

# The State of the World's Refugees 1993

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## Foreword

In 1970 there were 2.5 million refugees in the world. Ten years ago there were 11 million. In 1993, the number is 18.2 million.

The scale and complexity of today's humanitarian crises are a reflection of the instability of the period in which we live. The collapse of the old order has given rise to a more volatile world in which new refugee movements are likely to continue to occur. At the same time, the nature of the refugee problem has undergone fundamental changes which call urgently for new approaches.

Firstly, flight is more than ever before the product of vicious internal conflicts. Nationalistic, ethnic or communal tensions have become the predominant factor in refugee movements around the world, be it in the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans or in the Middle East and parts of the Asian sub-continent.

Secondly, the loosening grip of authoritarian regimes and the destructive effects of civil war are straining fragile state structures. This has led, in cases such as Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the disintegration of states into territories controlled by competing factions, thereby greatly complicating efforts to protect and assist refugees and other victims.

Thirdly, internal conflicts are not only causing massive refugee flows but are also displacing inside their own countries large numbers of people who, in many cases, have the same need for protection and assistance as refugees. There are estimated to be about 24 million internally displaced people in the world today. Some of them are trapped by conflict and have no possibility of seeking asylum across an international border but many of them are potential refugees.

Fourthly, the widespread deprivation that continues to afflict the great majority of humankind is not only leading larger numbers of migrants to leave their homes in search of a better life; it is also exacerbating the social and political instability that produces refugees.

And fifthly, confronted by rising numbers of refugees and migrants, the traditional system for protecting refugees has come dangerously close to breaking down. The massive number of people on the move has weakened international solidarity and endangered, at times seriously, the time-honoured tradition of granting asylum to those in genuine need of protection.

In a world where persecution, massive human rights violations and armed conflict remain a daily reality, the need to protect refugees is greater than ever before. Asylum for those forced to flee must be preserved. But the current scale and nature of the refugee problem and limits to the absorption capacity of asylum countries mean that traditional methods of protection are no longer sufficient. They must be complemented by flexible approaches that respond to the present period of transition and upheaval in world affairs.

The pages that follow seek to define the current agenda of refugee protection. They attempt to analyze the issues that the international community urgently needs to address in coming to grips with the challenges of the refugee problem in the post-Cold-War world. This report examines evolving strategies which aim both to preserve asylum for those who need it and to address all stages in the development of refugee problems through preventive initiatives, emergency response, protection and the promotion and consolidation of solutions. In doing so, the report argues that humanitarian action must be firmly inscribed in a broader context of

political initiatives to promote peace, human rights and development. Above all, it is an urgent appeal for international solidarity for humanitarian action.

The subject of refugees and displaced people is high on the list of international concerns today not only because of its humanitarian significance, but also because of its impact on peace, security and stability. The world cannot reach a new order without effectively addressing the problem of human displacement.

Sadako Ogata  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# **The State of the World's Refugees 1993**

## ***Team for the preparation of The State of the World's Refugees 1993***

***UNHCR Editorial Team***

***Raymond Hall (director),  
Kathleen Newland (principal author),  
Rupert Colville (editor),  
Jeff Crisp,  
Jean-François Durieux,  
Erika Feller,  
Sylvana Foa,  
Jan Henneman,  
Fabrizio Hochschild,  
Irene Khan,  
R. James Lattimer,  
Ekber Menemencioglu,  
Waldo Villalpando.  
External Advisory Committee***

***Marie-Angélique Savané (Chairperson),  
Claude Ake,  
Reginald Appleyard,  
Jochen Blaschke,  
Gil Loescher.***

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## Abbreviations

CIREFCA	International Conference on Central American Refugees
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
EC	European Communities
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODP	Orderly Departure Programme
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORC	Open Relief Centre
QUIP	Quick Impact Project
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRO	Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance Relating to Afghanistan
UNOSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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## Publication Information

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