

**Forum:** Human Rights Council (HRC)

**Issue #1:** Measures to address the lack of protection for refugees and displaced communities

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## Introduction

The number of people forcibly displaced from their homes has increased significantly in the past twelve years. As of May 2024, the number of displaced individuals has surpassed 120 million, with millions of people being forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflict, persecution, and environmental degradation. Such individuals often face significant challenges, including limited access to basic services, inadequate legal

safeguards, and unstable livelihoods. Despite international mechanisms such as the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, system failures and successive crises underscore the need for adaptable solutions to address our current political landscape. One aspect of this issue includes the higher risk of displaced individuals to gender based violence and exploitation due to their lack of federal protection.

Additionally, the reported 220 million weather-related displacements since 2014 show the increase in displaced individuals due to environmental crisis and climate change. Both of these showcase the variety of impacted individuals and the consequences of their lack of protection. The UNHRC has reported that "Protracted displacement now defines the crisis, with 66% of refugees displaced for over five years." Protracted displacement is when at least 25,000 individuals from the same country have been living in a foreign country without a legal status and often lacking protection. These numbers highlight gaps in international and national systems for addressing refugee crises, underscoring the urgent need for the protection of displaced communities.

### Definition of Key Terms

**Refugee:** An individual who has left their home country due to political, environmental, or social issues that have limited their human rights and ability to live an adequate life. They seek asylum in another country and have crossed international borders.

**Asylum:** The protection granted by a state to an individual who is unable to return to their home country due to political conflict, discrimination, or climate crises, among other factors.

**Immigrant:** An individual who travels from their respective country to a new country to seek permanent residency.

**Migrant:** An individual who travels within or from their respective country to a new country to seek temporary employment or better living conditions.

**Geneva Refugee Convention:** A United Nations treaty adopted in 1951, which upholds the legal definition for 'refugee', outlining their rights and states' obligations to protect them.

**Internally Displaced Individuals:** Individuals who have been directly or indirectly forced to leave their home countries, but remain within the borders of their own country.

**Exploitation:** The taking advantage of an individual's vulnerable state for someone's own or collective benefit.

**Stateless Person:** An individual who is not considered a legal citizen by any state's law.

**Human Rights:** The established rights and freedoms every individual is entitled to by simply being a human being, regardless of their contextual, geographical, or religious backgrounds

## General Overview

### Context

The issue of the lack of protection for refugees and displaced communities is currently aggravated by countless political crises and ongoing conflicts, which have placed individuals in situations where they need to flee their country urgently for their safety and well-being. Relevant cases include the Sudanese Civil War, the Ukraine War, Syria's prolonged conflict, the Darien Gap, and Venezuela.

### System Gaps and Lack of State Cooperation

Legal gaps in protection introduce a significant challenge to addressing this issue. Climate immigrants, conflict immigrants, or internally displaced individuals often face the challenge of not falling under the political definition of 'refugee'. This limits individuals' ability to receive proper protection from the state and international organizations.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **United Nations Human Rights Council**

Established on March 15, 2006, the Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations, focusing on the establishment, promotion, and protection of the human rights of all individuals, regardless of their race, age, sex, religion, or sexual orientation.

### **United States**

The US is a global leader in refugee settlement. Despite a history of efforts to support the safe resettlement of refugees, recent changes dictated by the Trump administration have complicated the US's role in refugee support. This can be seen in effects such as the lack of refugee admissions and deportation of undocumented immigrants, often disregarding humanitarian responsibilities.

### **Türkiye**

Turkey is one of the largest host countries for refugees, specifically hosting Syrians fleeing conflict. Türkiye has placed measures to protect and support incoming refugees; however, recent public anti-immigrant critiques and economic challenges have shifted and complicated Turkey's refugee approach.

### **Germany**

As one of the largest hosts for refugees in Europe, Germany has been an exemplary country in the European Union for refugee policies and humanitarian responses. Their intake of refugees has significantly increased since the Syrian refugee crisis.

### **Canada**

Canada has supported global efforts to address the lack of protection for refugees by being committed to international laws and adapting domestic policies and regulations. Although Canada has shown great support for the issue through being involved in numerous resettlement initiatives, it has recently faced criticism, arguing that Canada has lacked involvement and efforts in the growing global displacement crisis.

## Australia

Australia is actively engaged in the issue through its focus on the most vulnerable groups within displaced refugees (women, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals). Australia has also financially supported refugee crises such as Myanmar and Afghanistan, giving about \$250 million. Despite this, Australia has been significantly criticized for its offshore detention policies, which cause severe harm to detainees, violating international human rights law.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1938	The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) was founded in the Evian Conference by the League of Nations as a response to the emerging of particularly Jewish fleeing refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria during the time of World War II. It received limited financial support from member states.
1980	The United States received approximately 300,000 Southeast Asia Refugees after the Vietnam War (The Migration Policy Institute). This refugee crisis was significant to the establishment of a formal refugee policy in the United States, leading to the adoption of the US Refugee Act of 1980.
1998	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees launched the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement, addressing the protection gaps faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs). Despite being non-binding, it was powerfully authoritative in affirming the role of national authorities in supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs).
2004	20 Latin American countries adopted the Mexican Action Plan to strengthen legal frameworks for refugee protection in the region. It was

2015 significant in evolving from ineffective declarations to operational commitments to implement advanced standards of refugee protection. The European Refugee Crisis took place, in which around 1.3 million sought asylum across all areas of Europe (Pew Research Center). This was the most significant influx of asylum seekers since World War II, and it exposed gaps in the European migration system with its inconsistency across nations' refugee policies and lack of collaborative cooperation in the distribution of refugees.

2020 With the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee protections and systems faced impactful challenges worldwide. Due to the global pandemic crisis alone, many countries suspended their refugee resettlement policies and programs, resulting in a significant drop in refugee resettlement numbers. The aftermath of the pandemic left refugee resettlement systems fragile, and challenges in international cooperation with political will and economic limits.

2022 - 2024 Escalation of the refugee crisis due to ongoing wars and political conflicts, including the Ukrainian War, the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis, and the Sudanese Refugee Crisis, among others. It has been reported that about 66% of refugees have been displaced for five or more years, indicating a crisis within international refugee protection systems, calling for increased global cooperation and solidarity (UNHCR Global Trends Report).

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

### Refugee Convention (1951) & Protocol (1967)

The 1951 Convention originally applied only to refugees who fled events preceding its ratification and was specifically European in its geographical scope. However, the 1967 Protocol eliminated temporal and geographical limitations, thereby expanding protection for refugees worldwide. One of the basic principles embodied in the Convention is non-refoulement, which is a ban on repatriating refugees to states in

which their lives or human rights would be in danger (Refugees International). Non-refoulement has achieved normative status in international jurisprudence and has thus become part of an obligation under customary international law. Various states, including China, Italy, the United States, and Australia, have been accused of violating their provisions in recent times (Human Rights Watch report). Despite its widespread coverage, problems of its implementation persistently haunt states. Many governments place barriers against refugees who are unable to secure employment, gain access to education, or enjoy freedom of movement. Refugees also face significant difficulties in obtaining formal documentation and gaining access to basic facilities, which directly conflict with states' obligations under the Convention. Notably, the Convention does not adequately cover today's and future drivers of displacement, including international climate change and internal migration. It hence underscores the immediate need for comprehensive reform and rejuvenation of international refugee laws.

### **World Humanitarian Summit (2016)**

The World Humanitarian Summit was a crucial global effort to strengthen humanitarian response mechanisms in response to the rising numbers of displacements, conflicts, and disasters. The Summit highlighted the importance of worldwide cooperation and the fair sharing of responsibilities among nations hosting large numbers of refugees and displaced people, reaffirming commitments expressed in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants that had been previously agreed upon in 2016 (Agenda for Humanity), thus laying the groundwork for the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). One core principle of the World Humanitarian Summit was the integration of humanitarian and developmental strategies to help refugees and hosting communities attain self-reliance and sustainable solutions, rather than relying on temporary assistance. The Summit also served as a foundation for the Global Compact on Refugees, adopted in 2018 as a non-binding declaration aimed at enhancing protection for refugees, improving resettlement mechanisms, and fostering international cooperation. Despite these strides, long-standing issues remain, including widespread funding shortfalls and political obstacles in long-term displacement crises. The Summit called for increased collaboration from governments, civil society actors, and private sector stakeholders in creating innovation and improving aid delivery.



### **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1296**

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1296, adopted in 2000, is a key legislative effort to protect civilians, refugees, and displaced persons during conflict (UN Security Council Resolution 1296). The resolution condemns deliberate attacks against civilian populations and promotes large-scale peacekeeping missions for the protection of vulnerable populations. Additionally, it emphasizes ensuring access for humanitarian actors into the field, security for UN staff, and disarmament and reintegration of former combatants as necessary conditions for sustainable security (Security Council Report, 2001). By linking the protection of refugees to overall peace and security efforts, Resolution 1296 underscores that sustainable protection for refugees necessitates an integrated political, security, and humanitarian approach.

### **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

Recent efforts to address the issue of inadequate protection for refugees and displaced communities include the evaluation of state efforts and the implementation of systems through a focal lens on the circumstances and context of each country's and refugees' situation. As stated by the Asylum Access Organization, the proper protection of refugees depends on considering and empowering each community and their unique situations. Past attempts to address this issue have been unsuccessful due to their lack of adaptability to diverse contexts. An example of this is present in the US's approach to addressing refugee displacement. In the past decade, the United States has had an unstable refugee system, which has failed to protect the rights of displaced individuals. The United States often prioritizes prompt approaches over careful evaluation in immigrant admission processes. Due to this, the protection of asylum seekers and displaced individuals, who each fall into different backgrounds and needs, is disregarded. In 2018, the UNHRC established the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) to improve support for refugees by easing reliance on host countries and their domestic circumstances. Since its establishment, the GCR has enabled regional support platforms such as the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), which focuses on providing support for refugees and displaced communities in Latin America. Due to its international recognition, the MIRPS has promoted advocacy for



refugee displacement in Latin America, as well as provided logistical and financial support to member countries to facilitate the implementation of proper monitoring frameworks, admission systems, and fostering of a peaceful relationship between refugees and host civilians. Despite successfully fostering effective regional cooperation, the increasing trend of refugees and displaced persons in the region signals a need for further consistency in already established efforts to sustain improvements in refugee protection.

## Possible Solutions

### Holding Countries Accountable

Establishing a network that more effectively holds countries accountable could help enhance states' cooperation and transparency on their domestic adaptation of refugee protection and upholding of their rights. Despite the already established accountability networks within the UN, a lack of political interest persists, influencing the cooperation of some states on the issue. A new, innovative network that holds states accountable for their actions on behalf of the issue by offering a political benefit specific to a country's situation would incentivize countries to prioritize the protection of refugees and displaced communities, rather than viewing them as a secondary issue to their domestic political situations.

### International Citizenship Pathway

Individuals' statelessness is one of the most concerning issues that comes with immigration and a lack of protection for refugees and displaced communities. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness aims to address this issue through a thoughtful framework. Nevertheless, its effectiveness relies primarily on state cooperation and its integration into a state's domestic laws, policies, and regulations. Most refugee crises are complex and require strategic approaches by states, which are often tangled and influenced by their domestic political turmoil. The United Nations, through the already established convention, should offer strategic support to facilitate states' alignment with the convention. Reinforce the right to legal identity and nationality as part of international law by condemning states that threaten this right without sustained justification. This helps reduce existing barriers imposed by states that

limit an immigrant's ability to claim or request citizenship.

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The issue of inadequate protection for refugees and displaced communities is connected to several Sustainable Development Goals due to its complexity and context-focused nature. Due to this, it is connected but not limited to Goals #1: No Poverty and #16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

#### Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty

Most displaced individuals live in poverty, as the majority come from conflict zones and economically fragile countries. The unreliability and instability of refugee protection systems result in a majority of displaced individuals remaining impoverished. Furthermore, gaps in the systems of individual countries and discrimination against displaced individuals limit their ability to overcome poverty and build a sustainable life.

#### Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Adopting strong, sustainable solutions to address the issue requires peaceful collaboration among countries and other relevant stakeholders. This also connects to justice as gaps and conflicts within refugee systems often lead to injustices and the violation of the rights of refugees, displaced individuals, and immigrants. The protection of refugees and displaced communities requires peace within the international community to establish stronger institutions that promote justice and human rights.

### Appendix

Delegates can use the appendix to further familiarize themselves with the data, articles, details, and statistics relevant to this issue. Additionally, these sources are of great use when looking at how the issue presents itself in particular environments and situations.

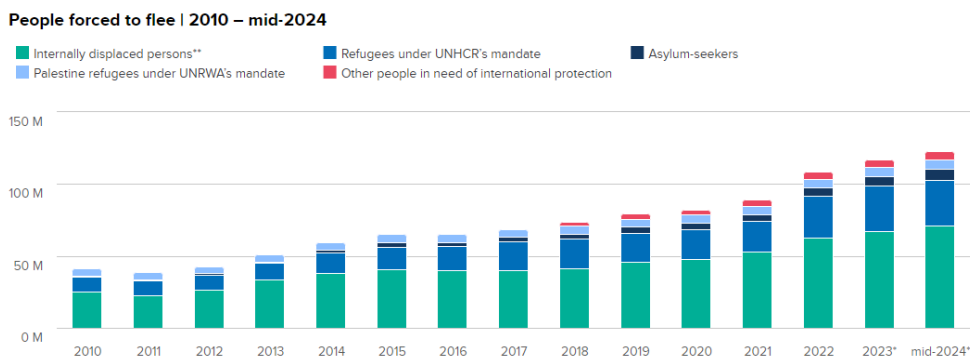
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-appeal-2025>.

**Source A:** This source covers UNHRC up-to-date priorities, reports, and statistics, including possible solutions to the issue of the lack of protection of refugees and

displaced communities.

<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4fe31cff9.pdf>

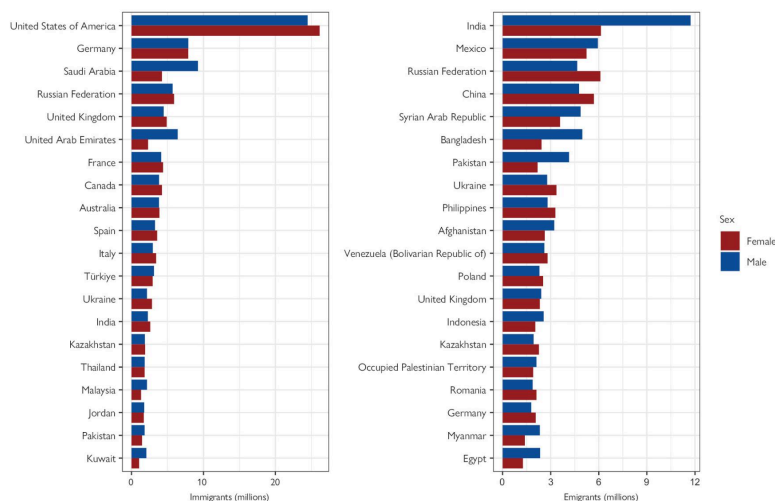
**Source B:** This official UN document outlines the protection principles of individuals in armed conflict, including refugees and displaced persons.



**Source C :** The image above is a bar graph that displays the number of people forced to flee from their respective countries from 2010 to mid-2024. Individuals are categorized into internally displaced persons, Palestinian refugees, refugees, people in need of international protection, and asylum seekers. There is a clear majority of internally displaced persons who have been displaced since 2010. Nevertheless, this number has increased with time, exceeding the 50 million mark in mid-2024. This visual representation illustrates the increasing trend of people forced to flee their respective countries. This may underscore a variety of factors such as an increase in political oppression, the rise of authoritarian governments, and a lack of international peace. (The UN Refugee Agency)

WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2024

Figure 3. International migrants, by sex, top 20 destination countries (left) and origin countries (right) (millions)\*



Source: UN DESA, 2021a.

Note: \* This includes territories.

**Source D:** The image above shows two bar graphs that illustrate recent data on both hosting countries for migrants and the countries from which most migrants come. The graph on the right shows that India is the dominant country from which most immigrants come, while the graph on the left shows that Germany is the dominant country hosting immigrants; however, the United States of America is close behind. It is essential to acknowledge the uneven distribution of immigrants in host countries and how this may be linked to the issue of state cooperation, as well as the instability of immigration systems and the inconsistent protection of refugees and displaced communities. (World Migration Report)

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