

Forum: Special conference on Re-defining Human Rights in an everchanging world (SPECON)

Issue: Minimizing social inequalities for refugees by enhancing equal life opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

The global refugee crisis remains one of the most pressing challenges that have struck humanity in the past years, with 42.7 million refugees in 2024¹, 73.5 million internally displaced people and 8 million asylum seekers². Every single day, individuals and families are forced to flee their households in pursuit of safety, education, well-being and stability, all inalienable rights that are often taken for granted in the most developing nations, but are not entitled to everyone around the world. Among them, nearly half are children, under the the age of 18³, who are stripped of access to basic necessities such as shelter and healthcare and are left in conditions of poverty, violence and instability.

Upon arrival in host countries, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (IDPs) often encounter additional challenges that undermine their dignity. They are frequently denied access to fundamental rights such as that to education, healthcare and legal protection⁴ despite having fled an environment of violence, conflict and life-threatening danger. A vicious cycle of marginalization and discrimination therefore commences, which prevents their successful integration into society. Their origin becomes a burden which perpetuates inequalities as their quest for safety is reduced to a struggle for survival.

Equality remains at the core of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to provide for those who lack a voice in today's global politics. Enhancing equal life opportunities for all refugees, is an essential step towards helping them rebuild their lives. These are not privileges but fundamental human rights that must be guaranteed to all individuals.

The theme of this year's conference "Redefining human rights in an ever changing world" is directly linked to the plight of refugees. For them, human rights remain abstract promises that have yet to be realized in their daily life. Last year alone, the migrant death rate

¹Valentine. "Refugees." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²"Refugees." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees. Accessed 25 July 2025.

³"Refugee and Migrant Crisis." *Oxfam International*, 5 Feb. 2025, www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/issues/refugee-and-migrant-crisis.

⁴*Reducing Global Inequalities* | *International Organization for Migration*, www.iom.int/reducing-global-inequalities. Accessed 25 July 2025.

was raised by 20%.⁵ This is not equality. Only when these inalienable rights are accessible to all and are not reduced to mere ideals will refugees finally feel safe and at home.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Acculturation

“the degree to which groups want to seek a relationship between their own group and another cultural group and maintain their own heritage culture and identity.”⁶

Assimilation

“the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society.”⁷

Asylum seekers

“Individuals who are seeking international protection. Their request for refugee status, or complementary protection status, has yet to be processed, or they may not yet have requested asylum but they intend to do so.”⁸

Forced Assimilation

“societal and/or governmental pressure on groups to adopt the dominant culture in a particular country or region and let go of their own heritage culture”⁹

Internally displaced People (IDP)

“people, referred to as IDPs, have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, they remain within the borders of their own country.”¹⁰

Marginalization

“ a process of social exclusion in which individuals or groups are relegated to the fringes of a society, being denied economic, political, and/or symbolic power and pushed towards being ‘outsiders’”¹¹

⁵ Oxford, Dwayne. “Why Are Refugee Deaths at an All-Time High?” *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 9 Mar. 2024, www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/8/why-are-refugee-deaths-at-an-all-time-high.

⁶ Kirsch, Max. *IB Global Politics Print & Online Course Book Pack: Oxford IB Diploma Programme*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2017.

⁷ “Assimilation.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁸ Buduka. “Asylum-Seekers.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/asylum-seekers. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁹ Kirsch, Max. *IB Global Politics Print & Online Course Book Pack: Oxford IB Diploma Programme*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2017.

¹⁰ Abdul. “Internally Displaced People.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹¹ “Marginalization.” *Oxford Reference*, www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100133827. Accessed 25 July 2025.

Refugee

“a person who "owing to 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 their nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.”¹²

Social and Development Goals(SDGs)

“a set of 17 interconnected global goals adopted by the United Nations to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. These goals address global challenges, including poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. They are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.”¹³

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Context

Pre- World Wars

History has proven how flagrant the refugee crisis can be. The first stages of such a crisis appeared at the end of the 18th century at the time of the 1789 French Revolution.¹⁴ Many nobles, in pursuit of safety, fled to Britain. They eventually received public support and sympathy for them increased. However, as the war between the UK and France began to brew, questions about the loyalty of the refugees arose, indicating the first anti-refugee sentiment in history, which pushed for obligatory registration/¹⁵

The most renowned refugee crisis, which involved 20,000-200,000¹⁶ individuals were the persecution of the Jewish populations. A total of over 2 million individuals¹⁷ left the continent to protect themselves from the religious threat. These immigrants were not welcomed by the English communities, resulting in the formation of tight-knit Jewish communities rather than integration in the broader society. However, as public opinion eased through time, this hostility towards these migrants ultimately decreased.

20th Century Refugee Movement

The 20th century saw the start of the two World Wars, a period characterized by the highest number of refugees the world had ever seen. As a result, the League of Nations created the post of High Commissioner for Refugees, and subsequently the Nansen passport for stateless persons. At the same time, the rise of fascism in Europe, along with Franco's Spain and Nazi Germany saw political dissidents, as well as Jewish and other persecuted minorities,

¹² Valentine. “Refugees.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹³ “Sustainable Development Goals.” *UNDP*, www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹⁴ “Timeline.” *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹⁵ “Timeline.” *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹⁶ “Timeline.” *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹⁷ “Timeline.” *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

fleeing across and out of Europe. Forty million people were displaced by the Second World War's successors.¹⁸

In particular, the first crisis commenced with the German invasion of Belgium in 1914,¹⁹ which resulted in about 240.000 to 250.000²⁰ people seeking refuge in France and the UK. The refugees were generally accepted, and integrated within the society as the British empathised with their plight and implemented institutional changes to accommodate their unique needs. An even worse situation was due to Nazism ideology, as the number of refugees fleeing from anti-Semitic ideology amounted to 300000 individuals in 1935.²¹ As the League of Nations lacked sufficient influence, the response to this influx was inadequate. Political refugees were given priority²² compared to Jewish people who were refused entry.

In 1956²³, when there was a large number of Hungarian refugees upon the Soviet invasion of their homeland, the international community visibly desired to welcome these individuals warmly. However, when the Cypriots were fleeing the invasion of their homeland in 1974 by the Turkish state²⁴, they did not receive any extra assistance or resettlement schemes. Similarly, state discrimination policies, lack of recognition and active persecution pushed the Kurds to flee Iraq, Turkey and Iran and seek refuge in Europe. They were initially prohibited from entry, but eventually were sent to safe zones, where they were provided with access to the basic necessities.

Lastly, after the 1994 Srebrenika genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 4.4 million of individuals were displaced at that time.²⁵ While the UK assisted in the movement of these peoples by lending an aircraft, it only accepted 1300 refugees and imposed strict visa requirements.²⁶

21th Century Refugee Crisis

During the 21st century, the world has been struck with many refugee crises as the total number of refugees, iDPs and forcibly displaced individuals is evident in Figure 1.

¹⁸ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹⁹ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²⁰ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²¹ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²² "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²³ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²⁴ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²⁵ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

²⁶ "Timeline." *Refugee History*, refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

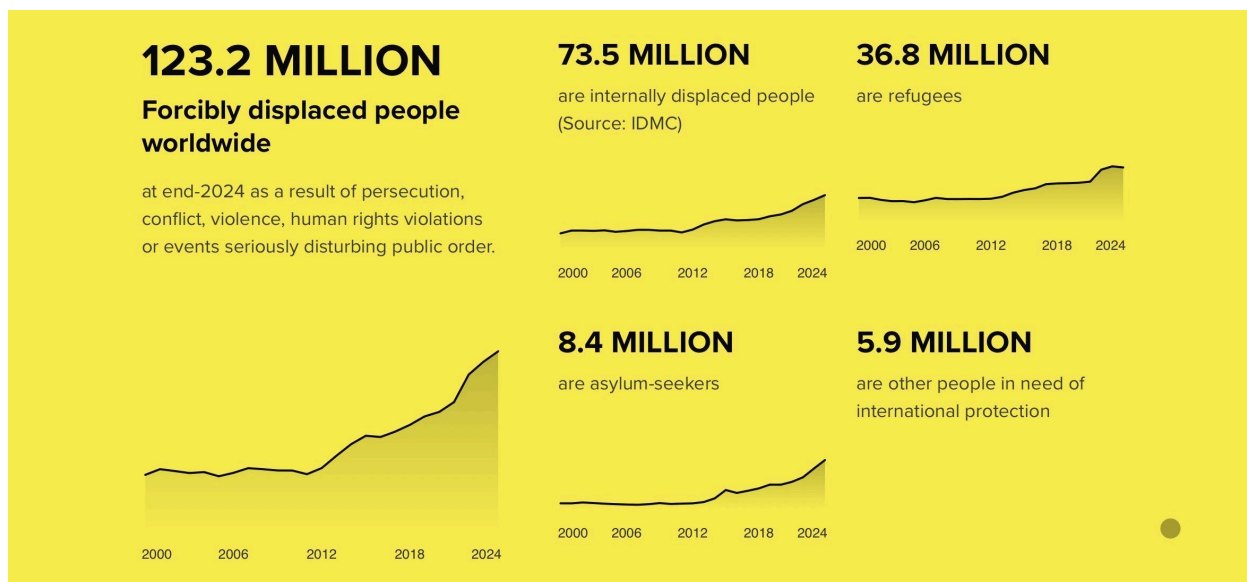


Figure 1: Number of refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers and forcibly displaced individuals

From the refugee crisis that have occurred in the past two decades, two have been the most striking: the Ukrainian and the Venezuelan.

The Ukrainian crisis began in 2014, when armed conflict broke out in eastern Ukraine following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Since Russia launched a military invasion into Ukraine in February of 2022, more than 5 million people have been internally displaced, and 6.3 million are now refugees in neighboring countries like Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Belarus. The war has transformed what is known as “the breadbasket of the world” into a global humanitarian crisis.

Lastly, a crisis not widely acknowledged yet really pressing is that of Venezuela. In 2014, the country suffered a startling economic collapse caused great unrest. Since then, 7.1 million Venezuelans have been forced to flee their homes after years of hardship, and an estimated 2,000 people are still leaving the country every day. Today, 2.3 million Venezuelans face hunger, having been driven from their homes by hyperinflation, violence, and food and medicine shortages

Social Inequalities faced by refugees

Access to basic service

In modern societies, one of the most significant inequalities that refugees face is access to basic services including employment, legalization, financial systems and education.

Firstly, these individuals often struggle to find legal and secure employment. This is primarily due to the fact that many countries, despite the rulings of the 1951 Convention, implement laws that exclude these individuals from working. In the rare cases where this right is granted, the refugees mostly face challenges including language barriers and discrimination.

Furthermore, another significant obstacle in their path to a better future is the inability to obtain necessary documents like residence permits. Without these, the refugees are considered to be illegally residing in the nation, which signals further legal challenges and potential deportation.

Moreover, most refugees cannot open bank accounts or access financial services such as loans or savings in the host countries due to such access being limited to only "legitimate" citizens. This severely limits their ability to achieve economic independence, invest in other businesses, and thus attain a better future. Their opportunities are limited to the financial resources they carry with them from their country of origin, which are limited or even non-existent.

As renowned, refugees are fleeing from conflict or poor areas, arriving at the host country after and are exposed to long, physically and emotionally exhausting journeys. There is thus a possibility that during this journey, or beforehand in their destitute conditions of living, they may have been exposed to chronic illnesses. Upon their arrival, while seeking the necessary treatment, they will find that as they lack the financial means, such care is not easily accessible. Certain host countries also lack the adequate infrastructure to accommodate their needs, as they may carry rare diseases for which a treatment has not been found, leading to their unfortunate demise.

In terms of their education, refugees face significant disadvantages. According to the UNHCR, approximately 3.7 million refugee²⁷ children are currently not attending school as a result of discrimination, bullying and lack of resources. The children therefore lose their insatiable thirst for education—a right which provides them a pathway to rebuild their lives by gaining skills necessary for their integration in employment. Without access to education, refugees become trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and dependence on other actors, pushing them to conduct illicit jobs for survival.

Legal and Social Discrimination

Refugees often face both social and legal discrimination in their host countries, impacting their well-being and integration. Socially, they may experience prejudice, xenophobia, and racism, leading to exclusion and even violence. This discrimination stems from phobia of the outsider based on ethnicity, race, religion or language, leading to their public perception as threats to culture, economy and security.

Moreover, immigrants are often exploited, facing wage theft and hazardous working conditions. A University of Chicago study found that 22% of migrants were employed in private households where the employees, endured 12-hour shifts without breaks and no overtime pay, sexual assault, and other forms of abuse. Many immigrants in the United States encounter verbal harassment, abuse and physical violence in their everyday life.²⁸ 44% of Latino immigrants report being less likely to contact police if they've been the victim of a crime due to

²⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5fc126354.pdf>

²⁸ <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/discrimination-against-immigrants/>

their immigration status. 62% of the same respondents responded “yes” when asked if they’d ever been stopped by the police without cause.²⁹

The European Union has shown bias in the treatment of refugees. While more than 4 million Ukrainian refugees crossed into the EU following the war, the arrival of 1.3 million refugees from the Global South in 2015 was labeled as a “migration crisis”.³⁰ This labelling is problematic on two grounds. One issue with labelling refugees and asylum seekers as “migrants” is that it is a term associated with “illegal migrants”. Secondly, it invokes a “crisis” narrative that deems the people seeking refuge as a threat to European border management, public safety, economy, and security. The use of the “migrant crisis” in reference to non-Ukrainian refugees helped legitimise illiberal and illegal extreme measures centred on deterring, blocking, thwarting, and pushing back asylum seekers from the global south.

In terms of legal discrimination, Denmark has a strict “zero asylum policy” for non-European refugees and a law called “the jewellery law” that only applies to non-Ukrainian asylum seekers, where the state confiscates their valuable belongings in the name of financing their stay in refugee camps.³¹ The Danish government has imprisoned hundreds of asylum seekers from countries such as Iran and Afghanistan in camps and has refused their right to study or work in Denmark. The camps are deliberately distant from cities and hubs of life.

Global impact of the refugee crisis

Economic Strain vs Economic Opportunity

The refugee crisis presents an opportunity and a threat to the world’s economies. The impact of the increased number of refugees can be both positive and negative depending on the conditions within the host country, the treatment of refugees and the public’s reaction. A debate has therefore surfaced whether refugees contribute to economic development or further deteriorate the economy. The impact of the refugees in the host country can ultimately be divided in two sections: short-term and medium-term.

In the short-term, previously remote areas become populated with refugees that reside in refugee camps while urban areas receive financial, and cultural aid from the Governments, NGOs and IGOs. Refugees consume goods and services, contributing to the rise of the GDP³². Foreign aid will benefit the nation, by improving infrastructure.³³ In the medium-term, the local household incomes will grow as consumption rises. Refugees seek employment, potentially lowering labor costs for employers and thus income and growth for their businesses.³⁴

²⁹ <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/discrimination-against-immigrants/>

³⁰ Monitor, Euro-Med Human Rights. “EU Member States’ Discrimination against Refugees Is Systematic.” *Euro*, euromedmonitor.org/en/article/5790/EU-member-states%E2%80%99-discrimination-against-refugees-is-systematic . Accessed 25 July 2025.

³¹ Monitor, Euro-Med Human Rights. “EU Member States’ Discrimination against Refugees Is Systematic.” *Euro*, euromedmonitor.org/en/article/5790/EU-member-states%E2%80%99-discrimination-against-refugees-is-systematic . Accessed 25 July 2025.

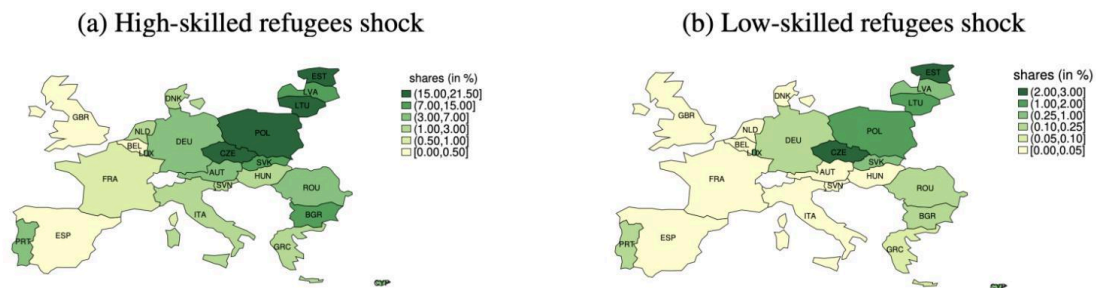
³² “Theory and Evidence on the Impact of Refugees on Host Communities.” *World Bank Blogs*, blogs.worldbank.org/en/dev4peace/theory-and-evidence-impact-refugees-host-communities . Accessed 25 July 2025.

³³ “Theory and Evidence on the Impact of Refugees on Host Communities.” *World Bank Blogs*, blogs.worldbank.org/en/dev4peace/theory-and-evidence-impact-refugees-host-communities . Accessed 25 July 2025.

³⁴ “Theory and Evidence on the Impact of Refugees on Host Communities.” *World Bank Blogs*, blogs.worldbank.org/en/dev4peace/theory-and-evidence-impact-refugees-host-communities . Accessed 25 July 2025.

However, in the short-term, resource strain and environmental degradation should the aid fail to be delivered on time. Overcrowding, unemployment and shortages in essential services all perpetuate economic volatility³⁵ In the medium-term, some locals may be displaced or lose their jobs due to increased competition in areas. These negative impacts are likely to affect the most vulnerable members of the community.

For example, in Europe, has recently experienced an unprecedented refugee crisis due to the war³⁶ with more than 8 million refugees fleeing Ukraine in desperation to find a new eligible home. Among them, 4 million are of working age, mainly females and children that acquire both a higher education or college diploma.³⁷ Neighboring countries receive the highest inflows. As evident in Figure 2, the states that are near Ukraine receive refugees, of whom 15 to 21%³⁸ are high-skilled workers that can contribute to GDP growth.



Note: The figures present the number of refugees as a share of the host country working-age population, by skill level.

Source: Caliendo et al. (2023)

Figure 2 : Number of refugees by skill as a share of the host country Working age population³⁹

Recent research has demonstrated that the inflow of Ukrainian refugees increases the aggregate real GDP in Europe by 3.6% in the long run, especially in Western Europe⁴⁰ These countries mostly grow through the arrival of refugees, with GDP growing up to 20%,⁴¹ Conversely, Eastern European countries experience a decline in output as they are not able to accumulate capital and build the substantial infrastructure fast enough to respond to the

³⁵ “Theory and Evidence on the Impact of Refugees on Host Communities.” *World Bank Blogs*, blogs.worldbank.org/en/dev4peace/theory-and-evidence-impact-refugees-host-communities. Accessed 25 July 2025.

³⁶ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

³⁷ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

³⁸ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

³⁹ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴⁰ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴¹ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

increase in labour supply. As a result, the inflow of refugees substantially strains capital structures in these countries in the short run.⁴²

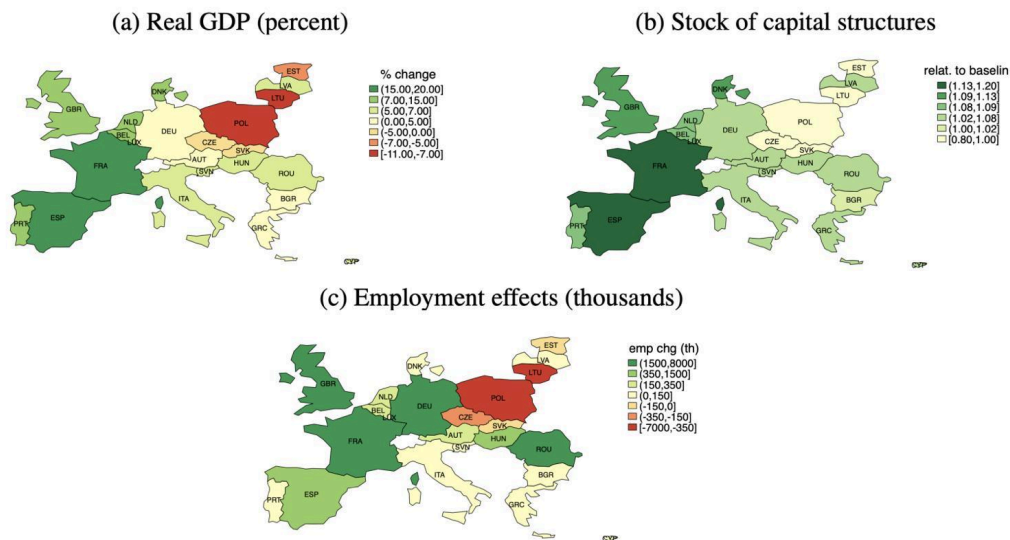


Figure 3: The impact of the refugee crisis in terms of Real GDP, Stock of capital structures and employment effects⁴³

Political and Social Polarization

The arrival of refugees in host countries can spark the reactions of the public, perpetuating a cycle of political and social polarization within the state that exacerbate inequalities for these individuals, as they are incessantly discriminated against. This is due to the fact that most people do not welcome the refugees, but rather perceive them as threats and incessantly marginalize them from the rest not wanting any association with these “foreigners”⁴⁴.

Undoubtedly, as the public is faced with a stream of immigrants and asylum seekers, they begin losing faith. The fear of unfair competition and loss of cultural identity, have been opportunistically channeled toward antipathy against migrants, pushing for their deportation from the country. Others have also opposed such claims, appealing to principles of human dignity and respect for human life.

⁴² *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴³ *The Short- and Long-Run Effects of the Refugee Crisis in Europe* | CEPR, cepr.org/voxeu/columns/short-and-long-run-effects-refugee-crisis-europe. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴⁴ *Article: Refugee Crisis Deepens Political Polariza..* | Migrationpolicy.Org, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-crisis-deepens-political-polarization-west. Accessed 25 July 2025.

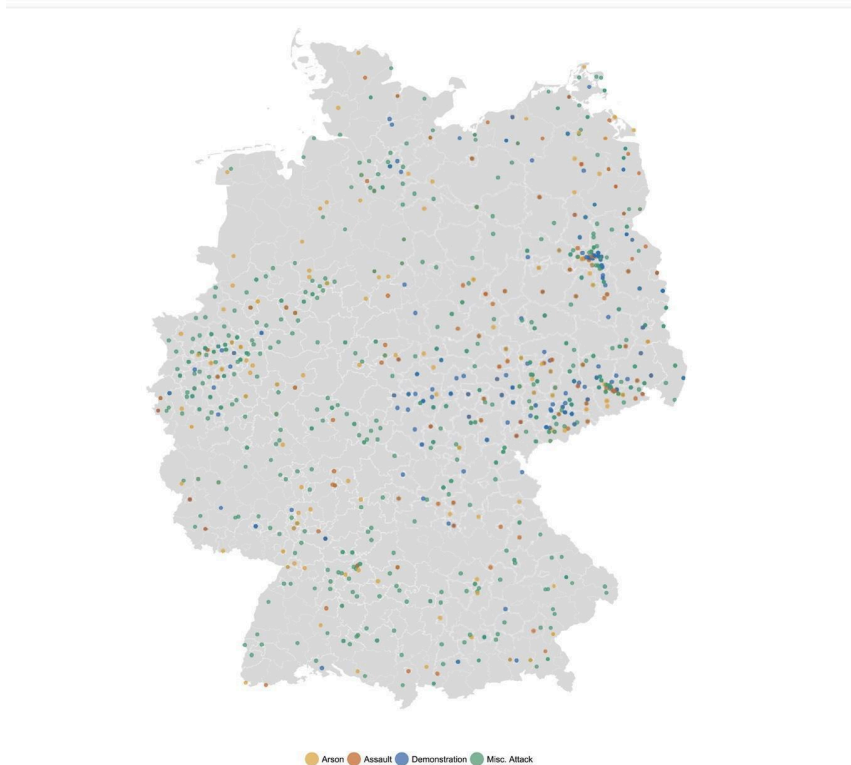


Figure 4: An overview. of the anti-refugee events in Germany ⁴⁵

The political sphere of the host country has also been polarised. In Europe, there is contradictory rhetoric from political parties Populist and far-right leaders employ tougher rhetoric to reassure voters that they can control the situation. Mainstream leaders have also co-opted such rhetoric to recapture the voters. The impact for refugees is flagrant. Border controls, deportations have become significantly prevalent in both the US and Europe signaling how the refugees are no longer welcome within the host country.⁴⁶

The November 13⁴⁷ Paris terrorist attacks sparked fear within the host state, after reports that one of the terrorists had a Syrian passport, Although all assailants were later confirmed to be EU nationals, countries like Poland announced that it would withdraw from the European Union (EU) relocation scheme. In the US, the response was polarising: while Obama

⁴⁵ Mahairi, Luma. "Frontiers: Overcoming Challenges to Teamwork in Healthcare: A Team...: Luma Mahairi." *Frontiers | Overcoming Challenges to Teamwork in Healthcare: A Team...* | Luma Mahairi, 12 June 2025, www.linkedin.com/posts/dr-luma-mahairi_frontiers-overcoming-challenges-to-teamwork-activity-7338908499868794892-qPH-.

⁴⁶ Article: *Refugee Crisis Deepens Political Polariza..* | *Migrationpolicy.Org*, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-crisis-deepens-political-polarization-west. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴⁷ Article: *Refugee Crisis Deepens Political Polariza..* | *Migrationpolicy.Org*, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-crisis-deepens-political-polarization-west. Accessed 25 July 2025.

proposed resettling 10.000 vetted Syrian refugees, opponents called calls to halt the plan entirely.⁴⁸

In Sweden, the far-right's sharp rhetoric sits in stark juxtaposition to the region's long history of generous humanitarian policies. The party supports that "those on their way to Sweden should stay out." Their growing popularity underscores internal divisions, as the anti-refugee statement continues to prevail .

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Afghanistan

Afghanistan remains at the core of one of the world's most enduring refugee crises in the Middle East, welcoming over 7 million refugees abroad and millions of IDPs as of mid 2025.⁴⁹ This is due to the death of conflict, economic deterioration, destitution, food insecurity, Covid 19 pandemic and climate disasters that have struck the Middle East- These events that all culminated in Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021, which perpetuated the instability and violence within the nation. In 2025 alone, more than 1.4 million Afghan returned or were forced to come back from Iran and Pakistan, after having fled the state in the past years. They arrived exhausted and destitute, seeking a better future in a state that is still struggling to uphold basic services⁵⁰ About 6.5 million children face hunger in their daily lives, lacking access to basic services to protect themselves from diseases. 12.4 million people experienced famine and acute food insecurity during October 2024, when the Middle Eastern conflict between Israel and Palestine sparked. It is reported that since 2021 there are at least 4.5 Afghan refugees residing in Iran, 71 5 of whom are women and children. Pakistan is also honoring another 1.4 million of refugees, all of whom are in search of a better life upon the tragedy that struck their homeland.

Germany

Germany has long provided protection to refugees. However, recent policy reforms highlight a shift in their attitudes. In 2025, about 35.500 Afghans have been resettled from the nation. The German court affirmed that the government is obligated to honour the visas already approved even if the policy has been altered. The approval rates for Asylum seekers dropped to 52% in 2025 from 74% in 2024.⁵¹ Subsequently, there are currently 351,400 people⁵² with subsidiary protection status in Germany and 2400 Afghans remain in Pakistan. A bureaucratic and legal cycle commences which enhances the struggles of these refugees, who have endured immense hardships to flee their country and now encounter rejection to a state that was supposed to protect them.

⁴⁸ Article: *Refugee Crisis Deepens Political Polariza..* | *Migrationpolicy.Org*, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-crisis-deepens-political-polarization-west . Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁴⁹ Stefano, Chiara De. "Repatriation Crisis in Afghanistan: A Growing Humanitarian Challenge." *Intersos*, 4 June 2025, www.intersos.org/en/repatriation-crisis-in-afghanistan-a-growing-humanitarian-challenge/.

⁵⁰ "UNHCR Sees Sharp Increase of Afghan Returns in Adverse Circumstances from Iran to Afghanistan." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/unhcr-sees-sharp-increase-afghan-returns-adverse-circumstances-iran-afghanistan. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵¹ *Afghan Refugees Stuck in Pakistan as Germany Halts Entry Programme* | *Reuters*, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-refugees-stuck-pakistan-germany-halts-entry-programme-2025-07-03/. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵² Whittle, Helen. "Germany Suspends Refugees' Family Reunification – DW – 06/27/2025." *Dw.Com*, Deutsche Welle, 27 June 2025, amp.dw.com/en/germany-suspends-refugees-family-reunification/a-72565576.

The reasons behind this shift lie on concerns over the social cohesion being disrupted and resource limits being perpetuated with the accommodation for the millions of refugees that arrive in Germany on a daily basis. However, such a move would not strengthen Germany's cultural identity but rather undermines its stance in international protection. As evident in figure 1, while this woman, an Afghan was once granted access to basic services for refugees, the shift has entrapped her future in legal processes and bureaucracy,



Figure 5: Kimia, 25, an Afghan journalist who is now stranded in a legal limbo over her stay in the country⁵³

Iran

Iran has historically hosted one of the largest Afghan refugee communities, reaching 3 million refugees at the peak in 2021. The nation offered access to schools, healthcare and work permits, indicating a positive attitude towards these individuals who are in need of protection and in search of safety. As evident in figure 3 up in 2025, Iran orchestrated “one of the largest expulsions”, forcibly deporting 1.1 million Afghans, a number expected to amount to 4 million in total.⁵⁴ Many refugees were expelled under national security pretenses, portraying them as threats to national unity, stripping them of documentation and subjecting them to violence.

The UN reports that these refugees are not even receiving the funding necessary to survive. More than 256.000 Afghan left the country in June alone, returning to their country of

⁵³ *Afghan Refugees Stuck in Pakistan as Germany Halts Entry Programme* | Reuters, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-refugees-stuck-pakistan-germany-halts-entry-programme-2025-07-03/. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵⁴ *Germany Must Honour Visa Obligations to Afghan Refugees, Rules Court* | Reuters, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/germany-must-honour-visa-obligations-afghan-refugees-rules-court-2025-07-08/. Accessed 25 July 2025.

origin, with 28000 people leaving in a single day. This is due to the return of Taliban in power back in Afghanistan which has sparked an Anti- Afghan sentiment in Iran.

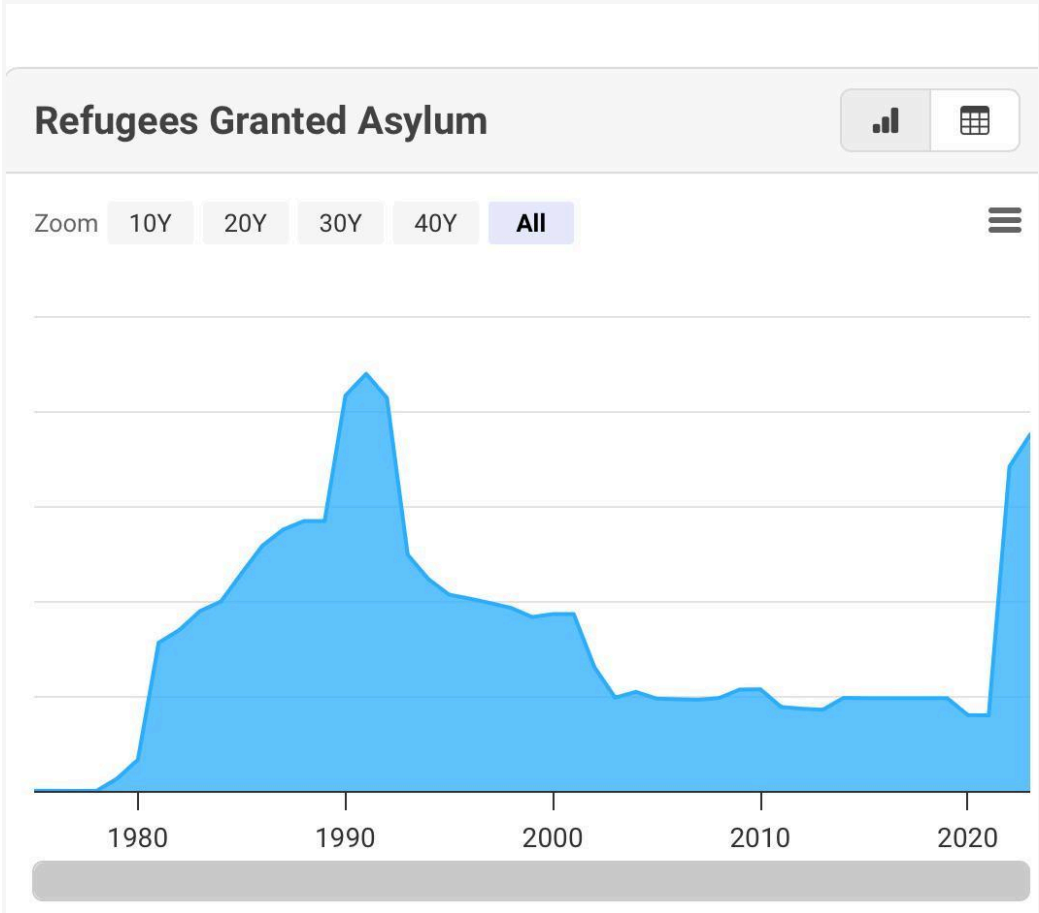


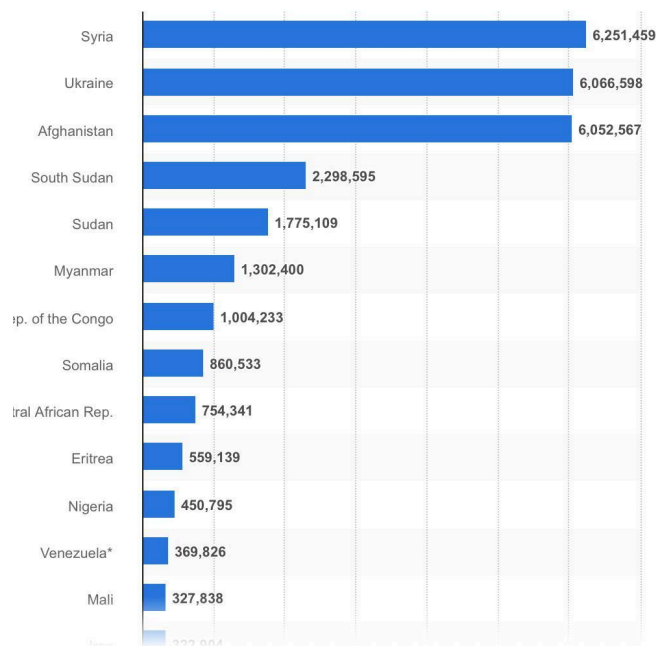
Figure 6: The number of refugees granted asylum in Iran until 2023⁵⁵

⁵⁵ "Iran Refugee Statistics: Historical Chart & Data." *Iran Refugee Statistics | Historical Chart & Data*, www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/ir/iran/refugee-statistics. Accessed 25 July 2025.

Syria

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, thousands of refugees and IDPs have started to return to their homes after years of being away. Between January and February 2025, approximately 297.000 refugees re-entered Syria, and 885000 IDPs returned home.⁵⁶ By mid-2025, the UN reports that 1.2 million have made their journey back to their country of origin, with the number estimated to reach 3.5 million by the end of the year.⁵⁷ This reflects a profound shift: in the past, only 2% of Syrians desired to go back to their country of origin, whereas now this number has increased to 30%, indicating a positive attitude towards reintegration into their country of origin.⁵⁸ As evident in figure 4 the past few years, the number of refugees from Syria surpassed 6 million, which indicates the positive impact of this shift.

However, limited infrastructural readiness, inadequate public services and documentation system, the security and future of these individuals remains unstable. Their return outpaces the development of the nation, as a time when UN's funding is falling short, with only 71 million of a total of 575 million having been pledged, which aimed to provide support for the returnees and aid in the development of the country.⁵⁹



⁵⁶ *Europa*, coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2024_10_EUAA_COI_Report_Syria_Country_Focus.pdf. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵⁷ *Europa*, coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2024_10_EUAA_COI_Report_Syria_Country_Focus.pdf. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵⁸ *Nearly 30% of Syrians Want to Go Home, up from Almost Zero, Un Refugee Chief Says | Reuters*, www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/nearly-30-syrians-want-go-home-up-almost-zero-un-refugee-chief-says-2025-01-25/. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁵⁹ "UNHCR: Needs Intensify as 400,000 Syrians Return." *UNHCR UK*, www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-needs-intensify-400-000-syrians-return?utm_source=chatgpt.com. Accessed 25 July 2025.

Figure 7: Number of refugees by country⁶⁰

Amnesty International

Amnesty International plays a pivotal role in providing for refugees and challenging harmful policies instigated by governments across Europe and beyond. In July 2024, the NGO investigated the conditions of living for refugees in Greece's Samos "Closed Controlled Access Centre", exposing the overcrowding, restricted access to medical care and potable water, and prolonged, arbitrary detention under 25-day "restriction of freedom" orders for those individuals⁶¹ and demanding change. This is an example of how Amnesty international pressures governments to uphold international human rights norms. Simultaneously, Amnesty International actively promotes sustainable solutions, including community sponsorship schemes, empowering ordinary citizens to resettle refugees and advocate for their reintegration in society. Their campaigns have mobilized support across countries, such as Australia, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Spain, and the U.S., encouraging groups to assume responsibility for housing, schooling, and medical access for incoming families.

United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR)

In December 2024, UNHCR secured a record \$1.5 billion for its 2025 operations in terms of the regime crisis, which represented about 15% of its total funding needs amid a global displacement total of 123 million people.⁶² Key donors like Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Australia, and the U.S. contributed substantial amounts, providing support and aid in times of dire need. However, UNHCR's Global Appeal for 2025 requires an estimated 10.2 billion to be effectively applied, suggesting substantial shortfalls that threaten the IGO's ability to respond effectively across multiple crises⁶³

UNHCR's evolving strategy emphasizes the livelihoods and economic inclusion of these refugees. Through its referrals and coordination, UNHCR set up employment platforms in eight European countries, helping over 6500 refugees secure jobs in 2024 and planning to scale that across 35 nations with the launch of a Regional Information Hub in March 2025.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Published by S. Galan, and May 30. "Where Do Most Refugees Come from 2024." *Statista*, 30 May 2025, www.statista.com/statistics/272999/refugees-by-source-country/.

⁶¹ "Greece: Move Asylum Seekers, Migrants to Safety." *European Institutions Office*, 26 Oct. 2022, www.amnesty.eu/news/greece-move-asylum-seekers-migrants-to-safety/.

⁶² "Refugee Employment Platforms | UNHCR Europe." *UNHCR Europe*, 2025, www.unhcr.org/europe/about-unhcr/unhcr-europe/refugee-employment-platforms. Accessed 14 Aug. 2025.

⁶³ "Refugee Employment Platforms | UNHCR Europe." *UNHCR Europe*, 2025, www.unhcr.org/europe/about-unhcr/unhcr-europe/refugee-employment-platforms. Accessed 14 Aug. 2025.

⁶⁴ "Refugee Employment Platforms | UNHCR Europe." *UNHCR Europe*, 2025, www.unhcr.org/europe/about-unhcr/unhcr-europe/refugee-employment-platforms. Accessed 14 Aug. 2025.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
14th July 1789-9th November 1799	French Revolution
1845-1852	The Great Potato Famine in Ireland led to over a million deaths and pushed more than a million of people to emigrate in search of a new beginning. ⁶⁵
1st November 906	Aliens Act in the UK
4th August 1914	German invasion of Belgium
28th July 1914-11th November 1918	World War I
1933-1939	Nazi Persecution
01st September 1939-02 November 1945	World War II
27th March 1947	Polish Resettlement Act in the UK that legislated the rights of the Polish refugees, urging Britain to accept 9000 displaced persons. ⁶⁶
11th November 1948	UN General Assembly Resolution 194
28th July 1951	Refugee Convention
23rd October 1956	Soviet invasion of Hungary
31st January 1967	Refugee protocol
20th July /1974	Turkish invasion of Cyprus
14th June 1985	Schengen Agreement
11th July 1995-22nd July 1995	Srebrenica genocide

⁶⁵ Timeline." *Refugee History*., refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁶⁶ Timeline." *Refugee History*., refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee . Accessed 25 July 2025.

1991-2001	Kurdish Persecution
20th February 2014	Ukrainian Conflict begins
20th June 2015	Kalobeyi Refugee Settlement in Kenya
16th September 2016	New York declaration for Refugees and Migrants
15th August 2021	Taliban takeover of Afghanistan
24th February /2022	Russian Invasion of Ukraine

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

The 1951 Refugee Convention is a key UN treaty that fights for the rights of refugees, defining who is a refugee as well as outlining the legal obligation of states to protect them. It was created after the immense displacement post World War 2. ⁶⁷While this convention is a foundational document for the international refugee protection system, the current refugee crisis signals at its ineffectiveness to fully be applied in the modern world. Many states such as Hungary and Poland refuse to provide asylum, and in some cases even deport refugees, prioritizing national doctrine over international law.

New York Resolution on refugees and migrants A/RES/71/1

In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Immigrants was adopted by the General Assembly. This declaration outlines the obligations of member states to protect refugees and migrants, and promoted the development of two global compacts: one on refugees and the other on safe, orderly and regular migration. This declaration provides the framework for cooperation between states to achieve the goals already established, set new ones and address the large movements of refugees. While this Declaration lays the fundamental framework, it is not legally binding to the member states, and thus as evident by real-world examples is not being applied. This enables the member states to choose whether or not to apply the rulings and principles of this Declaration, rather than obligating them to comply.

⁶⁷ “The 1951 Refugee Convention.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention. Accessed 25 July 2025.



PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Cartagena Declaration on Refugees adopted in 1984

In 1984, the Cartagena Declaration on refugees was adopted, which aimed to protect refugees. It was brought out by delegates from 10 Latin American countries,⁶⁸The Declaration broadens the category of people in need of international protection to be regarded as refugees, a crucial step towards ensuring a better future for all.⁶⁹ Specifically, it adds 5 situational events to the definition given by the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which allows a wider number of individuals to be incorporated in the groups receiving aid from IGOs and other states.

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Since its application, the Declaration has been remarkably successful in Latin America. It has been incorporated into the national laws of 14 countries. However, its national scope prohibits the declaration from being effective on an international level.

Kalabeyi Refugee Settlement

The Kalabeyi Refugee Settlement, refers to a refugee camp located in Turkana, Kenya, which was established in 2015, welcoming a number of South Sudanese refugees, fleeing the widespread conflict in their country in 2013.⁷¹The ultimate aim is to develop an urban center until 2030 where refugees will benefit from investments in basic infrastructure access to social services and increased opportunities for gaining income.⁷²This program enables the community to have a direct role in the decisions affecting the area.

This settlement has already provided urban and agricultural development for the 60000 refugees along with 20000 individuals that reside in Turkana.⁷³ As of 2021, the camp was home

⁶⁸ "Forced Migration Review." *The Cartagena Process: 30 Years of Innovation and Solidarity | Forced Migration Review*, web.archive.org/web/20170207113536/www.fmreview.org/climatechange-disasters/maldonadocastillo.html. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁶⁹ "Summary Conclusions on the Interpretation of the Extended Refugee Definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/media/summary-conclusions-interpretation-extended-refugee-definition-1984-cartagena-declaration . Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷⁰ "Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Adopted by the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 22 November 1984." *UNHCR UK*, www.unhcr.org/uk/media/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection-refugees-centra l. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷¹ "Kalobeyei Settlement." *UNHCR Kenya*, www.unhcr.org/ke/about-us/where-we-work/kalobeyei-settlement. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷² "Kalobeyei Settlement." *UNHCR Kenya*, www.unhcr.org/ke/about-us/where-we-work/kalobeyei-settlement. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷³ "Kalobeyei Settlement." *UNHCR Kenya*, www.unhcr.org/ke/about-us/where-we-work/kalobeyei-settlement . Accessed 25 July 2025.

to 38000 refugees, indicating its efficiency in providing a home for these individuals in need of support.⁷⁴ The number is only projected to increase as more adaptations are brought about.

Schengen Agreement

In 1985, an agreement was signed between 5 European countries, whereby each state agreed to abolish control at their internal borders.⁷⁵ This lays the foundation for establishing an area within Europe without internal border controls. The agreements came into force in 1995⁷⁶, and since then its signatories have increased to 30 European countries. Entering the EU signals becoming a Schengen state. This step is crucial for refugees who usually encounter a lot of trouble when passing from one country to the next and facilitates their journey within Europe, and thus their access to a more equitable future.

However, while the alignment of the signation of these agreements and entering the EU has obligated many states to join there are others, like Iceland, that do not apply the Schengen rules. This state maintains its own visa and border. This exemplifies how while this agreement is effective, it is still not applied by many nations, where the entry for refugees is barred.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Education for both the public and refugees

A crucial step in addressing the refugee crisis is educating the population on the hardships and emotional turmoil that refugees endure throughout their journey from their country of origin to the host country. Educational programs must be implemented providing substantial information about the plight of refugees to the host public. This will Enable the public to recognize how important it is to welcome these people and not add to their already burdened lives by discriminating against them or marginalizing them from the rest of the community.

Education should also empower the refugees themselves. Programs specifically made for refugees should be widely implemented offering language acquisition courses, cultural orientation, and practical skills training. These educational opportunities, which must be funded by the United Nations and international NGOs, can be hosted in reception centers and local schools. These programs should also provide information on the legal rights, and civic participation of refugees, enabling them to know what their rights are under international law and be fully aware when these are not granted, so as to evoke the appropriate response.

Offer of employment opportunities

Securing employment for refugees is a vital step towards their reintegration in the host country. Such an initiative would foster the refugees financial independence and dignity and

⁷⁴ "Refugees and Local Residents Study, Play and Live Together at Kalobeyei Integrated Refugee Settlement:" UN, unhabitat.org/refugees-and-local-residents-study-play-and-live-together-at-kalobeyei-integrated-refugee-settlement. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷⁵ "Schengen Agreement and Schengen Implementing Convention." EUR, eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/schengen-agreement-and-convention.html . Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁷⁶ "Schengen Agreement and Schengen Implementing Convention." EUR, eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/schengen-agreement-and-convention.html . Accessed 25 July 2025.

make the refugees feel more at home and accepted at the host country, significantly reducing the inequalities that exist. By allowing them to work in the host country, these refugees contribute to the nation's GDP, becoming a valuable asset for the country and thus increasing the reasons for which refugees must be treated well and respected in the host country..

Community sponsorship through collaboration with NGOs

Community sponsorship, a model where local communities, often in partnership with NGOs, commit to supporting refugee families is a sustainable solution that enables refugees' access to basic services, such as healthcare, food and hospitals. Community sponsors can provide housing, cultural orientation, emotional support, and even job referrals, which dramatically ease the pressure on government systems, signalling at the success of this model and underscoring the importance of implementing it for refugees, whose lives are at stake.

Government agencies must vet and approve sponsor groups, who will commit to providing for these refugees and will then receive training and operational support from NGOs to successfully implement such programs.

Legal Support

The 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, although efficient in theory, no longer adequately support the plight of refugees. The definition of who constitutes a refugee remains narrow not incorporating climate disasters and other critical conditions . A reform is hence needed to ensure that people fleeing from such conditions are treated with the necessary and appropriate respect.

Furthermore, binding mechanisms must be introduced to ensure that Member States consistently and effectively implement the rulings of these conventions. An international oversight body should exist that will monitor and oversee the treatment of refugees in the host countries, observing whether member states abide by their obligations under this Convention, and applying the appropriate sanctions when encountering a breach of the regulations.

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www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/nearly-30-syrians-want-go-home-up-almost-zero-un-refugee-chief-says-2025-01-25/. Accessed 25 July 2025.

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