

2009 Kampala Convention on IDPs

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In 2019, the African Union, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and partner organizations, governments and millions of people across the continent and beyond are commemorating the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 Kampala Convention on internally displaced persons (IDP). The treaty has had an important impact in Africa. This document highlights key facts about the Convention, which has been adopted by about half of AU member states. The remaining countries are being urged by the AU to ratify soon.

- In October 2009, African states adopted the world's first and only binding continent-wide treaty to protect people forcibly displaced within their countries (internally displaced persons, or IDPs). Its full title is the African Union (AU) Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, but the treaty is better known as the Kampala Convention.
- The Kampala Convention builds upon the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the internationally recognized framework on internal displacement, which restates the principles of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law applicable to IDPs. The Kampala Convention gives these non-binding principles the force of law in Africa.
- In line with the Guiding Principles, the Kampala Convention's Article 1 defines IDPs as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border".
- The Kampala Convention is framed principally in terms of state obligations in relation to internal displacement, including state obligations of prevention, protection and assistance obligations during displacement and obligations in relation to return and compensation.
- In addition to the central role of the state, the Kampala Convention also recognizes the important roles of various groups. It mandates a role for international organizations and humanitarian agencies, and addresses the responsibilities of armed groups arising in situations of armed conflict, including the prohibitions of impeding humanitarian access and recruiting children to take part in hostilities.
- The Kampala Convention describes the role of the African Union in supporting "the efforts of States Parties to protect and assist" IDPs, including by collaborating with international organizations and humanitarian agencies, civil society and other relevant actors.
- States' compliance is monitored through a Conference of States Parties, which convened for the first time in Zimbabwe in April 2017, and through other relevant regional mechanisms.
- October 23, 2019 will mark exactly 10 years since the Kampala Convention was adopted. As of May 1, 2019, it had been ratified by 27 of the AU's 55 member states.