

Forum: International Organization for Migration

Issue #2: Addressing the humanitarian impact of deportation policies

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Introduction

Deportations are the removal of foreign citizens from a country by the government, often because they are there illegally in search of safety from their home countries. Although these people's residence is illegal, their human rights should always be upheld. Many deportation policies have a major humanitarian impact on the individuals being removed. These include separation from family and being sent to countries where their safety would be endangered.

Forced deportations are removing a foreign individual from the country's territory against his or her will (Scholten). These are often done using violence. A mass deportation is the removal of a large group of people, whether it's due to their race or

ethnicity, without having a thorough check on each individual's case. Mass deportations are illegal under many laws, as they do not provide a fair evaluation of each person. If each case is checked before being deported, it is not classified as a mass deportation. All deportations are done using the country's deportation policy, a legal framework that tells the government how and when immigrants should be removed from the country.

Many deportations send refugees and asylum seekers back to their country of origin, which usually places them in danger of persecution and violations of their human rights. This could mean their home country is at war or unsafe.

Definition of Key Terms

Deportation: When a government forces a foreign person to leave the country, usually because they don't have legal permission to stay or have broken immigration laws. This removal is often permanent and can happen with or without a fair legal process. ("Understand the Deportation Process | USAGov")

Expulsion: Expulsion is a general legal order for someone to leave a country. It includes deportation and other types of forced removal. It can be used for both immigration and non-immigration reasons. (Scholten)

Forced Deportation: Forced deportation is when someone is removed from a country against their will, often with the use of force or without fair legal procedures. It becomes a serious human rights concern when people are not given a chance to explain their case or access legal help. (Scholten)

Collective Expulsion/Mass Deportation: This is when large groups of people are deported at the same time without reviewing each individual case. It is illegal under international law because everyone has the right to a personal hearing and fair treatment. (UNHCR)

Voluntary Departure: Voluntary departure happens when someone chooses to leave a country on their own, usually to avoid being formally deported. Even though it is "voluntary," many people feel pressured to leave due to fear of legal consequences. (Immigration Equality)

Asylum Seeker: An asylum seeker is a person who flees their country and asks for protection in another country because they fear persecution or harm. They are waiting for a decision on whether they will be granted refugee status. ("Asylum-Seekers | UNHCR")

Refugee: A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their country due to war, violence, or persecution. They cannot return safely and are protected under international law. ("Refugees | UNHCR")

Non-refoulement: Non-refoulement is a principle in international law that says people should not be sent back to a country where they may face serious danger. It is a key protection for asylum seekers and refugees. (IOM) (OHCHR)

Due Process: Due process means everyone has the right to a fair legal procedure before being deported. This includes having a lawyer, knowing the reason for deportation, and the chance to explain their situation. (International Rescue Committee)

Humanitarian Impact: Refers to the social, emotional, and physical effects experienced by individuals who are forced to leave their countries or seek protection due to urgent crises, including violence, abuse, or disasters. These impacts show the need for more humane immigration policies. (IOM)

General Overview

Context Surrounding Deportation Policies

Deportation policies, which require the removal of foreign nationals from a country, have become a significant focus in global migration governance. While it is within the sovereign rights of countries to manage and control their borders, these policies often have serious humanitarian consequences that extend far beyond the act of removal itself. Deportations impact not only the individuals being deported, but also their families, local communities, and countries of origin. Organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and various United Nations bodies emphasize that migration policies, including those that involve deportation, must uphold human rights and place humanitarian concerns at the center of their design and implementation. (UNHCR)

Driving Causes and Policy Background

Deportation policies are generally enforced in response to irregular migration, expired visas, or involvement in criminal activities. However, a significant number of those who are extradited are actually asylum seekers, refugees, or long-term residents who have built their lives in the host country. In recent years, many countries have adopted stricter deportation measures, often driven by increased migration flows, rising political pressure, and security concerns. These changes have led to the enforcement of policies that do not always consider the personal circumstances of those being deported, raising questions about justice and fairness. (UNHCR)

Humanitarian Impact on Individuals and Families

The humanitarian consequences of deportation are most strongly felt by individuals and families. These frequently result in family separation, which can be especially harmful when children are left behind without parents or caregivers. This often leads to long-lasting psychological trauma, anxiety, and economic struggles. Children who are separated from their parents may face housing instability, food insecurity, and disruptions in their education. In many cases, older siblings are forced to take on parental responsibilities or work to support the family, which can negatively affect their

emotional health and academic success. In addition to family separation, both displaced individuals and their loved ones typically suffer from deep emotional distress. This may include feelings of depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal. The trauma caused by forced separation may continue even if families are later reunited. Moreover, the departure of a family's primary income earner can lead to significant financial instability, pushing the entire household into poverty. Single parents may have to work longer hours to cover their expenses, which increases household stress and reduces the time they can spend with their children. (American)

Community and Societal Consequences

The effects of deportation extend beyond families and individuals and can disrupt entire communities. The constant threat of deportation often creates fear and mistrust among immigrant populations. This fear discourages people from seeking help or interacting with important public services such as schools, healthcare centers, or law enforcement, which in turn undermines public safety and weakens community cohesion. Furthermore, individuals who are deported, as well as their families, may face social stigma and discrimination. This can happen both in their host country and upon return to their country of origin. Such stigma makes it harder for them to reintegrate into society and access basic services, creating long-term barriers to stability. (Baker Institute)

Human Rights Concerns and Legal Challenges

Deportation practices have raised many concerns about human rights and legal protections. In many cases, they occur without proper legal procedures or access to fair representation. This is especially common during mass deportations or immediate removals, where individuals are denied the opportunity to explain their personal situation. Some countries have been criticized for carrying out collective expulsions, where people are removed based on nationality, race, or group identity without individual case evaluations. These actions violate international law, which prohibits such practices. Another serious issue is the displacement of individuals to countries where they may face violence, persecution, or humanitarian crises. This goes against the

principle of non-refoulement, a core part of international refugee law that protects individuals from being returned to places where their life or freedom would be in danger. (UNHCR)

Countries around the world approach deportation in different ways, often depending on their political priorities, legal systems, or capacity to manage migration. Some governments, like those of the United States or certain European Union members, argue that deportation is a necessary tool to protect national security, enforce immigration laws, or respond to irregular migration. Others, along with many human rights organizations, emphasize the importance of due process, humanitarian protections, and individualized assessments. These different perspectives have led to ongoing debate about how to ensure that deportation policies respect international legal standards while addressing national concerns. (Euronews)

Socioeconomic and Development Impacts

Deportation policies can have destabilizing effects on both the host and the origin countries. In host countries, the removal of workers can damage local economies, break apart families, and reduce the workforce in key industries. For origin countries, especially those already struggling with poverty or instability, receiving large numbers of returnees places additional pressure on already limited resources. Governments may not have the infrastructure or services needed to support these returnees, which can worsen humanitarian conditions and contribute to repeated cycles of migration. (Scholten)

International Response and Role of the IOM

The international community, including the IOM and the United Nations, continues to advocate for deportation policies that are fair, humane, and compliant with international legal standards. These organizations stress the need to protect vulnerable populations and uphold human dignity in every stage of the process. They call on countries to share responsibility, act with solidarity, and commit to long-term solutions that prioritize human rights and sustainable development. Through international cooperation and support, there is hope to reduce the negative humanitarian

consequences of deportation and create migration systems that are more just and compassionate. (IOM)

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has published a plan that was concluded not to meet the required standards. The United Kingdom's (UK) UK-Rwanda plan was published by the government of the United Kingdom and the government of the Republic of Rwanda on April 14, 2022. This plan states that certain asylum-seekers will be sent to Rwanda to have their claims fulfilled there. However, after an analysis of this plan, published by the UNHCR, it was concluded that it did not "meet the required standards relating to the legality and appropriateness of transfer of asylum seekers" (UNHCR).

Mexico

Not only does Mexico play a key role in migration, especially for immigrants from South America attempting to go north, due to poverty, political instability, and violence, but many Latin Americans are met with political debates, for the majority centered around economic concerns, security, and border control. Mexico also deports many immigrants back to their countries of origin. In 2021, Mexican authorities arrested 307,000 immigrants, primarily from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, redirecting them to many immigration authorities (ACAPs). This process usually places these people at risk of kidnappings, assaults, and exploitation by criminal groups.

Libya

Libya has a major role as a transit country for people trying to cross from Africa to Europe. Many of these migrants are usually forcibly detained and sent to inhumane detention facilities where they face horrible conditions such as ill-treatment, sexual assault, and unlawful killings. The United States has been told it should avoid sending individuals to Libya as these conditions were inhumane (HRW). On May 7, 2025, a US federal judge ruled that any efforts to deport migrants to Libya would clearly violate a

previous court which emphasized the need to consider if the individuals would face persecution in countries that are not their country of origin.

United States

The United States' deportations by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) hit a 10-year record in 2024 under the Biden administration, where they deported 271,000 immigrants in fiscal year 2024. The trump administration vowed to have the largest deportation effort in American history (CBS News). The United States Border Patrol (USBP), throughout March 2017 and the end of 2019, forcibly separated 4,656 children from their parents along the U.S.-Mexico border (Immigration and Human Rights Law Review). Forcible family separations occur when children are separated from their families with no plan to enable reunification. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sent many of the children separated from their families to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) without any measures for authorities to reunite the children with their families.

The Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras)

This group of countries experiences large amounts of deportees from mainly the United States and Mexico. In 2024, a total of 102,689 migrants were received in the Northern Triangle, of these migrants, 13,144 were children or adolescents. El Salvador specifically experiences the largest increase in the number of migrants being sent home, with a 35.8% increase in cases (El Salvador Now). El Salvador also has the largest increase in percentage of repatriations of women, with a 68.3% increase. Additionally, El Salvador also has the highest increase in adolescent and child migrants being sent to their country of origin, with an increase of 72.9% according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14, emphasizes the basic human right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. Meaning, when an individual's safety is at risk and put in danger, due to violence, political oppression, war, or discrimination in their country of origin, they have the legal right to seek help and safety beyond the borders of their country (OHCHR).
1951	The 1951 Refugee Convention declares the rights of refugees and states the core principle of non-refoulement, asserting that no refugee will be sent back to a place where their life or freedom is put in danger (UNHCR).
1984	UN Convention Against Torture (CAT) prohibits the expulsion/deportation of refugees to a country where they would be placed in danger of torture.
2000	The Protocol against the Smuggling of migrants by Land, Sea, and Air supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This protocol aims to combat the illegal smuggling of migrants while protecting their rights (OHCHR).
2006	As a response to increased migration flows, mainly coming from

Central and South America, Mexico has reinforced its legal and institutional framework for handling asylum seekers. The Mexican government acknowledges that since Mexico is a transit and destination country for many migrants, it must build more effective, humane, and organized systems for dealing with the large number of people coming in (MPI).

- 2011 The United Nations Human Rights office criticized the Dominican Republic for mass deportations (which are illegal as they go against many laws protecting individuals from unfair legal treatment) of Haitians in 2023-2024. Many of these Haitians are fleeing poverty and violence in their home countries. This led the Dominican government to increase deportations, often without following any legal procedures.
- 2016 The New York Declaration of Refugees and Migrants, signed by all 193 members of the United Nations in September 2016, reaffirms the importance of respecting the rights of refugees and migrants. It emphasizes the importance that all refugees are treated with respect, fairness, and humanity (UNHCR).
- 2018 The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration is the first intergovernmental agreement covering all dimensions of international migration. It highlights the need for humane treatment of migrants and refugees (OHCHR).
- 2023 UN makes a report on refugee protection, internal displacement, and statelessness. This report highlights the responsibility of states

to protect people who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked (OHCHR).

2025 A US federal judge halts the Trump administration's attempts to deport hundreds, if not thousands, of migrants to countries that are not their country of origin without allowing them to express fear of persecution/torture (Reuters).

2025 The European Commission proposes deporting individuals to countries

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

UN Contributions

The United Nations has played an important role in responding to the humanitarian consequences of deportation policies by working to protect the rights and dignity of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Agencies like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provide emergency support, legal advice, and promote voluntary return programs that respect safety and human rights. The UN encourages countries to use alternatives to deportation, such as legal status, regularization, or community inclusion, especially to avoid harm to vulnerable people. One major effort has focused on protecting children from immigration detention, with the UN Task Force on Children Deprived of Liberty pushing for community-based solutions. The UN's work generally reflects its belief in international cooperation, legal safeguards, and the creation of safer, more humane migration systems (UNHCR).

Relevant Resolutions

Several UN resolutions guide how countries should treat migrants and structure

deportation policies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established that everyone has the right to seek asylum and be protected from discrimination. This document laid the foundation for international human rights protection and influenced national laws and the creation of safeguards for migrants and refugees. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) strengthened this framework by confirming that all UN member states are responsible for protecting migrants' rights regardless of legal status. It also led to greater international cooperation and the development of the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, which promote more humane and coordinated migration policies. The Human Rights Council Resolution 9/5 urges governments to fight racism and xenophobia, ensure fair legal treatment, and pay special attention to the rights of women and children. This resolution has increased global examination of discriminatory practices and encouraged countries to adopt measures to protect vulnerable groups. More recent recommendations from the UNHCR have asked countries to stop detaining asylum seekers without cause and to provide access to legal aid and alternatives to detention. These recommendations have influenced legal reforms and led to the implementation of alternative programs in several countries. Altogether, these resolutions and recommendations not only set ethical and legal principles, but have also had real-world effects: they have driven legislative change, strengthened international monitoring, and encouraged cooperation to create a migration system based on fairness, safety, and respect for fundamental human rights (Human Rights Watch) (UN General Assembly) (UNHCR).

Treaties

International treaties give legal strength to how the UN and its member states address deportation and protect migrant rights. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are key agreements that define who qualifies as a refugee and introduce the principle of non-refoulement, which means that no one should be sent back to a country where they face danger or persecution. This principle has had a major impact by requiring countries to respect humanitarian law and protect people fleeing conflict or persecution, limiting arbitrary or dangerous deportations. The Convention Against

Torture (1984) also reinforces this by banning deportations to places where individuals may face torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. As a result, courts and international bodies have reviewed and blocked deportations that do not meet these standards, helping defend the rights of vulnerable migrants. More recently, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (2018) and the Global Compact on Refugees (2018) have encouraged greater international cooperation, stronger support systems, and more humane migration policies. Although these compacts are not legally binding, they have influenced national and regional policies by promoting dignity, inclusion, and protection of migrant and refugee rights. Together, these treaties and agreements create the legal and ethical foundation for how countries should manage deportation, ensuring respect for international law, stronger accountability, and improved protection for people on the move (UNHCR)(OHCHR).

Events

Several events over the years have brought global attention to how deportation practices can impact human rights and inspire international action. One of the most important moments was the signing of the New York Declaration in 2016, where all 193 UN Member States agreed to protect the rights of migrants and refugees, leading to the development of the Global Compacts. However, situations like the 2011 mass deportations from the Dominican Republic and the 2018 family separation policy in the United States showed the serious harms that can happen when deportations are carried out without proper protections. These events triggered international concern, legal challenges, and increased calls for policy reform. The UN has also raised awareness through global initiatives like the IOM's Migration Film Festival, which promotes positive views of migrants and the need to end discrimination. These efforts show the UN's long-term commitment to building safer and more just migration systems (OHCHR)(UNHCR).

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

UNHCR supporting those most vulnerable in Syria

Despite the limited access, UNHCR has remained a crucial leader in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring countries. Within Syria's more stable areas, UNHCR delivers food, water, medical supplies, and other essentials to individuals in need. UNHCR also tracks displacement patterns, provides mental health support and case management to refugees and asylum seekers, and assesses needs in hosting countries. Meanwhile, in neighboring countries, UNHCR supports the most vulnerable refugees with cash for necessities, health services, and winterization materials (UNHCR).

In addition, UNHCR co-leads the Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to coordinate 270 partners who support host countries who are responding to these dire conditions. This attempt at solving the crisis in Syria does address the humanitarian impact on the refugees, and it provides a lifeline to many refugees, but the effectiveness is limited due to insufficient international funding (UNHCR).

Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programs

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programs partner with the IOM to offer refugees and migrants a more humane alternative to forced deportations. These programs permit refugees and migrants to return to their countries of origin voluntarily and provide support for reintegration.

According to the International Organization for Migration's Framework for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, "The range of host countries where AVRR activities are implemented has steadily grown beyond Europe to include host countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania."

Most AVRR programs work closely with IOM to provide essential services such as financial aid, housing, educational support, and job placement to support the refugees' reintegration in their countries of origin (IOM).

While AVRR programs represent a more humane approach in comparison to forced deportations, their effectiveness is hindered by issues related to coercion, inconsistent support for reintegration, and mainly political and economic challenges in the countries of origin. The most important part of these AVRR programs is the voluntary aspects, and the reintegration support is long-term. These programs should also prioritize the lives of the refugees when they are back in their home countries.

Possible Solutions

Using Community Programs Instead of Detention

One of the most effective and realistic solutions to reduce the humanitarian harm caused by deportation policies is to expand alternatives to detention (ATD) that focus on community-based case management. Instead of placing migrants and asylum seekers in detention centers, governments can create programs where trained case managers help individuals through the immigration process. This support includes legal advice, housing options, medical care, and social services. Countries like Spain, the UK, Canada, and pilot programs in the US, Bulgaria, and Cyprus have shown that these alternatives have over 85% success rates and cost much less than detention (Human Rights Watch). These programs also build trust and help migrants follow the legal process voluntarily, which lowers the chances of them disappearing or being deported forcefully. Most importantly, this approach reduces the emotional harm caused by detention and family separation, especially for children and survivors of trafficking. Although starting these programs requires funding and political support, governments can work with NGOs that have experience supporting refugees to make them work. Expanding ATD is a fair and balanced solution that respects both border control and human rights (Stanford).

Strengthening Return Systems Through Global Cooperation

Another important solution is to strengthen international cooperation to make sure that deportations are done in a safe, respectful, and organized way. Countries involved in

deportations, including the deporting state, the country of transit, and the country of origin, can work together by creating agreements that coordinate each step of the return process. These agreements can help ensure that returnees have access to housing, mental health support, education, and job training when they arrive back home. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has already led successful reintegration programs in Central America, the Caribbean, and West Africa, showing that good planning helps migrants rebuild their lives and reduces the chances they'll migrate again out of desperation (EU-IOM). By sharing responsibilities, countries can reduce the pressure on border states and avoid humanitarian emergencies. This kind of cooperation takes negotiation and effort, but it can be done using current UN platforms and regional partnerships. It protects national interests while also respecting human dignity, making it a realistic and fair solution (International Criminal Court).

Protecting Family Unity in Deportation Procedures

Protecting families during deportation is both the right thing and a smart way to prevent long-term harm. Governments should adopt policies that avoid separating children from their parents during immigration procedures. Several countries have already put in place alternatives that allow families to stay together, such as community monitoring, case management, or support services that guide families through the legal process. After the 2018 family separation crisis in the US, an emergency family case management program was created to reunite families and help them with legal aid, housing, and transportation (Human Rights Watch). Although this program didn't receive enough funding, it showed that these solutions are possible and effective. Expanding such programs requires resources and political will, but it can reduce emotional damage, improve cooperation with immigration systems, and follow international human rights rules. Prioritizing family unity helps reduce the social and economic problems that come from breaking families apart and supports a more humane and stable migration system (American Immigration Council).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 1 — No Poverty

SDG 1: No Poverty connects to the issue of deportation policies, particularly because of Target 1.5, which emphasizes the importance of building the resilience of vulnerable groups and reducing the exposure to economic shocks and instability. Most individuals who are deported often face extreme poverty, violence, and lack of essentials such as education, housing job opportunities. This means many of these refugees are forced to leave the lives they had established in their home countries, which makes reintegration very difficult. This cycle of deportation and displacement diminishes the efforts for the goal of “No Poverty”, which also highlights the need for new deportation policies that prioritize the health and well-being of the individuals who are being moved away from their homes.

SDG 3 — Good Health and Well-being

This issue connects closely with the SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being, particularly on target 3.8, which aims to ensure universal health coverage, including financial risk protection and access to quality health-care, including medicine and vaccines, to everyone, no matter their financial status or class. Most vulnerable groups, such as children and their families, usually lose access to healthcare systems upon deportation. Additionally, most deportation systems have a strong psychological impact on refugees due to family separations, detention, and the uncertainty of what is in the future holds for them.

SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities

This issue directly connects to the UNSDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, particularly Target 10.7, which focuses on the need for safe and orderly migration. Multiple deportation policies often result in severe humanitarian consequences. Some of these consequences can be family separations, which is the separation of children from their families without a set return date. Another major consequence is the loss of many legal protections and the increased vulnerability to violence and poverty. All of these

consequences highlight the need to reform deportation policies to meet the UNSDG of reducing inequalities.

Appendix

This section of the issue bulletin is dedicated to providing delegates with valuable sources to utilize during their research.

<https://www.iom.int/>

Source A: The official IOM website provides updated information about migration policies, humanitarian programs, and global data. It is essential to understand the mandate that the organization delegates represent and its efforts to reduce the humanitarian impact of deportations.

<https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/>

Source B: This annual report is the main publication of the IOM. It offers statistics, analysis, and trends on global migration, including deportations and their consequences. It provides a strong foundation to understand the global context and to design realistic solutions.

https://www.unhcr.org/uk/sites/uk/files/2024-01/updated_unhcr_analysis_-_uk-rwanda_arrangement_1.pdf

Source C: This analysis by UNHCR of the United Kingdom's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is key to evaluating the legal and humanitarian risks of outsourcing asylum and deportation policies.

<https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>

Source D: This is a key treaty that defines the status of refugees and prohibits returning them to places where they are at risk. It is a basis of the international legal framework.

<https://www.acaps.org/country/mexico/crisis/migration>

Source E: This detailed analysis explains Mexico's role as a transit and deportation country, focusing on humanitarian risks. It is useful for understanding regional dynamics and specific challenges.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/iom-unbound/ioms-immigration-detention-practices-and-policies/95E40B3720D5E72B1D7B7D3595A616C8>

Source F: This study examines the evolution and tensions in IOM's detention policies, including its efforts to promote alternatives to detention. It is key to understanding the organization's complex role.

<https://www.swisscontact.org/es/proyectos/nuevas-oportunidades-reintegracion-productiva-de-migrantes-retornados>

Source G: This direct source provides insight into the challenges and reintegration programs for deportees in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. It is essential for understanding the regional impacts and humanitarian responses in these countries.

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