

# REFUGEE CRISIS: A NEW ERA OF GLOBAL CONFLICT

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## **Abstract:**

The world is facing common global challenges ranging from ending hunger to climate change to gender inequality. But, the biggest dilemma of the present world is the refugee crisis which repeatedly and intensely appears in every region in general and war-torn countries in particular. These issues are of global scope, and affect all nations and societies, though in different ways and to varying degrees. These challenges are also central objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Trends 2021, at least 89.3 million people around the world<sup>1</sup> have been forced to flee their homes due to multiple and complex factors such as armed conflicts, civil war, conflicts, violence, human rights violations, persecution and discrimination. According to Amnesty International 2019, more than two-thirds of all refugees came from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. In this framework, the paper is an attempt to articulate trends of forced displacement globally. Therefore, this study is based on the hypothesis: Firstly, the refugee crisis causes widespread stress on the states which could be catastrophic with social, economic, political, and security implications. Secondly, alleviating the suffering of all refugees trapped in the global refugee crisis will bring peace and prosperity to people and the planet and be much closer to solving many more major real-world problems. Subsequently, the paper concludes with a discussion of the key avenues that must be addressed at the regional and global levels to move this research forward. The paper proposes several opportunities to help improve the well-being of global refugees which is an urgent call for action by all countries both developed and developing under a global partnership with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The problem of global refugee issue is among the greatest humanitarian challenge facing the international community. It is indeed a significant constraint in achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030. The refugee crisis claimed headlines as the number of refugee populations worldwide has more than doubled in the past decade. UNHCR's Global Trends report reveals key statistical trends for the global refugee population that have more than doubled in the past decade. The total number of people around the world who were forced to flee from their country of origin has increased yearly over the past decade. In addition, the number of people forced to flee due to conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution. Other conflicts that pushed the number of people forced to flee like extreme dangers, bombing, invasion, or other life-threatening circumstances. Consequently, it has risen 89.3% million by the end of 2021 and is expected to rise 101.1 million by 2022. Thus, these people are not safe due to ethnic, social, political, and religious characteristics in their home country.

These people have rights as per the principles of international law. These rights are defined under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. According to the UNHCR estimates, the number has risen to 24.6 million since 2015 and there are 31.7 million<sup>4</sup> refugees and asylum seekers in 2021. These numbers have been rising steadily particularly propelled by the new wave of war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts. The latest data from the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, indicates that approximately 14 million people have fled their homes since Russia invaded Ukraine. Taken together, these figures suggest that the global total will exceed 100 million by 2022, the first time worldwide forcibly displaced people are on record.

**The UN Refugee Convention and Protocol**

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the most comprehensive international codification of refugee rights. The Convention was adopted by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, held in Geneva from 2 to 25 July 1951<sup>2</sup>. According to article 1(A) (2) of the 1951 Convention, the term “refugee” only applied to any person who fled due to events that occurred before January 1, 1951, and within Europe. Later, such limitations were removed in the form of a 1967 Protocol. Consequently, the amendment made the Refugee Convention applicable worldwide<sup>3</sup>. Thus, both have become a *de facto* important legal document and universal instrument for the protection of refugees.

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**GLOBAL REFUGEE TRENDS**

The majority of refugees we meet come from Afghanistan, South Sudan, Eritrean, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

The Global Peace Index 2022 (GPI), produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, results show that the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.03%<sup>5</sup>.

The report ranked 163 countries that are classified based on the most and least peaceful countries in the world. It is a statistical measurement that covers both internal and external factors of a nation’s ‘peacefulness’. The ranking is determined by three domains and 23 indicators. It is a comprehensive

GPI Methodology	
3 Domains	23 Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict</li> </ul>	Internal and external conflict etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Safety and Security</li> </ul>	Political terror, homicide rate etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Militarization</li> </ul>	Military expenditure, nuclear and heavy weapons capabilities etc.

qualitative and quantitative data-driven approach using different parameters to the GPI rating scales. According to the Global Peace Index 2020, the ten countries at the bottom are ranked based on index value: Afghanistan<sup>6</sup> (3.63) was the least peaceful country in the world followed by Yemen (3.41), Syria (3.37), South Sudan (3.36), Iraq (3.36), Somalia (3.21), Democratic Republic of Congo (3.2), Libya (3.17), Central African Republic (3.14) and Russia (2.99). In addition, the humanitarian crisis in many of these above countries is worsening and deepening due to widespread hunger, disease, violence, political instability, economic collapse, and attacks against civilians. According to Global Humanitarian Overview 2022 published by the European Commission, Joint Research Centre and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs assessed that due to the above complex, protracted and recurrent crisis that has been observed and caused seven of the top countries as ‘world’s worst humanitarian crisis’<sup>7</sup> namely Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Consequently, these most dangerous countries experienced large displacement of the population due to conflict.

## CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan also known as the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US-led foreign forces in August 2021. The country witnessed massive displacement within the country as well as into neighbouring countries. According to UNHCR, more than 3.5 million<sup>8</sup> people are internally displaced within Afghanistan's borders and 2.6 million Afghan refugees are already in neighbouring countries. The event triggered a complex humanitarian crisis that has worsened at an alarming rate in Afghanistan due to recent political developments. Such as severe displacement, sharp economic decay, food crisis, lack of development, the collapse of the healthcare system, increasing instability and violence. UNHCR estimated 24 million<sup>9</sup> people across the country need humanitarian assistance. Thus, Afghanistan continues to produce the greatest share of the refugee population in the world. According to the UNHCR, Iran and Pakistan, together host, more than two million<sup>10</sup> registered Afghan refugees in these two neighboring countries.

The Republic of Yemen is another war-torn country in the Middle East and North Africa. The country is facing difficult long-term challenges from political instability to the humanitarian crisis. The country has been plagued by conflict since the civil war began in September 2014. Thus, the armed conflict and instability in Yemen have resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, and as a result, poverty in Yemen has significantly increased. Yemen is the second largest humanitarian disaster in the world due to the refugee crisis. According to UNHCR, 6 million<sup>11</sup> Yemenis have been forced to flee their homes since the beginning of the crisis, whereas 4.3 million people have become internally displaced within the country. The condition is continued to deteriorate for more than seven years at an unprecedented level. The civil strife has impacted Yemen's social and economic structure of the country. According to one UN estimate, a total of 23.7 million need humanitarian assistance. Yemen currently confronting with some extreme challenges including unemployment, food security, insecurity for civilians, economic woes etc.

Syria is another war-torn country facing a humanitarian emergency due to the refugee crisis as a result of the civil war that erupted on March 15, 2011. Thus, 6.7 million Syrians had to be forcibly displaced inside Syria<sup>12</sup>. There are 6.6 million<sup>13</sup> Syrian refugees worldwide. The millions of Syrians fleeing to the non-neighboring countries also. Based on UNHCR data, host countries include Germany (620,000), Canada (54,000), the United States (33,000), Sweden (110,000) and Austria (50,000) etc. In addition, 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees by UNHCR 2022 are hosted by neighboring countries such as Turkey (3,648,983), Lebanon (831,053), Jordan (675,433), Iraq (262,756) and Egypt (143,803)<sup>14</sup> etc. Thus, the humanitarian crisis and conflicts that have been going on for more than a decade have profoundly impacted the country. By one estimate, about 13.4 million<sup>15</sup> people continue to require humanitarian and protection assistance including access to vital services like food, water, sanitation, shelter and health care. They need numerous protection from harm and risks like collapsing economy, child labor, gender-based violence, and other forms of exploitation as millions of them have lost their livelihood.

Among the seven top countries, Sudan has been facing a refugee crisis caused by the unstable political situation. Humanitarian needs continue to grow in the face of brutal conflict compounded by economic woes which are affecting millions of people such as massive internal displacement, rampant violence and dreadful food shortages. According to Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022, about 14.3 million Sudanese need humanitarian assistance in 2022<sup>16</sup>, up from 13.4 million in 2021. Whereas, a total of 13.4 million people are projected to need humanitarian assistance. Additionally, Sudan has a long history of hosting refugees and asylum seekers. According to Sudan country refugee response Plan 2022, over 1.1 million refugees – mostly from Eritrea, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ethiopia, Chad, Syria and Yemen. Of the 1.16 million refugees in Sudan, the majority are from South Sudan.

Today, another dangerous and unstable country, the Republic of South Sudan is in the grip of multiple challenges like political conflict, economic decline, huge displacement, rampant violence, diseases and

lack of food. But, the real challenge is the refugee problem as the country is facing a serious humanitarian crisis today. The country represents the largest refugee crisis on the African continent. It remains the fourth largest refugee crisis in the world as millions of South Sudanese fled from the war-torn country to the bordering countries at an alarming rate. According to UNHCR, nearly 2.3 million South Sudanese have fled to neighboring countries such as Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, 1.87 million<sup>17</sup> were displaced within their own country due to violent conflict and violence.

The political instability and civil strife that erupted in the 1990s have made Somalia an example of a destabilized country. The country marked conflict, crisis and statelessness over the last 30 years. According to UNHCR, there are more than 750,000 were forced to flee from their homeland in neighbouring countries like Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia. On the other hand, over 2.6 million Somalis are internally displaced in Somalia due to pervasive conflict combined with poverty, health care, flood and drought.

One of the world's deadliest, multifarious and prolonged humanitarian crisis has been unfolding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For more than a decade the civilian population has been witnessing the devastating effects of the conflict. According to the UNHCR, by 2020, Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan hosted more than 918,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. Furthermore, 5.01 million people are internally displaced persons. The worsening and rampant violence sets off a series of catastrophic effects on people that have destroyed their homes, lives and livelihoods at an alarming pace and forced people to flee their homes.

The long-term trends suggest that the refugee problem has undergone drastic quantitative and qualitative changes over the past five decades. Those who have been uprooted from their homes often face the acute need for humanitarian assistance on their journey to find safety, and lack of access to essential needs like safe drinking water, sanitation service, adequate food, shelter and health care.

### STEPS TOWARDS GLOBAL CRISIS

Thus, there is a new urgency for global efforts to achieve closer cooperation in supporting the population of forcibly displaced people in the world has increased significantly. Thus, the countries must work together through strong equal partnerships and responsibility to address the world's refugee problem.

- Increase *funding support* to provide strong, well-prepared, and long-term aid practices to help people in fragile and war-stricken countries.
- The refugee issue requires the adoption of *comprehensive concrete support* on repatriation like institutional and operational procedures.
- Need to work on major *policies* approach such as repatriation to solve the problem of the refugee issue.
- A *plan of an action program* for the local integration either in the country of present residence or in combination with intraregional migration.
- Safe, orderly and humane *resettlement* requires increased access for refugees through third-country resettlement to all migrants regardless of their migratory status. The collaborative migration strategy needs to be strengthened as a framework for responsibility-sharing efforts with those countries. This is outlined in the preamble to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. It set out in the convention that all countries should share responsibility. Therefore, creating a global alliance can be one of the innovative commitments which can support refugees and other people of concern.

- The international community including governments of the world protect refugees by not returning them to dangerous situations which is also the core principle of the 1951 Convention establishes in article 33 known as the Principle of non-refoulement. Thus, a sustained state must stand by the spirit of this principle and protect those who need protection.

The convention also highlights “Non-refoulement”, the principle that precludes refugees or asylum seekers should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

- In addition, the *skill-based pathways* as an approach can play important role in refugee protection. This includes the diverse nature of opportunities, mostly labor migration or education, such as jobs or scholarships programme etc. Hence, it is imperative to enhance refugee mobility as a priority solution to the refugee issue.

- Finally, the international community can play an important role in tackling the root cause of conflict. It is important to note that we need more *political will* if we are to truly solve today's refugee problem, beyond humanitarian intervention.

## CONCLUSION

In the past decade, the global refugee issue is a fast becoming humanitarian crisis for our generation. Accordingly, the crisis has revealed that an urgent global challenge requires a more sustained and systematic global solution. Thus, this is a global crisis that requires a collective effort, increased investment, innovation and accountability to achieve results for the global decision-makers. The international community needs to cooperate and collaborate around a range of common principles and approaches that focus on the link between development, human rights and refugees. World leaders need to adopt global action plans to address the global refugee crisis. As SDG16 is related to peace, but the global trend is unfortunately negative, however, failed to quantify as specifically as the number of people fleeing war, violence, conflict or persecution over the past few decades. Hence, conflict is at the core of chronically complex humanitarian crises and that will continue to threaten world peace as it often causes human rights concerns. To ‘leave no one behind’ refugee issues must be considered through efforts. Therefore, includes refugees as a new SDG indicator framework to achieve the principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda. Thus, the refugee crisis is a major test to address the most pressing global challenges and turn goals into action. Because now it's up to all of us how we respond will define us under the SDGs for years to come.

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