

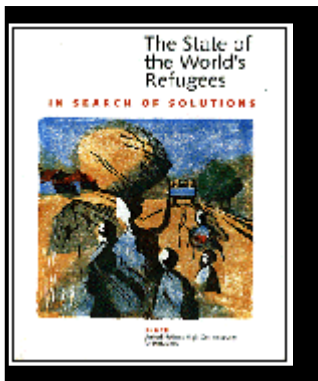
## **The State of The World's Refugees in search of solutions**

Published by Oxford University Press

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### Preface

*by the United Nations Secretary-General*

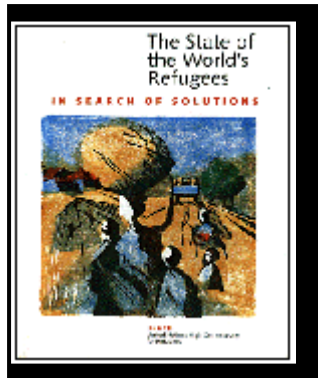
There is no greater symbol of the challenges that confront the United Nations in its efforts to promote peace, shared prosperity and mutual respect than the plight of the world's displaced people. Refugees and other uprooted people are the products of failure - the failure to resolve conflict and its underlying causes: intolerance, antagonism and poverty.

Radical economic and social change have, in many cases, added to an already volatile mix - providing a fertile breeding ground for the violence and human rights abuses which provoke large-scale population displacements. In some cases, the very structure of the state has collapsed, provoking massive new population movements within and across international borders.

But the situation is not without hope. States and societies throughout the world continue to offer refuge to people who have been forced to leave their own country. In many parts of the world, authoritarian regimes have given way to democratic and participatory systems of government. Millions of refugees and displaced people have been able to go back to their homes and contribute towards the reconstruction of their shattered societies.

*The State of the World's Refugees* is a timely and challenging book. It provides a detailed analysis of an issue which has in recent years risen to the top of the international agenda. It demonstrates the linkages which exist between refugee issues and the broader question of human rights, armed conflict, underdevelopment and mass migration. And by identifying actions which can be taken to address the problem of human displacement, *The State of the World's Refugees* contributes to the objective set by the founders of the United Nations 50 years ago - the attainment of peace, development and human rights for all.

*Boutros Boutros-Ghali*



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### Foreword

*by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

One of the greatest challenges of the 21st century will be to ensure that people in every part of the world enjoy security and freedom: security from armed conflict, violence, human rights abuses and poverty; and the freedom to realize their personal potential, to participate in the governance of their country, and to express their individual and collective identity.

As a succession of recent refugee emergencies has demonstrated, people who do not enjoy security and freedom may be left with no alternative but to flee from their homeland and seek refuge in another state. Such forced migrations may in turn generate new forms of tension and insecurity, particularly in countries which are unable to meet the needs of their own citizens, let alone thousands of displaced and distressed new arrivals. Refugees are increasingly confronted with rejection and exclusion. Too often there is pressure to contain displaced populations within the borders of their own state or to send them back home, irrespective of the dangers confronting them there.

For many years, UNHCR and its operational partners waited for refugees to cross an international border before providing them with protection and assistance. The subsequent search for solutions to their plight focused primarily on the question of the refugees' physical location: whether they should repatriate to their homeland, integrate in the society where they had found asylum, or move on to a third country and settle down there.

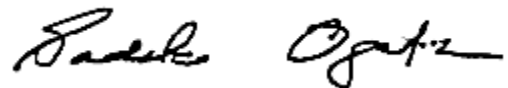
The limitations of these traditional solutions, coupled with the growing scale of the refugee problem and the changing nature of the international political and economic order, have prompted UNHCR to develop a new approach to the question of human displacement. This approach is proactive and preventive, rather than reactive. Instead of focusing purely on countries of asylum, it is equally concerned with conditions in actual and potential refugee-producing states. And as well as providing protection and assistance to refugees, it seeks to reinforce the security and freedom enjoyed by several other groups: internally displaced people; refugees who have

returned to their own country; war-affected communities and those who are at risk of being uprooted.

In our efforts to address the plight of displaced and threatened populations, the right to seek asylum in another state must be scrupulously respected. At the same time, however, greater efforts must be made to ensure that people can live safely and without hardship in their country of origin. No-one should have to become a refugee in order to survive.

At a time when large numbers of people are confronted with the horrors of ethnic cleansing, the threat of communal violence and a growing gap between their economic expectations and their standard of living, these will not be easy tasks. Nor can they be undertaken by humanitarian organizations alone. It is for this reason that UNHCR's work is becoming more and more linked with a wide range of UN efforts, from political negotiations, peacekeeping operations, economic and social development, to the defence of human rights and environmental protection.

The quest for solutions to the refugee problem requires a sustained commitment by states and regional organizations, in both the richer and poorer regions of the world. It requires the active involvement of international and non-governmental agencies. Above all, the search for solutions requires a willingness to listen to and work with the people most directly affected by the problem of forced migration: refugees, returnees and displaced people themselves, as well as those communities which are affected by their presence. The refugee question is ultimately a human one, and the strategies pursued by UNHCR and its partners will only succeed if they build upon local commitment and capacities.



*Sadako Ogata*