

Human Rights Committee

TOPIC B:

Protecting the Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Post-Conflict Settings



I. Introduction of topic:

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDCM), around 26 million individuals have been displaced from their homes in 148 countries in 2018. (IDCM) Additionally, natural disasters displaced 36 million individuals worldwide (IDCM). Currently, the largest concentration of IDPs in the world is Syria with around 6.9 million individuals, and second is Ukraine, with around 5.9 million newly displaced individuals (IDCM). Forced to get out of their homes, internally displaced persons (IDPs) often experience horrendous events such as leaving loved ones and most of their objects or valuables behind (IDPMC).

It is vital to protect individuals' rights in post-conflict settings, and [The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) is doing exactly that by assisting IDPs and refugees worldwide. The UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder indicates that there were 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in mid-2023 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations. Of these, 62.5 million are internally displaced people, 36.4 million are refugees, 6.1 million are asylum-seekers, and 5.2 million are other people in need of international protection. (UNHCR).

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), IDPs retain a broad range of economic, social, cultural and political rights, including the right to basic humanitarian help (such as food, medicine, shelter), the right to be protected from physical violence, the right to education and much more.

Many discriminatory strategies based on religious, ethnic, and political orientation are often used against displaced groups. [The Special Rapporteur on forms of slavery](#) has highlighted the violations of human rights against IDPs including forms of contemporary slavery such as domestic servitude, and early marriage. Also, women are highly abused and used and are severely affected by these practices, facing additional risks such as sexual violence, which leads to sexual slavery.

II. Definition of Key Terms:

- **Refugees:** Refugees are individuals who were forced to flee their country to avoid an armed conflict. They fear returning to their country due to the risk of being persecuted. Many refugees leave their countries with little to no clothes, often wearing a shirt and leaving everything behind, even their own family. To this day there are around 35.3 million refugees.
- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** IDPs are individuals who are forced to leave their homes or current location, usually to avoid armed conflict, violation of human rights, or human-made disasters that didn't cross an internationally recognized border.
- **Post-Conflict Settings:** A post-conflict setting is a location in which an open warfare has concluded. Although the location is a post-conflict location, the situation can remain tense for many years and warfare could start again.
- **Human rights:** Human rights are the rights of all individuals regardless of race, sex, nationality, religion, or economic status. Human rights include freedom of expression, education, and much more.
- **Returnee:** A returnee is an individual who returns to their country of residence or belonging.
- **Contemporary Slavery:** Refers to when an individual is exploited and used by others for personal or commercial gain.
- **Host Countries:** Host countries are defined as countries that receive and take care of host refugees and IDPs within their borders.
- **Donor Countries:** Donor countries are those that provide financial support for humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts in post-conflict regions.

III. Background Information:

The term "Internally displaced person" was first used in the early 1950s, during the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), separating them from refugees, underlining they had "separate problems" and that they should not be assisted the same way. Although during international meetings the term "internally displaced person". During several meetings, many individuals and organizations have requested to change the name and ask for more assistance towards them, and this has always been denied since IDPs did not cross international borders therefore not requesting as much assistance as refugees.

In 1957, during the Algerian crisis, UNHCR representatives visited millions who were internally displaced and living in camps in Algeria, and by looking at their conditions, they also demanded international help. Only a few years later, the authorization UNHCR sought would come. At the onset of the Bangladesh War in 1971, UNHCR was formally requested by the General Assembly to assist not only refugees,

but also the people of East Pakistan, and was requested again at the end of the First Sudanese Civil War in 1972, to assist refugees and people uprooted within Southern Sudan following a request from the President of Sudan subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly. These events represented the continuation of a consistent trend by the General Assembly in requesting UNHCR to extend its activities, and this time to IDPs.

By 1979, displaced persons had become prominent enough that the General Assembly requested that UNHCR promote “durable and speedy solutions for refugees and displaced persons wherever they occur.” After the early 1990s, IDPs almost reached 20 million individuals, triggering the demand for humanitarian help by all worldwide organizations. At the end of [1992](#), the General Assembly acknowledged, for the first time, IDPs as part of UNHCR’s activities in its annual resolution on the work of the office of UNHCR, known as the omnibus resolution, as well as in its resolution on the continuation of the office.

IV. Previous Attempts at Solving the Issue:

a. International Aid and Organisations:

Many associations such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), and NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) aim to provide aid, and protection and advocate for the rights of Internally displaced people playing a significant role in their protection but at the same time following all the same policies set by the document “UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021”.

b. Legal Frameworks:

There are many documents, acts, and laws that help IDPs such as the IHL (International Humanitarian Law), which states that it prohibits the displacement of people unless it is a state of emergency such as an ongoing conflict or violation of human rights. Also, the Global Compact on Refugees, which aims to improve the international response to refugee crises, and the Kampala Convention, which is the first legally binding instrument for the protection and assistance of IDPs.

c. Resettlement Programs:

Another attempt is third-country resettlement, which involves the relocation of refugees from their country of asylum to a third country that has agreed to accept them. This is one of three durable solutions traditionally available for refugees, the other two being voluntary repatriation and local integration. However, the number of refugees requiring protection and support surpasses the practical capacity of existing interventions to address, including resettlement.

V. Agencies and Countries Involved:

There are many agencies involved in the protection of the rights of IDPs. The UNHCR and other UN agencies play a vital role in coordinating international efforts and helping IDPs and Refugees. UNHCR is the main agency coordinating other UN agencies such as OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and many others.

Also, humanitarian organizations such as the International Movement of the Red Cross provide essential humanitarian help such as health care, water, sanitation, clothes, rights protection, and shelter to Refugees and IDPs.

There are also host countries such as, but not limited to: Colombia, Uganda, Turkey, and Germany. They have the responsibility to protect and assist the individuals. Some examples of countries helping and hosting these individuals are:

- Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey all helped by assisting and hosting Syrian refugees although assisting with economic challenges they offered shelters, education, a job, and health care.

They play a key role in mobilizing and allocating resources and ensuring the assistance's accountability and effectiveness. They also influence the policies and priorities of the humanitarian actors. The largest donors of humanitarian aid in 2020 were the United States, Germany, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia.

Regional organizations and collaborations are those that address refugee and IDP issues within specific geographical contexts. They can facilitate cooperation and coordination among member states, as well as provide normative and operational frameworks for the protection and assistance of displaced people. Examples of such organizations and collaborations include but are not limited to: the African Union, the Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

VI. UN Treaties and Historical Events:

a. 1951 Refugee Convention:

In the 1951 Refugee Convention held in Geneva, the term “refugee” was defined and the rights were improved and expanded beyond borders. During this convention, many rights for refugees were established such as:

i. Non-Refoulement: This underlines and strictly prohibits any country from returning the refugee to the country where they would face persecution. It is an international law, meaning that every state should follow this rule regardless they are members of the UN.

b. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GDIP) were principles created in 1998 as a set of non-binding guidelines to address the specific needs and rights of IDPs. The

principles emphasize the need for all countries for non-discrimination in the help and treatment of IDPs. States are required to treat all IDPs the same without any form of discrimination based on gender, race, economic status, religion, or social status.

c. Historical Events:

1. Post-WWII Displacement: After the Second World War, there was a massive displacement of people in Europe, which later led to the creation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the 1950s.
2. 1990s Balkan Conflict: In the 1990s there was a conflict in the Balkans, which later led to a large-scale displacement mainly in two countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This conflict later brought to the creation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

VII. Main Issues:

a. Security and Protection:

Refugees and IDPs are often at risk of violence, exploitation, and discrimination. It is important to ensure that they have access to safe and secure living conditions and that their basic human rights are protected. This can be achieved through measures such as providing adequate shelter, security, and legal protection. IDPs and Refugees face this issue every day, putting them at risk of death. This issue often results in the lack of protection and security provided by host countries.

b. Access to Basic Needs:

Ensuring access to basic needs like shelter, food, clean water, education, and healthcare is crucial for refugees and IDPs. However, this can be challenging, especially in situations where resources are limited. This issue often results in the lack of resources given by the hosting country. Many IDPs suffer and live in extreme conditions even in the hosting country, this often is a result of a lack of interest of the host country towards IDPs and Refugees.

c. Mental Health and Trauma:

Refugees and IDPs often face significant mental health challenges as a result of their past experiences. Many IDPs face post-traumatic stress disorder, resulting in the individual having difficulty adapting to the environment and the community.

d. Legal Status and Documentation:

Legal status and documentation are important issues for refugees and IDPs. Without proper documentation, they may be unable to access essential services and support. IDPs and refugees escape from their country without bringing anything with them and arrive in the hosting country or location without any proper documentation or identification. Documents for identification or legal papers can take months or even years for them to be created, approved, and sent to the individual, this can result in the IDP or refugee not being able to access basic needs.

Another issue happening right now is the dramatic situation in the Gaza Strip. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), almost 1.6 million people have been displaced across the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023. Of these, nearly 830,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are now sheltering in 154 UNRWA installations across all five governorates of the Gaza Strip, including in the north. Nearly 670,000 IDPs are sheltering in 97 facilities in the Middle, Khan Younis, and Rafah areas.

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