

Who Are Refugees

Refugee

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) itself, in addition to the 1951 definition, recognizes the following persons as refugees: who are outside their country

A refugee, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is a person "forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country. They are unable to return to their own country because of feared persecution as a result of who they are, what they believe in or say, or because of armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder." Such a person may be called an asylum seeker until granted refugee status by a contracting state or by the UNHCR if they formally make a claim for asylum.

Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are often called refugees, but they are distinguished from refugees because they have not crossed an international border, although their reasons for leaving their home may be the same as those of refugees.

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

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The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who a refugee is and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. The convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals. The convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of refugee travel documents issued under the convention.

This convention was mentioned in Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The Refugee Convention builds on Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. A refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state in addition to those provided for in the convention.

The rights created by the Convention generally still stand today. Some have argued that the complex nature of 21st century refugee relationships calls for a new treaty that recognizes the evolving nature of the nation-state, economic migrants, population displacement, environmental migrants, and modern warfare. Nevertheless, ideas like the principle of non-refoulement (non-returning of refugees to dangerous countries) (Article 33) are still applied today, with the 1951 Convention being the source of such rights.

Palestinian refugees

Palestinian refugees are citizens of Mandatory Palestine, and their descendants, who fled or were expelled from their country, village or house over the

Palestinian refugees are citizens of Mandatory Palestine, and their descendants, who fled or were expelled from their country, village or house over the course of the 1948 Palestine war and during the 1967 Six-Day War. Most Palestinian refugees live in or near 68 Palestinian refugee camps across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 2019 more than 5.6 million Palestinian refugees were registered with the United Nations.

In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) defined Palestinian refugees to refer to the original "Palestine refugees" as well as their patrilineal descendants. However, UNRWA's assistance is limited to Palestine refugees residing in UNRWA's areas of operation in the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

As of 2019, more than 5.6 million Palestinians were registered with UNRWA as refugees, of which more than 1.5 million live in UNRWA-run camps. The term "Palestine refugee" does not include internally displaced Palestinians, who became Israeli citizens, or displaced Palestinian Jews. According to some estimates, as many as 1,050,000–1,380,000 people, who descend from displaced people of Mandatory Palestine are not registered under UNRWA or UNHCR mandates.

During the 1948 Palestine War, around 85% of the population or 700,000 Palestinian Arabs, living in the area that became Israel fled or were expelled from their homes, to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and to the countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. They, and their descendants who are also entitled to registration, are assisted by UNWRA in 59 registered camps, ten of which were established in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 to cope with the new wave of displaced Palestinians. They are also the world's oldest unsettled refugee population, having been under the ongoing governance of Arab states following the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, the refugee populations of the West Bank under Israeli governance since the Six-Day War and Palestinian administration since 1994, and the Gaza Strip administered by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) since 2007.

Today, the largest number of refugees, over 2,000,000, live in Jordan, where by 2009 over 90% of UNWRA-registered Palestinian refugees had acquired full citizenship rights. This figure consists almost exclusively of West Bank–descended Palestinians; however, as of December 2021, Palestinians with roots in the Gaza Strip are also still kept in legal limbo. In 2021, Jordanian politician Jawad Anani estimated that roughly 50% of Jordan's population had West Bank–Palestinian roots. Another approximately 2,000,000 refugees live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under Israeli occupation and blockade. Approximately 500,000 refugees live in each of Syria and Lebanon respectively, albeit under very different circumstances. While Palestinian refugees in Syria maintained their stateless status, the Syrian government during Assad's rule afforded them the same economic and social rights enjoyed by Syrian citizens; they were also drafted into the Armed Forces despite not being citizens. Citizenship or legal residency in some host countries is denied, most notably for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, where the absorption of Palestinians would upset a delicate confessional balance. For the refugees themselves, these situations mean they have reduced rights: no right to vote, limited property rights and access to social services, among other things.

On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) adopted Resolution 194 which affirmed the Palestinians right to return to their homes.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and has 20,305 staff working in 136 countries as of December 2023.

Refugee crisis

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A refugee crisis can refer to difficulties and/or dangerous situations in the reception of large groups of refugees. These could be forcibly displaced persons, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers or any other huge groups of migrants.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), due to conflicts, human rights violations, and other disturbing events, 108.4 million individuals experienced forced displacement globally by the end of 2022. 35.3 million of 108.4 were refugees. UNHCR oversees 29.4 million refugees, whereas 5.9 million fall under the mandate of UNRWA as Palestine refugees. Furthermore, internal displacement affects 62.5 million individuals, 5.4 million are asylum-seekers, and an additional 5.2 million are other people in need of international protection. More vital information from UNHCR highlights that 76% of refugees and those in need of international protection worldwide are hosted in low to middle-income countries, with a significant portion being countries neighboring their nations of origin. Türkiye hosted the largest refugee population globally, accommodating nearly 3.6 million refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran followed closely with 3.4 million, trailed by Colombia with 2.5 million, Germany with 2.1 million, and Pakistan with 1.7 million. In relation to their national populations, Aruba (1 in 6) and Lebanon (1 in 7) hosted the highest number of refugees and individuals requiring international protection, followed by Curaçao (1 in 14), Jordan (1 in 16), and Montenegro (1 in 19). In 2022, the majority of refugees and individuals in need of international protection, accounting for 52%, originated from the top three countries that migrated to host nations. The first country was the Syrian Arab Republic with 6.5 million refugees, followed by Ukraine with 5.7 million, and Afghanistan, ranking third with 5.7 million refugees. In 2022, the government reported approximately 113,300 refugees who resettled, while UNHCR documented 116,500 refugees relocated to states for resettlement.

Ukrainian refugee crisis

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An ongoing refugee crisis began in Europe in late February 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Over 5 million refugees fleeing Ukraine are recorded across Europe (as of May 2025), while an estimated 8 million others had been displaced within the country by late May 2022. Approximately one-quarter of the country's total population had left their homes in Ukraine by 20 March. 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women and children, while most Ukrainian men between the ages of 18 and 60 are banned from leaving the country. By 24 March, more than half of all children in Ukraine had left their homes, of whom a quarter had left the country. The invasion caused Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II and its aftermath, is the first of its kind in Europe since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, as well as the fourth largest refugee crisis in history, and is the largest refugee crisis of the 21st century, with the highest refugee flight rate globally.

The vast majority of refugees initially entered neighbouring countries to the west of Ukraine (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova). Around 3 million people then moved further west to other European countries. As of May 2025, according to UNHCR data, the countries in which the largest numbers of Ukrainians had applied for asylum, or other temporary protection, were Germany (1.2 million), Poland (1 million), and the Czech Republic (0.4 million). As of September 2022, Human Rights Watch documented that Ukrainian civilians were being forcibly transferred to Russia. The UN Human Rights Office stated "There have been credible allegations of forced transfers of unaccompanied children to Russian occupied territory, or to the Russian Federation itself." The United States Department of State estimated that at least 900,000 Ukrainian citizens have been forcibly relocated to Russia. More than 4.5 million Ukrainians have returned to Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion.

European Union (EU) countries bordering Ukraine have allowed entry to all Ukrainian refugees, and the EU has invoked the Temporary Protection Directive which grants Ukrainians the right to stay, work, and study in any European Union member state for an initial period of one year. Some non-European and Romani people have reported ethnic discrimination at the border.

Refugee camp

A refugee camp is a temporary settlement built to receive refugees and people in refugee-like situations. Refugee camps usually accommodate displaced

A refugee camp is a temporary settlement built to receive refugees and people in refugee-like situations. Refugee camps usually accommodate displaced people who have fled their home country, but camps are also made for internally displaced people. Usually, refugees seek asylum after they have escaped war in their home countries, but some camps also house environmental and economic migrants. Camps with over a hundred thousand people are common, but as of 2012, the average-sized camp housed around 11,400. They are usually built and run by a government, the United Nations, international organizations (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross), or non-governmental organization. Unofficial refugee camps, such as Idomeni in Greece or the Calais jungle in France, are where refugees are largely left without the support of governments or international organizations.

Refugee camps generally develop in an impromptu fashion with the aim of meeting basic human needs for only a short time. Facilities that make a camp look or feel more permanent are often prohibited by host country governments. If the return of refugees is prevented (often by civil war), a humanitarian crisis can result or continue.

According to UNHCR, most refugees worldwide do not live in refugee camps. At the end of 2015, some 67% of refugees around the world lived in individual, private accommodations. This can be partly explained by the high number of Syrian refugees renting apartments in urban agglomerations across the Middle East. Worldwide, slightly over a quarter (25.4%) of refugees were reported to be living in managed camps. At the end of 2015, about 56% of the total refugee population in rural locations resided in a managed camp, compared to the 2% who resided in individual accommodation. In urban locations, the overwhelming majority (99%) of refugees lived in individual accommodations, compared with less than 1% who lived in a managed camp. A small percentage of refugees also live in collective centres, transit camps, and self-settled camps.

Despite 74% of refugees being in urban areas, the service delivery model of international humanitarian aid agencies remains focused on the establishment and operation of refugee camps.

Refugees International

year of Refugees International. In Washington, D.C., the founding Director of Refugees International was Dianne L. Lawson, who incorporated Refugees International

Refugees International (RI) is a humanitarian organization that advocates for lifesaving assistance, human rights, and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. It does not accept United Nations or government funding.

Palestinian refugee camps

registered refugees. Lebanon: There are 12 official refugee and no unofficial camps in Lebanon, and 448,599 registered refugees. Jordan: There are 10 official

Palestinian refugee camps were first established to accommodate Palestinians who were displaced by the 1948 Palestinian expulsion and flight during the 1948 Palestine war. Camps were established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A subsequent wave of Palestinian refugees were created in the Naksa after the Six-Day War in 1967.

There are 68 Palestinian refugee camps in total, 58 official and 10 unofficial, ten of which were established after the Six-Day War while the others were established in 1948 to 1950s.

Only a third of registered Palestinian refugees live within the boundaries of the refugee camps. Most have integrated socially and economically outside the camps. Many live in adjacent geographic areas.

The number of registered Palestine refugees grew from 750,000 in 1950 to around 5 million in 2013.

Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is a UK-based organisation which works with refugees and asylum seekers. The organisation provides support and advice to refugees and

The Refugee Council is a UK-based organisation which works with refugees and asylum seekers. The organisation provides support and advice to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as support for other refugee and asylum seeker organisations. The Refugee Council also produces many reports and educational material relating to refugee issues, and lobbies politicians and the media on these issues. The Council works in partnership with many other refugee organisations, including the British Red Cross, Scottish Refugee Council, Welsh Refugee Council, North of England Refugee Service, Northern Refugee Centre, and Refugee Action.

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