persecution, often at the hands of their own governments. Their situation is often so perilous that they cross national borders to seek sanctuary in nearby countries, and thus become internationally recognized as “refugees” with access to official assistance from states, UNHCR and other organizations. They are so recognized precisely because it is too dangerous for them to return home and they need sanctuary elsewhere.

An **asylum-seeker** is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively assessed. National asylum systems, or in some cases, UNHCR under its mandate, decide which claimant qualifies for international protection. Those judged not to be refugees, nor in need of any other form of international protection, can be sent back to their home countries.

The efficiency of any asylum system is key. If the asylum system is both fast and fair, people who know they are not refugees have little incentive to make a claim in the first place, which benefits



both the host country and the refugees for whom the system is intended.

During mass movements of refugees (usually as a result of conflicts or violence, which may itself be persecutory in nature), there is not – and never can be – a capacity to conduct individual asylum interviews for everyone crossing the border. Nor is it usually necessary, since in such circumstances it is generally evident why they have fled. As a result, such groups are often declared “*prima facie*” refugees.

**Internally displaced people** are often wrongly identified by the press or general public as refugees. However, as the name suggests, IDPs have not crossed an international border but remain within





UNHCR / GY. SOPRONYI

their own countries. Though they may have fled for similar reasons such as war or persecution, sometimes perpetrated by their own governments, they legally remain under the protection of that same government, and retain all their rights to protection under human rights and international humanitarian law.

UNHCR's original mandate does not specifically cover IDPs. But because of the agency's expertise on displacement, it has for many years assisted millions of them, most recently through an inter-agency "cluster" approach, whereby UNHCR takes a lead role with other humanitarian agencies to coordinate protection, shelter and camp management. UNHCR is currently active in 24 IDP operations, including those in the Syrian

Arab Republic, Colombia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

**A family seeking asylum** are housed at the Reception Centre in Sofia, Bulgaria while their claim is processed.

Victims of natural disasters also frequently become IDPs. UNHCR is involved in relief efforts only in exceptional circumstances, a recent example being the Philippines Typhoon Haiyan disaster in 2013.

**A stateless person** is an individual who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law, including a person whose nationality is not established. The consequences can be extremely grave since, without a na-



UNHCR / F. NOY

tionality, a person is unable to exercise a wide range of rights.

**Returnees** are individuals who were of concern to UNHCR when outside his/her country of origin, and who remain so for a limited period (usually two years), after returning to the country of origin. The term also applies to internally displaced people who return to their previous place of residence.

**Migrants**, particularly economic migrants, choose to move not because of

a direct threat of persecution or death but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion or other reasons. Thus, they need to be, and are treated differently under national and international laws than refugees. However, since they often use the same routes and means of transport as refugees, such “mixed migration” patterns present a huge challenge to authorities trying to decide the status of a new arrival. To address this growing issue, UNHCR developed and is encouraging the use of a *10-Point*





*Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration* covering countries of origin, transit and destination. Unlike refugees, who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return.

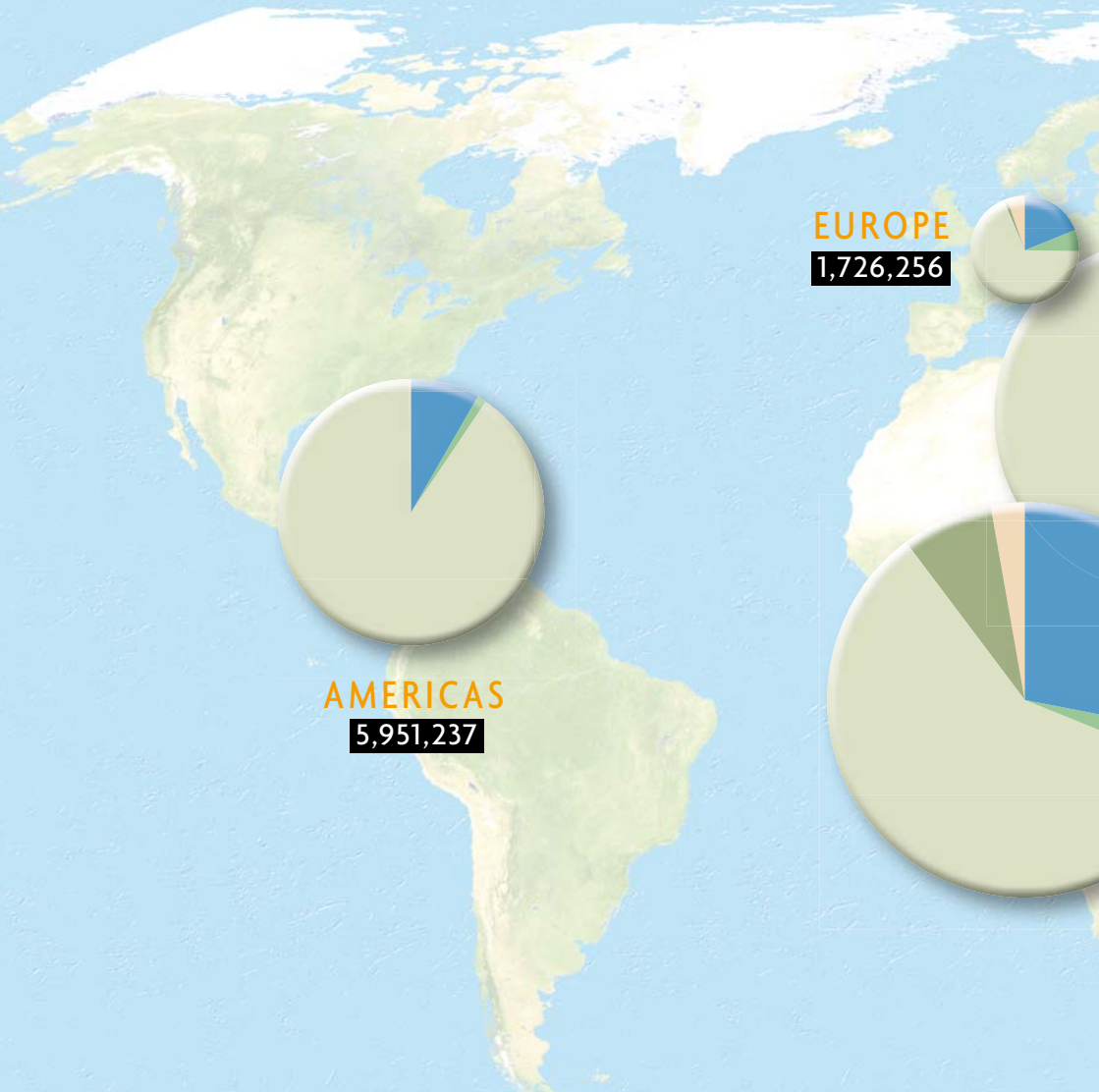
Mixed migration movements are of concern globally, but especially in the Mediterranean basin, the Gulf of Aden, Central America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. In 2013, more than 65,000

**Thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers** trying to reach Europe from Africa have arrived in the Italian port of Lampedusa, but many others have died trying.

people fleeing conditions in the Horn of Africa - Somalia as well as Eritrea and Ethiopia - used people smugglers to cross the Gulf of Aden to Yemen. In the central Mediterranean, over 60,000 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta during 2013 and the number has soared past 75,000 in the first half of 2014. Many thousands have died attempting the voyage in recent years.



# PEOPLE OF CON



## EUROPE

1,726,256

## AMERICAS

5,951,237

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes groups of people who are outside of their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

<sup>(2)</sup> Includes groups of people who are inside their country of nationality or habitual

residence and who face protection risks similar to those of IDPs, but who, for practical or other reasons, could not be reported as such.

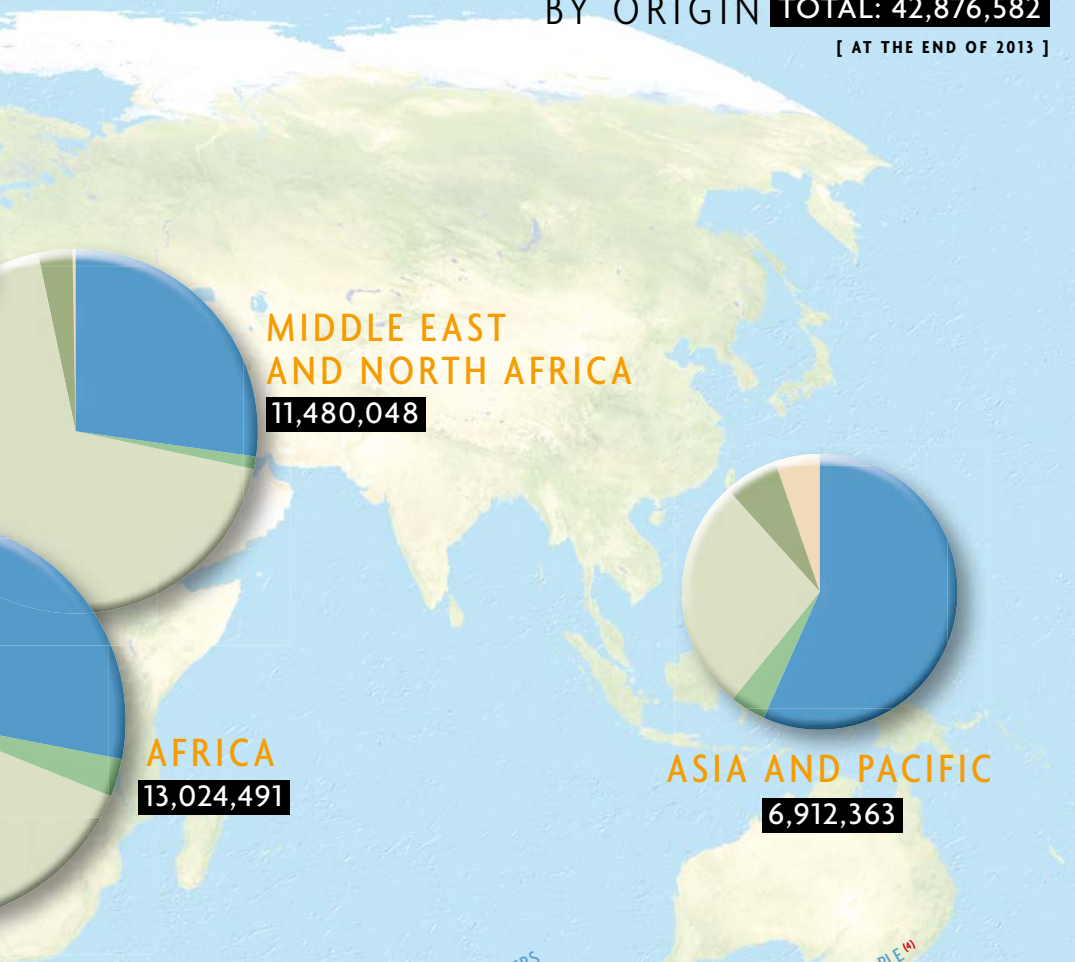
<sup>(3)</sup> Includes both returned refugees and IDPs.

<sup>(4)</sup> Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate.

# CERN TO UNHCR

BY ORIGIN **TOTAL: 42,876,582**

[ AT THE END OF 2013 ]



**MIDDLE EAST  
AND NORTH AFRICA**

**11,480,048**

**AFRICA**

**13,024,491**

**ASIA AND PACIFIC**

**6,912,363**

REFUGEES (a)    ASYLUM-SEEKERS    IDPS (b)    RETURNEES (b)    STATELESS PEOPLE (c)    OTHERS    TOTAL

UNHCR BUREAUX

UNHCR BUREAUX	REFUGEES (a)	ASYLUM-SEEKERS	IDPS (b)	RETURNEES (b)	STATELESS PEOPLE (c)	OTHERS	TOTAL
AFRICA	3,670,630	414,924	7,633,317	951,109	-	354,511	13,024,491
ASIA AND PACIFIC	3,921,851	287,820	1,910,344	435,748	-	356,600	6,912,363
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	3,149,994	118,675	7,835,121	363,330	-	12,928	11,480,048
EUROPE	329,891	110,210	1,178,635	20,531	-	86,989	1,726,256
AMERICAS	501,335	69,414	5,368,138	18	-	12,332	5,951,237
VARIOUS / STATELESS	129,478	170,719	-	-	3,469,250	12,740	3,782,187
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,703,179</b>	<b>1,171,762</b>	<b>23,925,555</b>	<b>1,770,736</b>	<b>3,469,250</b>	<b>836,100</b>	<b>42,876,582</b>



**A refugee girl gets water** for her family in Bangladesh, where thousands of Rohingya people have fled to escape persecution in Myanmar.

## PROTECTING REFUGEES

**T**HE PROTECTION OF REFUGEES has many aspects. These include safety from being returned to the dangers they have fled; access to asylum procedures that are fair and efficient; measures to ensure that their basic human rights are respected, and to allow them to live in dignity and safety while helping them to find a more durable, long-term solution.

States bear the primary responsibility for this protection, in conformity with their obligations under international refugee law, including regional treaties which concern them. UNHCR therefore works closely with governments, advis-

ing and supporting them as needed. This is notably in the case of asylum procedures through which refugee status is determined. When such procedures do not exist, UNHCR has the authority to determine refugee status under its mandate.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play an important role in defending the rights of refugees and ensuring that certain recognized standards are met. They not only include the major international NGOs, but also a host of local organizations that are in daily contact with the refugees.



# THE 1951 UN REFUGEE CONVENTION

THE 1951 UN CONVENTION relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol remain the cornerstone of modern refugee protection, and the legal principles they enshrine have permeated into countless other international, regional and national laws and practices.

One of the most crucial principles laid down in the 1951 Convention is that refugees should not be expelled or returned “...to the frontiers of territories where [their] life or freedom would be threatened...” (Art. 33). The Convention also outlines the basic rights which states should afford to refugees, and it defines who is a refugee – and who is not (excluding, for example, persons having committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a serious non-political crime (Art. 1 F)).

The 1951 Convention was never intended to address migration issues - its sole aim being to protect refugees.

Today’s challenge is to help states find other efficient mechanisms to manage migration

## TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

[ AT THE END OF 2013 ]

COUNTRY	REFUGEES*
Afghanistan	2,556,600
Syrian Arab Rep.	2,468,400
Somalia	1,121,700
Sudan	649,300
Dem. Rep. of Congo	499,500
Myanmar*	479,600
Iraq	401,400
Colombia*	396,600
Viet Nam**	314,100
Eritrea	308,000

\* Includes people in a refugee-like situation.

\*\* The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.

**Note:** Some 5 million Palestinian refugees are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). An additional 100,000 Palestinian refugees come under UNHCR’s mandate.

## TOP 10 ASYLUM COUNTRIES

[ AT THE END OF 2013 ]

COUNTRY	REFUGEES
Pakistan	1,616,500
Islamic Rep. of Iran	857,400
Lebanon	856,500
Jordan	641,900
Turkey*	609,900
Kenya	534,900
Chad	434,500
Ethiopia	433,900
China**	301,000
United States***	263,600

\* Government estimate.

\*\* The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.

\*\*\* UNHCR estimate.

and maintain border security – legitimate concerns that need to be carefully balanced with the responsibility to protect refugees.

By the end of 2013, a total of 148 countries had signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol (see brochure on the 1951 Refugee Convention for more details).

## WHAT IS UNHCR?

**T**HE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, more commonly referred to as the UN refugee agency or UNHCR, was created by the UN General Assembly in 1950 and began work on 1 January 1951. Its statute was drafted virtually simultaneously with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which became the cornerstone of refugee protection in subsequent decades.

UNHCR's initial task was to help millions of uprooted peoples – mainly in Europe – in the aftermath of World War II, and to seek permanent solutions for them. The Convention obliged states not to expel or forcibly return (*refoulement*) an asylum-seeker to a territory where he or she faced persecution. This was surely an important development, but the bulk of the Convention was, and remains, devoted to setting out the access to rights and standards governing the treatment of those recognized as refugees, so that they could resume normal lives.

The agency was given three years to accomplish this task. But as new refugee crises proliferated across the globe, the mandate was repeatedly renewed until, in 2003, the UN General Assembly made the High Commissioner's mandate permanent.



**“THE CONTRACTING STATES UNDERTAKE  
THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS**



UNHCR / S. RICH

A 1967 Protocol strengthened global refugee protection by removing the geographical and time limitations written into the original Convention, under which mainly Europeans involved in events occurring before 1 January, 1951 could apply for refugee status.

UNHCR is now one of the world's principal humanitarian agencies, with some 8,000 staff members working in 449 locations in 123 countries. In the last six decades, the agency has provided assistance to well over 50 million people, earning Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981.

**Karenni refugee children** play after school in the Ban Mai Nai Soi camp in northern Thailand, where these children were born.

António Guterres, who became the 10<sup>th</sup> High Commissioner in June 2005, reports to the Economic and Social Council on coordination aspects of the work of the agency, and submits a written report annually to the UN General Assembly on the overall work of UNHCR.

UNHCR's programmes are approved by an Executive Committee, currently of 94 member states, that meets annually in Geneva. A working group, or Standing Committee, meets several times a year.

## TO COOPERATE WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES..."

*Article 35, 1951 UN Refugee Convention*



**Syrian refugee**

Rasmeyah holds her great-granddaughter in Jordan, where they are registered with UNHCR.



# HOW UNHCR'S ROLE HAS EVOLVED

**P**ROTECTION RESPONSIBILITIES have remained at the core of UNHCR's work over the years. These include continuing efforts to promote and extend the international legal framework, to develop and strengthen asylum systems, to improve protection standards, to seek durable solutions, and many other activities designed to ensure the safety and well-being of refugees.

In 2001, the most important global refugee conference in half a century adopted a landmark declaration reaffirming the commitment of signatory states to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Through a process of global consultations, UNHCR drew up an "Agenda for Protection," which continues to serve as a guide to governments and humanitarian organizations in their efforts to strengthen worldwide refugee protection.

In addition to this work for refugees, UNHCR was mandated by the UN to monitor and protect stateless persons worldwide, assisting states and individuals - for whom statelessness can have devastating consequences. The current year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, which along with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, form the legal framework for this important work.

UNHCR is also a key player in the UN's "cluster approach", involving a wide range of agencies that help millions of internally displaced people who, unlike refugees, have never had a single agency wholly dedicated to their well-being.



UNHCR ARCHIVES / 133 / 1953

**At the time of UNHCR's creation**, it was expected to help an estimated 1,250,000 refugees dating from World War II.

With its proven operational expertise, UNHCR plays a prominent and more di-





**Seventeen-year-old Deloro**, a worker on a sugar plantation, is one of thousands of stateless people in the Dominican Republic.

rect role in countries where displacement is occurring – either helping returning refugees to settle back into their home areas or through activities on behalf of IDPs in countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic, Colombia, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

UNHCR has likewise contributed to major international relief operations to help victims of natural disasters, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, China's 2008 Sichuan earthquake and the 2013 Philippines typhoon.

**Survivors** of the Philippine's typhoon Haiyan salvage material to rebuild their homes.







**Thousands of UNHCR blankets** are unloaded in Jordan for distribution to Syrian refugees facing a frigid winter in tents.

## FROM EMERGENCIES TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS

**R**ESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES is a major feature of UNHCR's work. In 2013, the dire needs of those fleeing the Syria crisis was an ongoing and overwhelming challenge, while in Africa successive emergency teams were deployed to ensure the protection of those fleeing from the Central African Republic, that of Sudanese refugees flooding into Chad; refugee arrivals from the DRC into Uganda; and the massive displacement of South Sudanese, internally and across borders.

In these and many other cases, the immediate priority was to save lives by meeting basic needs in terms of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care. One example was the airlifting of winter aid to north-east Syria.

Other more specific protection needs call for immediate attention in emergencies, and not only in longer-standing refugee crises. Those of women and children - who comprise a large share of refugee populations, are of high

MAJOR OPERATIONS IN 2013	
COUNTRY	EXPENDITURE (US\$)
Jordan	367.6
Lebanon	362.1
Syrian Arab Rep.	317.9
Iraq	293.7
Turkey	225.6
Kenya	251.6
South Sudan	220.2
Afghanistan	131.4



**Somali refugee Dhaibro Hussain Ali** asked to take her four children home from Kenya as soon as UNHCR concludes it is safe to begin repatriation.

priority: education; countering sexual and gender-based violence; numerous child protection issues, including the threat of child recruitment; and the risk of human trafficking.

The goal of all efforts to protect and assist refugees and other displaced persons is ultimately the reestablishment of a normal life. The traditional durable solutions options are those below. Efforts are being made, however, to ensure that refugees are also able to realize other opportunities for which they may be eligible, with protection

safeguards. These include promotion of humanitarian admission, family reunification, labour migration, regional mobility and other such schemes.

**Voluntary repatriation** to their own country is the preferred solution for the majority of refugees, as soon as circumstances permit. Providing it is safe and reintegration is viable, UNHCR encourages this solution and often provides transportation and a start-up package, including cash grants, income-generation

TOP 5 VOLUNTARY REPATRIATIONS IN 2013	
COUNTRY	RETURNEES
Dem. Rep. of Congo	68,400
Iraq	60,900
Afghanistan	39,700
Somalia	36,100
Côte d'Ivoire	20,000

projects and practical assistance such as farm tools and seeds.

Together with NGO partners, UNHCR on occasion extends this help to include the rebuilding of individual homes and communal infrastructure such as schools and clinics, roads, bridges and wells. Such projects are often designed to help IDPs as well as returning refugees – while also benefitting local populations. UNHCR’s field staff may also monitor the well-being of returnees in precarious situations. Longer-term development assistance is provided by other organizations.

In 2013, the number of those returning to their home countries was relatively low: 414,600 refugees – the fourth lowest level of the past 25 years. Of this number 206,000 received UNHCR’s assistance. The leading country of

return was the DRC (68,400), followed by Iraq (60,900), Afghanistan (39,700), Somalia (36,100), Côte d’Ivoire (20,000), Sudan (17,000) and Mali (14,300). In the last decade, 6.5 million refugees were able to return home, compared to 14.6 million in the previous decade.

### Local integration

Refugees unable to return to their home countries may aim at self-sufficiency in their country of asylum, and integrate locally. It is a complex and gradual process leading ultimately to becoming full members of the host society, with entitlements and rights that are comparable to those of nationals. Over time the process should lead to permanent residence and, in the best-case scenario, the acquisition of citizenship in the country of



UNHCR / B. SOKOL

**Former Angolan refugees return home** from the Democratic Republic of Congo in August, 2014.





UNHCR / S. RICH

**Former refugee children** from many nations gather in a Kentucky school for English lessons after they were resettled in the United States.

asylum. UNHCR has encouraged states to improve their data on naturalized refugees, but statistics are still only partial. However, from those available it appears that, during the past decade, at least 716,000 refugees have been granted citizenship by their asylum countries, the United States accounting for two-thirds of this figure.

**Resettlement**

The other durable solution is resettlement in a third country. In 2013, a total 27 countries offered resettlement places – the same number as the previous year. However, resettlement needs continued to exceed the number of

**TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT IN 2013**

COUNTRY	REFUGEES
United States	66,200
Australia	13,200
Canada	12,200
Sweden	1,900
United Kingdom	970

places available by a ratio of 12 to one. The main beneficiaries in 2013 were refugees from Myanmar (23,500), Iraq (13,200), DRC (12,200), Somalia (9,000) and Bhutan (7,100). Three categories dominated submissions for resettlement: legal and/or

physical protection needs (42%); lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions (22%), and survivors of violence and/or torture (16%). Women and girls at risk represented more than 12 per cent of total resettlement submissions.

During the year, a total of 98,400 refugees were admitted for resettlement. Ninety per cent were resettled in the United States, Australia and Canada (see table).

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## ■ What rights and obligations does a refugee have?

A refugee has the right to seek asylum. However, international protection involves more than just physical safety: refugees should receive at least the same basic rights and help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident, including freedom of thought, of movement and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. They should also benefit from the same fundamental economic and social rights. In return, refugees are required to respect the laws and regulations of their country of asylum.

## ■ What is the difference between an asylum-seeker and a refugee?

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another state, they often have to officially apply for asylum. While their case is still being decided, they are known as asylum-seekers. If asylum is granted, it means they have been recognized as refugees in need of international protection.

## ■ What happens when governments cannot or will not provide help?

In certain circumstances, when adequate government resources are not available (for example after the sudden arrival of large numbers of uprooted people), UNHCR and other international

organizations provide assistance such as legal help, food, tools and shelter, schools and clinics.

## ■ Are people who flee war zones refugees?

The 1951 Convention does not specifically address the issue of civilians fleeing conflict, unless they fall within a particular group being persecuted within the context of the conflict. However, UNHCR's long-held position is that people fleeing the indiscriminate effects of conflict should be generally considered as refugees if their own state is unwilling or unable to protect them. Regional instruments, such as the 1969 OAU Convention on refugees and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration in Latin America, recognize such people as refugees.



UNHCR / F. NOY

**CAR refugee mothers** and their severely malnourished children at a feeding centre in Batouri hospital, Cameroon.



UNHCR / G. KOTSCHY

### ■ Can governments deport people who are found not to be refugees?

People who have been determined, under a fair procedure, not to be in need of international protection are in a situation similar to that of illegal aliens, and may be deported. However, UNHCR advocates that a fair procedure has to include the right to a review before they are deported, since the consequences of a faulty decision may put the individual's life at risk.

### ■ Can a war criminal or terrorist be a refugee?

No. People who have participated in war crimes and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law – including acts of terrorism – are specifically excluded from the protection accorded to refugees.

### ■ Can a soldier be a refugee?

Only civilians can be refugees. A person who continues to pursue armed action from the country of asylum cannot be considered a refugee. However, soldiers or fighters who have laid down their arms may subsequently be granted refugee status, providing they are not excludable for other reasons.

### ■ Do all refugees have to go through an asylum determination process?

In many countries, people who apply for refugee status have to establish individually that their fear of persecution is well-founded. However, during major exoduses involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of people, individual screening may be impossible. In such circumstances, the entire group may be granted “*prima facie*” refugee status.







UNHCR / F. NOY

## ■ What is “temporary protection”?

Countries sometimes offer “temporary protection” when their regular asylum systems risk being overwhelmed by a sudden mass influx of people, as happened during the 1990s conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In such circumstances, people can be rapidly admitted to safe countries, but without any guarantee of permanent stay.

Temporary protection can work to the advantage of both governments and asylum-seekers in specific circumstances. But it only complements – and does not substitute for – the wider protection measures, including formal refugee status, offered by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

**Left: Asylum-seekers from Iraq entering Bulgaria from Turkey** are housed in a transit centre at Pastrogor while preliminary screening of applications is conducted.

**Above: UNHCR staff give documentation to refugees** from the Democratic Republic of Congo at the Nyakabande transit centre in Uganda.





**Hundreds of refugees cross the border from Syria into Jordan at remote eastern desert locations, June 2014.**

## HOW UNHCR OPERATES

### Funding

UNHCR is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, principally from governments but also from inter-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals. It receives a limited subsidy of just over 2 per cent of its funding from the United Nations regular budget,

for administrative costs. It also accepts in-kind contributions, including relief items such as tents, medicines, trucks and air transport.

UNHCR presented a global needs-based budget for 2013 that rose during the year to US\$5.3 billion because of new





UNHCR / J. KOHLER

emergencies. Despite difficult worldwide economic conditions, UNHCR received more than US\$2.9 billion in funding, a rise of US\$647 million over 2012. Nevertheless, with funding covering only 60 per cent of needs, a wide gap remained.

## Partnerships

Partnerships are important to UNHCR and, as humanitarian crises have become more complex, UNHCR has expanded both the number and type of organizations it works with. Its operational partners now include more than 740 international and national NGOs.



UNHCR / S. RICH

**NFI'S Being unloaded** at Erbil international airport, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

It also plays an active role in the inter-agency “cluster” approach, taking the lead in certain areas of its expertise. United Nations sister agencies with which it cooperates include the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Other organizations with which UNHCR has strong links include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).



# NUMBERS AT A GLANCE \*

## General

- In 2013, an estimated **51.2 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution**.
- By the end of 2013, **the total population of concern to UNHCR** was estimated at **42.9 million** people, broken down as follows:
  - 11.7 million refugees;
  - 1.2 million asylum-seekers;
  - 415,000 refugees who had repatriated during 2013;
  - 23.9 million IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR;
  - 1.4 million IDPs who had returned to their place of origin in 2013;
  - 3.5 million stateless persons confirmed;
  - 836,000 others of concern.
- By the end of 2013, according to UNHCR's global estimates, there remained close to **2.6 million Afghan refugees**, nearly a quarter of the global refugee population under UNHCR's responsibility. The **Syrian Arab Republic** was the second largest country of origin of refugees [**2.5 million**], followed by **Somalia** [**1.1 million**], **Sudan** [**650,000**] and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** [**500,000**].

## Refugees

- Many of the refugees fleeing **the conflict in Syria** sought refuge in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Za'atari camp in Jordan grew to the size of the third largest "city" of the country. In Lebanon the number of Syrian refugees swelled to around a quarter of the total population.
- The largest refugee camp complex in the world is Dadaab in north-east Kenya. Since it opened 22 years ago to host a maximum of 90,000 people fleeing **civil war in Somalia**, it has grown into five camps hosting more than **350,000 refugees and asylum-seekers**, including third generation refugees born in the camp.
- Gathering demographic information is a priority for UNHCR, particularly to plan assistance. While data collection has improved over time, it is a continuous challenge, especially where UNHCR depends on governments for the information. By the end of 2013, UNHCR had data that disaggregated by sex for 56 per cent of persons of concern and 42 per cent by age.

## Asylum-seekers

- During 2013, nearly **1.1 million individual applications for asylum or refugee status** were submitted to governments and UNHCR offices in 167 countries or territories, a 15 per cent increase from the previous year and the highest in a decade. UNHCR offices registered a record **203,200 applications**, a sharp rise from 125,500 in 2012.
- **Some 288,000 asylum-seekers** were either recognized as refugees [**213,400**] or granted a complementary form of protection [**74,600**] during 2013.
- **Germany** registered the most new applications for refugee status during 2013, with **109,600 asylum claims**. **The United States** recorded the second highest number of new claims [**84,400**], followed by **South Africa** [**70,000**], **France** [**60,200**] and **Sweden** [**54,300**].

\* Figures do not include nearly 5 million Palestinian refugees registered under a separate mandate by UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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**Displaced girls  
peek from a tent  
that serves as a  
temporary classroom  
in Ajoung Thok  
refugee camp in  
South Sudan.**

## ■ Internally displaced

- The number of IDPs at the end of 2013 was **333 million, the highest ever recorded**.
- The number of internally displaced persons, including those in IDP-like situations, benefitting from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities rose to **239 million** at the end of 2013, a **6.3 million increase compared to the previous year** and the highest level on record.

## ■ Stateless

- By the end of 2013, UNHCR had identified some **35 million stateless people in 75 countries**. However, the actual number of stateless persons worldwide was estimated to be at least 10 million\*\*.
- At least **37,700 stateless people acquired nationality** during 2013.

\*\* These figures do not, however, capture the full scale or magnitude of the phenomenon of statelessness. A significant number of stateless people have not been systematically identified and the statistical data on statelessness is not yet available in many cases.



