



Ten Steps to Address the Global Refugee Crisis

November 2015

According to the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, the number of people forcibly displaced at the beginning of 2015 had risen to nearly 60 million—the largest number of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people since World War II.

The following are ten steps for governments to take to address this global crisis:

1. **Never return refugees to the threat of serious harm.** Scrupulously respect the principle of nonrefoulement: the prohibition on the forcible return of refugees to places where their lives or freedom would be threatened or on returning anyone to places where they would face a real risk of torture or inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.
2. **Don't interfere with the right to seek asylum.** Respect everyone's right to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries, including for asylum seekers who present their claims at borders and other ports of entry. Do not allow extraterritorial migration-control measures—even those that purport to be humanitarian in intent—to prevent asylum seekers from reaching safe places where their claims for refugee status can be fairly examined.
3. **Assess asylum claims fairly.** In countries where refugees are not recognized on a *prima facie* group basis or given temporary protection, conduct fair and efficient assessments of individual asylum claims, taking into account not only the standards of the 1951 Refugee Convention, but also the need to protect individuals at real risk of serious harm on the basis of indiscriminate violence arising from armed conflict, even if they do not qualify as refugees under the 1951 treaty. Such fair and efficient assessment should include suitable review of gender-based, LGBT, health-related, and other complex claims.

4. **Refrain from detaining asylum seekers, particularly children, on the grounds of illegal entry or stay.** Adopt alternatives to detention, including supervised release and open centers.

5. **Provide inclusive humanitarian and development assistance.** Fully meet funding appeals by international humanitarian agencies, in addition to other bilateral support, to allow refugees in countries of first asylum to live in safety and dignity. There should be sufficient funding support to encourage the governments of those countries to keep their borders open to asylum seekers and to provide rights-respecting asylum space in their countries that respects refugees' right to freedom of movement and the realization of other social and economic rights -- in particular the rights to work or engage in income generating activity, and to education, health, and services for populations with particular needs.

6. **Save lives.** Engage in robust search and rescue to minimize deaths at sea. Countries that rescue or interdict migrants should disembark them at safe locations where those seeking asylum are able to present and have their refugee claims examined fairly. Ensure that border enforcement policies do not result in excessive use of force or put migrants' lives in danger.

7. **Resettle refugees.** At a minimum, resettle the number of refugees UNHCR refers each year in the spirit of global solidarity with countries of first asylum. Resettlement countries should ensure efficient and gender-sensitive refugee selection and security screening processes, prioritizing resettlement for refugees who are not safe in the country of first asylum, including those with particular health needs. Admitting refugees who are processed overseas should be regarded as a supplement to, not a substitute for, granting asylum to refugees who arrive or stay irregularly.

8. **Facilitate safe and legal travel to refugee host countries.** Help asylum seekers safely reach safety by issuing humanitarian visas, facilitating family reunification if relatives are already in the host country, and exploring other discretionary ways to safely and lawfully admit people seeking international protection.

9. **Address particular needs.** Address, through protection measures and targeted services, including health services, the particular needs of people at greater risk of abuse,

discrimination, neglect, abandonment, exploitation, and exclusion from support and services in all governmental actions relating to refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Those at greater risk include unaccompanied children, families traveling with young children, victims of trafficking, people who have suffered or are at risk of gender-based violence (forced marriage, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, etc.), women traveling on their own and female heads of household, pregnant and lactating mothers, LGBT people, and persons with disabilities.

10. **Sign the Refugee Convention and Protocol.** Sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol without reservations or geographical limitations, and enact domestic law to implement its provisions. Also grant complementary protection to people who do not meet the refugee definition under the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, but who need international protection as a result of indiscriminate violence and other serious harm.