



## GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

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# 1 Introduction

We are currently witnessing the largest and most rapid escalation ever in the number of people being forced from their homes. Millions of people are fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as persecution in areas of Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, creating the highest level of displacement since World War II. Global refugee crises in numbers:

- The global refugee total exceeded 20 million for the first time since 1992
- The number of internally displaced people rose from 2 million to 34 million
- Worldwide forced displacement is expected to exceed 60 million for the first time – 1 in every 122 people has been forced to flee their home
- 4,600 people are forced to flee their countries every day
- One million 'refugees and migrants' reached EU in 2015
- Half of those arriving in six countries were Syrians fleeing war and the overwhelming majority landed in Greece.
- Around 1,700 refugees and migrants died trying to cross the Mediterranean in January-April 2015 alone.

In the past two years, the world has witnessed a growing refugee crisis. In 2013, for the first time since World War II, the number of those forcibly displaced from their homes exceeded 50 million. Millions more have since been displaced as a result of conflict and crises around the globe. The year 2015 has seen continuing dramatic growth in mass displacement from wars and conflict, once again reaching levels unprecedented in recent history.

New crises have broken out in the Middle East and Africa, compounded by continuing unresolved conflicts in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and elsewhere. In addition to the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, new conflicts in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Iraq, among others, have caused suffering and massive displacement.

The European migrant crisis or European refugee crisis began in 2015, when a rising number of refugees and migrants made the journey to the European Union to seek asylum, travelling across the Mediterranean Sea, or through Southeast Europe. They came from areas such as Western and South Asia, Africa and the Western Balkans.

It is not just the scale of global forced displacement that is disconcerting but also its rapid acceleration in recent years. For most of the past decade, displacement figures ranged between 38 million and 43 million persons annually. Since 2011, however, when levels stood at 42.5 million, these numbers have grown to the current 59.5 million – a 40 per cent increase within a span of just three years. Such growth poses challenges to finding adequate responses to these crises, increasingly leading to the multiple displacements of individuals or secondary movements in search of safety.

## 2 Worst Affected Regions

### 1. Middle East and North Africa:

- The worsening humanitarian situation in and around Syria was compounded by an escalation of violence in Iraq during 2014. Syrians have become the largest refugee population under United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s mandate, with an estimated 3.7 million Syrian refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region at the end of 2014.
- In 2015, the humanitarian situation in Yemen has deteriorated further as conflict spreads throughout the country. This is prompting new waves of displacement, of both Yemeni nationals and refugees who had sought safety in Yemen, to flee to neighboring countries and further afield.

- The security situation in Libya remained volatile. According to local authorities and national non-governmental organizations, around 400,000 people were displaced inside the country by the end of 2014.

## 2. Europe:

- Crimean crisis and subsequent war resulted in humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Fighting between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatists has severely damaged Ukraine's industrial belt. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have fled to neighbouring countries. The conflict has been particularly damaging to Ukraine's economy, which is expected to shrink by nine percent.
- Masses of migrants and refugees, many from Syria, Afghanistan and Kosovo, have been overwhelming border authorities in several Balkan countries as they try to reach Western Europe.

## 3. South- East Asia:

- Communal clashes in the Rakhine province of Myanmar have displaced thousands of Rohingya Muslim community. Long standing political turmoil and ethnic clashes in Myanmar have resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crisis of the region.
- Inside Myanmar, approximately 370,000 people remain displaced in Rakhine and Kachin States, and in the south-east of the country. Moreover, an estimated 810,000 people are without citizenship in Rakhine State. There are also approximately 265,000 refugees of different ethnicities, originating from Myanmar, who are displaced in neighboring countries.

## 4. Africa:

- With new conflicts emerging in Africa and ongoing crises worsening, Africa has become hotspot for the refugee crisis. The outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa aggravated the situation further in last two years.
- As a result of the unrest in South Sudan, the number of refugees that fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda reached 614,000, of whom 488,000 fled in the course of 2014.
- Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali have experienced worsening of ongoing political conflicts which has added to the refugee crisis in the region.
- Horn of Africa along with Kenya and Ethiopia experienced one of the worst droughts in last three years. It has resulted in widespread migrations to surrounding countries.

## 3 Refugee Crisis: a shared responsibility

- **Consequences of Refugee Crisis:**
  - People fleeing their countries land in the hands of trafficking gangs and smugglers for transportation in the absence of safe passage in neighboring countries.
  - Refugees attempting to cross oceans are drowned in hundreds. Thousands have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya and Turkey. Similar life loss is experienced in the Pacific region in case of Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar. Hundred got killed while attempting to reach Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.
  - Infrastructure and administration in neighbouring countries is falling apart in the absence of any humanitarian aid.
  - In case of Lebanon and Jordan, the economies are suffering due to influx of migration. Unemployment rates have soured in all surrounding region. It resulted in hostile attitude towards refugees.
- **Response to the Crisis:**
  - Powerful nations, which often send bombers to poorer countries to "solve" their domestic problems, as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization did in Libya in 2011, are not as forthcoming when they face refugee crises and poverty.
  - At present, almost 86 per cent of all refugees are in the developing countries, which lack the infrastructure and resources to tackle the challenge.

- The international community's response to the crisis remains dismal: only 23% of the UN humanitarian appeal for Syria's refugees was funded as of June 2015. As a result of this funding shortage, aid agencies have repeatedly had to reduce financial assistance to refugees.
- The refugee crises in Sub-Saharan Africa receive little or no attention in regional or global political forums. Many of the host countries in the region have little or no capacity to provide support to refugees, and UN humanitarian operations on the continent are significantly under-resourced.
- The response by South-East Asian countries has worst to pathetic. In Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand boats carrying refugees and migrants are forced out of the territorial waters.
- The asylum shelters in Australia inspected by the Amnesty International revealed worst human rights violations in camps created for asylum seekers.
- The prolonged nature of the Syria crisis, which entered its fifth year in March 2015, has also required a shift in approach. **The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 (3RP)**, issued at the end of 2014, is a regional strategy that brings together host Governments and around 200 humanitarian and development partners to support nationally-led response plans for the five main Syrian refugee host countries. This unique coordination initiative aims to scale up resilience and stabilization-based development components to complement humanitarian assistance. UNHCR and UNDP led the development of the 3RP in 2014.
- EU nations agreed on a plan to relocate 120,000 of these refugees across the Union. Sixty-six thousands of them, who are now in Greece and Italy after making dangerous voyages across the Mediterranean, would be relocated. Fifty-four thousand are to be relocated from Hungary, where they had reached after trekking across the Balkans. But after Hungary's opposition to the plan, the quota will now go to Italy and Greece.
- In 2014, UNHCR and the Government of Indonesia co-chaired a workshop to assess the implementation of the 2013 Jakarta Declaration on addressing irregular movement of persons. In addition to the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, 14 States, representing countries of origin, transit and destination, participated in the workshop. States reiterated their commitment towards burden sharing and common

#### Amnesty International's Recommendations:

- **An international summit** on the global refugee crisis focused on increasing international responsibility and burden-sharing;
- **Global ratification of the Refugee Convention**
- **Develop robust domestic refugee systems:** states must have fair domestic procedures to assess refugee claims and must guarantee fundamental rights and access to services, such as education and healthcare, to refugees.
- **An absolute commitment to saving lives first:** states must prioritise saving people in distress over implementing immigration policies. In situations where people are in danger of death, including – but not limited to – people attempting sea crossings, states should invest in search and rescue operations and immediately come to the rescue of people in distress.
- **Combat trafficking:** states must take effective action to investigate and prosecute trafficking gangs. States should offer protection and assistance to victims of trafficking and ensure they have access to refugee status determination procedures and/or resettlement opportunities
- **Fulfill all resettlement needs identified by UNHCR:** nearly one million resettlement and humanitarian admission places are required for refugees who need resettlement and this number will increase every year. Amnesty International estimates that 300,000 annual resettlement and humanitarian admission places will be needed every year over the next four years.
- **Combat xenophobia:** governments must refrain from engaging in xenophobia themselves, for example by implying or directly claiming asylum-seekers and migrants are to blame for economic and social problems. Governments must also have effective policies to address xenophobic violence;
- **Establish a global refugee fund:** such a fund should fulfil all UN humanitarian appeals for refugee crises. This fund should also provide meaningful financial support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees to help them provide services to refugees and their host communities. This should be additional to existing development aid.

responsibility, and underscored the importance of regional agreements and practical actions to protect people rescued and intercepted at sea.

- Indonesia and Malaysia announced that they would provide “temporary shelter” for up to 7,000 people still at sea. This temporary protection would only last for up to a year and on condition that the international community would help with repatriation or resettlement of the people.

## 4 Role of the World Community

- A more coordinated approach is needed to address the problem. Richer countries in the West and the Asia Pacific should find more room for refugees from stricken lands, in order to share the burden more equitably. And, agencies such as the UNHCR that deal with millions of refugees should be sufficiently funded to fulfill their missions. More important, there have to be more meaningful efforts, driven not merely by geopolitical calculations but by moral, humanitarian conviction, to solve the world’s crises. That could be the first step towards addressing the causes of the problem.
- The global refugee crisis is primarily a result of conflicts and widespread human rights violations. In the aftermath of World War II, the international community created the United Nations Refugee Convention. Together with other international treaties and norms, it obligates that states ensure refugees, having lost the protection of their country of origin, are able to enjoy international protection from their countries of asylum. The Refugee Convention also establishes the principle of responsibility-sharing - the idea that the international community must work together to address refugee crises so that no one country, or a small number of countries, has to cope alone.
- The obligation of individual countries to give protection and assistance to refugees, coupled with the responsibility of the international community to act collectively in the case of large refugee crises, is essential to refugee protection. The refugee crisis the world has witnessed in the past few years has been exacerbated by the failures of individual states, and of the international community as a whole, to live up to these obligations.
- Although 145 countries have ratified the Refugee Convention, there are regions of the world in which very few countries have ratified the treaty, including most of the Middle East, South Asia and South East Asia. In these regions refugees generally enjoy limited rights and in some cases are not legally recognized as refugees.
- The responsibility for coping with the world’s multiple refugee crises lies almost entirely with poorer countries in the world. Wealthier countries are not doing nearly enough to share the burden of the global refugee crisis. Humanitarian appeals for refugee crises are consistently – and often severely – underfunded.
- Nearly one million refugees need resettlement, yet, globally, annual resettlement commitments are less than a tenth of this number. Only around 30 countries offer any resettlement places at all.
- In many countries, political considerations regularly take precedence over the lives of refugees and migrants, leaving thousands to die on dangerous journeys that could have been avoided.
- Ultimately, refugee crises end when their root causes are addressed. Ending conflicts and widespread human rights abuses are objectives that states should pursue, but they are difficult to achieve. However, individual states and the international community as a whole must recognize that they can lessen the devastating consequences of the refugee crisis on people. For this, a global approach to the problem is needed.

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