

International Standard for Archival Description

1.1 Reference code	UNHCR 3
1.2 Title	Records of the International Refugee Organization
1.3 Dates of creation	1921-1955 (predominant 1946-1952)
1.4 Level	Fonds
1.3 Extent (quantity)	56.50 m

2.2 Administrative/Biographical history The International Refugee Organization was created on 1 July 1947, at which time the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees terminated. During the period from July 1947 until August 1948, the IRO activity was handled by a Preparatory Commission of IRO (PCIRO). The IRO was a non-permanent Specialized Agency of the United Nations. It was liquidated on 28 February 1952. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, it had about ninety branch offices throughout the world.

2.3 Archival history When the IRO was liquidated, the Liquidator was directed to dispose of any records of the IRO as determined by the General Council and the Board of Liquidation. The Board, composed of representatives of France, Venezuela and the United Kingdom, authorized the Liquidator to transfer the archives of the IRO to the Archives Nationales of France (the United Kingdom abstained from the decision).

Because the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was to continue the functions of the IRO, certain records were transferred to UNHCR. These included some IRO individual case records and legal protection files, transferred both in Geneva and in the UNHCR branch offices; personnel records and the accompanying card index system; and some documentary materials and photographs. Except for the files transferred to branch offices and certain materials selected for use by the Documentation Centre of UNHCR, the records transferred were maintained in the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), where UNHCR had its offices. In 1995, when UNHCR moved to its current headquarters at 94 rue de Montbrillant, and again in 1999 the IRO records were transferred from UNOG to the Archives of UNHCR. In 2001 the records from the Documentation Centre were transferred to the Archives.

A small quantity of records was also transferred to the International Organization for Migration to assist the IOM in its work.

2.4 Immediate source of acquisition Library, United Nations Office at Geneva; Centre for Documentation and Research

3.1 Scope and content With the exception of the personnel files, the records are thin. The legal files were reviewed by IRO and many documents withdrawn and sent with the records to the Archives Nationales. In addition, some legal files were not transferred at all; a list of the missing legal files is found in the "List of IRO Registry Files" in Series 4. The IRO numbered photographs are principally caption lists, not photographs. The stock photographs are useful, while the collection of the IRO documentation branch generally duplicates United Nations and IRO official documents. Some files from the UNHCR Documentation Centre contain information on the

transition from IRO to UNHCR. The records from the IRO office in Greece contain statistics related to the massive resettlement of refugees from Greece to Argentina, Brazil, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

- 3.2 Appraisal, destruction, scheduling** Records relating to payroll activities, mailing lists, and hotel lists have been destroyed by UNHCR Archives.
- 3.3 Accruals** Accruals are not expected.
- 3.4 System of arrangement** The records are arranged in nine series. The series are:
1. Registry Files relating to Legal Matters
2. Kardex System [Card Index to Personnel]
3. Individual Personnel Records
4. Records relating to Administration and Termination
5. IRO Captions of numbered photographs
6. Stock Photographs of UNRRA, PCIRO, and IRO Operations
7. Collection of the IRO Documentation Branch
8. Collection of the UNHCR Documentation Centre
9. Records of the IRO Office in Greece
- 4.1 Conditions governing access** Materials are subject to the Archives Access Policy of the UNHCR Archives
- 4.3 Language/scripts of material** English, French
- 4.5 Finding aids** File unit lists available for series 1, 4-9
- 5.3 Related units of description** UNHCR 2 Records of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration; UNHCR 6 Collection of the Documentation Center; UNHCR 7 Collective fonds regarding pre-UNHCR refugee matters. The principal body of IRO records is in the Archives Nationales of France. Other records are at the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, Switzerland.
- 7.1 Archivist's note** Sources consulted include Louise W. Holborn, Refugees: A Problem of Our Time (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1975) and "Disposal of Archives on Refugee Questions (League of Nations, I.R.O.)," G.I. 12/1/9 8524, UNHCR 4 Records of the United Nations Office in Geneva.
- 7.2 Rules or Conventions** Internal UNHCR rules
- 7.3 Date(s) of descriptions** 29/01/2001 - 16/04/2010