

Security Council Update

Global Refugee Crisis

Introduction

In the words of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “displacement remains arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face.”¹ The practice of granting asylum to people fleeing from persecution from their home Member State is one of the earliest marks of humanitarianism. Fast forward to the 21st century, protecting refugees was made the core mandate of the UN Refugee Agency, set up to protect refugees, particularly those affected by World War II.² According to the *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)*, a refugee is someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”³ Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are described in *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* as, “Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”⁴

The major issue circulating in the global refugee crisis is the difference between the terms, ‘refugee’ and ‘internally displaced person.’ A crucial requirement to be considered a “refugee” is crossing an international border. Secondly, they are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, either political, religious, economic stress or natural disaster. On the contrary, IDP’s are generally forcibly displaced albeit by generalized violence, natural hazards, etc. but they are not considered refugees as they do not cross an international border.⁵ Lastly, unlike refugees, IDPs do not have a special status in international law with rights specific to their situation.⁶ The term IDP is merely descriptive.

Today, the total number of refugees and IDPs are at extraordinary numbers in terms of population. Studies done by the UN Refugee Agency concluded that in 2014, the numbers of forcibly displaced peoples reached to 59.5 million. Just a year earlier, 2013, there were only 51.2 million, and a decade ago, 37.5 million.⁷ Since the increase of populations in Member States, that has dramatically created tremendous strains in terms of resources, security and even uncertainty amongst nationals. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Antoni  Guterro states, “With huge shortages of funding and wide gaps in the global regime for protecting victims of war, people in need of compassion, aid and refuge are being abandoned. For an age of unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response and a renewed global commitment to tolerance and protection for people fleeing conflict and persecution.”⁸

¹ *Internal Displacement- Overview*, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations, <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/advocacy/thematic-campaigns/internal-displacement/overview> (accessed January 23, 2016).

² *Flowing Across Borders*, The UN Refugee Agency, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html> (accessed January 22, 2016).

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Internal Displacement*, Global Database, Georgetown University, 2007, http://www.law.georgetown.edu/idp/english/id_faq.html (accessed January 22, 2016).

⁵ *Refugees*, Resources for Speakers on Global Issues, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/refugees/nextsteps.html> (accessed February 13, 2016).

⁶ Questions and Answers about IDPs, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Issues.aspx#3> (accessed March 3, 2016).

⁷ *Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase*, The UN Refugee Agency, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 18 June 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html> (accessed January 22, 2016.)

⁸ *UNHCR Calls for Tolerance and Protection as More People Now Displaced than at Any Other Time in History*, Electronic Immigration. Electronic Immigration Network, 18 June 2015, <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/unhcr->

Hot Spots

Middle East

The UNHCR has identified many different hot areas across the Middle East as a place for many displaced people to be from. Most prominently is the number of displaced individuals from the Syrian Arab Republic due to the ongoing civil war. Over 3.8 million people have fled Syria into neighboring Member States and onto other areas in Europe, Africa, and the United States of America.⁹ However, as of July 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that over 7.6 million people are displaced within Syria.¹⁰ Turkey has received an estimated one million Syrians since the crisis began in 2011.¹¹ Turkey has maintained an emergency response of high standards and declared temporary protection of the regime, ensuring *non-refoulement* and assistance in 22 camps, where an estimated 217,000 people are staying.¹² In 2014, there were over 2.6 million Afghan refugees and over 300,000 Iraqi refugees fleeing conflict in their respective Member State.¹³

Many of these refugees are searching for safety by travelling towards the European borders and the western world. However, this is putting an enormous strain on the European Union (EU) and its Member States, as they do not have the adequate resources to control the massive influx of migrants. Many of the migrants are crossing through Turkey and into the EU through boats across the Mediterranean or through Turkey's land border with Bulgaria. As of September 2015, over 450,000 migrants have traveled to Greece by boat, placing strains on registration centers, many of them erupting into violence.¹⁴ The UNHCR stated it needs more resources to make sure the registration of these migrants is sufficient in order to provide aid and relocate them in the future. Having an increase in refugee migration means Member States will become more multi-ethnic and will be challenged by accommodating peoples of different culture, races, languages and religions. The extent of racial discrimination and xenophobia are often downplayed and sometimes denied by authorities. This problem is a defining feature of international migration today.¹⁵ Many groups are denied access into EU borders by border patrols, and sometimes even killed.¹⁶ Adequate preparation plans have not been created by many EU States, and they are simply turning to rejecting the refugees instead of helping them.

Africa

Africa has been a major and long lasting area affected by both refugees and IDPs. Somalia has been affected by terrorism and extreme drought and famine. Currently, over two million Somalis are displaced within the region. More than one million of those people are IDPs living in Somalia, with over 420,000 people living in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, 220,000 people in Ethiopia, and 200,000 Somalis in

[calls-tolerance-and-protection-more-people-now-displaced-any-other-time-history](#) (accessed January 22, 2016).

⁹ *Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Origin*, The World Bank, 2015,

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG.OR> (accessed October 28, 2015).

¹⁰ Syria, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, IDMC, 201, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/> (accessed January 23, 2015).

¹¹ *2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile- Turkey*, The UN Refugee Agency, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html>. (accessed January 23, 2016).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Origin*, The World Bank, 2015,

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG.OR> (accessed October 28, 2015).

¹⁴ Schlein, Lisa, *UNHCR: Greece Overwhelmed by Migrants*, News, Voice of America, 16 Oct. 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/unhcr-greece-overwhelmed-by-migrants/3010213.html> (accessed October 26, 2015).

¹⁵ *International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia*, UNESCO, International Labour Office (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Aug. 2001, <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/imrdx.pdf> (accessed January 23, 2016).

¹⁶ Weaver, Matthew, *UNHCR demands investigation after Afghan refugee shot dead in Bulgaria*, News and Media, The Guardian, 16 Oct. 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/unhcr-investigation-bulgaria-border-guards-shoot-dead-afghan-refugee> (accessed October 26, 2015).

Yemen.¹⁷ Since December 2014, the UNHCR has been able to help only 5,000 refugees return home from Kenya's Dadaab refugee camps.¹⁸ Many still fear that they are going home to either a war or a barren land.

In western Chad, many internally displaced Chadians have fled from their homes near Baga Sola and Lake Chad, due to attacks from Boko Haram in Nigeria. This horrific event has caused the fleeing of 40,500 people between January and August 2015.¹⁹ Since 2008, among the 181,000 IDPs turn to inter-ethnic violence, 110,000 have reportedly returned back home, but the recent attacks from Boko Haram have displaced over 40,000 more people in the Lake Chad region.²⁰ In addition to the IDPs, Chad is host to over 350,000 Sudanese refugees, 90,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, and 13,000 refugees from Nigeria.²¹ The UNHCR has pledged to help in the region but cannot and has been forced to close offices in western Chad due to concerns of violent conflict, leaving many in a protracted state without any aid or protection.

Security Implications

As the number of refugees entering Europe increases, so do fears that terror organizations, such as the Islamic State (ISIS), have placed operatives within the flow of refugees. These fears have led to a surge in the popularity of far right groups and political movements in both Europe and the United States of America, as they have been taking hard stances against accepting refugees.^{22 23} It would appear that these fears are not entirely unfounded, as the commander of NATO, American General Phillip Breedlove, recently stated, "ISIS is spreading like cancer," in waves of refugees.²⁴ With recent reports of possible future ISIS attacks throughout Europe, it is abundantly clear that this is a time that international security is of utmost importance, but it is also a time to be sensitive to the disastrous humanitarian crisis that has driven these people from their homes, and ultimately created this very tense period of global affairs.^{25 26}

¹⁷ *UNHCR: More Support Needed for Somali Refugees Going Back*, The UN Refugee Agency, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 16 Oct. 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/5620edec9.html>. (accessed October 26, 2015).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Chad IDP Figure Analysis*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/chad/figures-analysis> (accessed October 28, 2015).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *UNHCR condemns attack on displaced in western Chad, pledges more help*, The UN Refugee Agency, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 16 October 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/561cfdda6.html> (accessed October 26, 2015).

²² Gutteridge, Nick, "MAPPED: Shocking March of the Far-right across Europe as Migration Fears Reach Fever Pitch," *Express Daily*, Northern And Shell Media Publications, 29 December 2015, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/629022/EU-migration-crisis-far-right-parties-Europe-Germany-Sweden-France> (accessed March 2, 2016).

²³ Diamond, Jeremy, "Donald Trump: Ban All Muslim Travel to U.S.," *CNN*, Cable News Network, 8 December 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/07/politics/donald-trump-muslim-ban-immigration/> (accessed March 2, 2016).

²⁴ Gaffey, Conor, "ISIS 'Spreading Like Cancer' in Waves of Refugees: NATO Commander," *Newsweek LLC*, 2 March 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-spreading-cancer-waves-refugees-nato-commander-432319> (accessed March 2, 2016).

²⁵ Dalton, Matthew, and Valentina Pop., "Islamic State Plans Further Attacks on Europe, Europol Warns," *Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Co. Inc., 25 January 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-plans-further-attacks-on-europe-europol-warns-1453731619> (accessed March 2, 2016).

²⁶ Taylor, Adam, "The Islamic State Wants You to Hate Refugees," *The Washington Post*, 16 November 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/16/the-islamic-state-wants-you-to-hate-refugees/> (accessed March 2, 2016).