

Frequently Asked Questions

English Version



FAQ 1 - What is the difference between refugees, asylum seekers and migrants?

The terms “refugee”, “asylum-seeker” and “migrant” are used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders.

The terms “migrant” and “refugee” are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish between them as there is a legal difference (Gill & Adam, 2021).

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection (Fazel & Stein, 2001).

Who is an asylum-seeker?

An asylum-seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum (Amnesty International, 2015)

Who is a migrant?

There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant. Like most agencies and organizations, the Amnesty International understand migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum-seekers or refugees.

Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family, for example. Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, natural disasters or other serious circumstances that exist there.

Lots of people don't fit the legal definition of a refugee but could nevertheless be in danger if they went home.

It is important to understand that, just because migrants do not flee persecution, they are still entitled to have all their human rights protected and respected, regardless of the status they have in the country they moved to. Governments must protect all migrants from racist and xenophobic violence, exploitation and forced labour. Migrants should never be detained or forced to return to their countries without a legitimate reason (Amnesty International, 2015) and (United Nations, 2018).



FAQ 2 - Why is there so many migrants, refugees?

There are more refugees in the world than ever before. About 26 million people have fled their countries because of conflict, violence, persecution, or human rights violations. That's greater than the number of people who live in Shanghai, China, the world's third-largest megacity.

Many more people than that — 79.5 million — have been forcibly displaced from their homes, according to the U.N. refugee agency's latest report. The previous spike in displacement occurred after World War II when 60 million people were left homeless. Today's displaced include 4.2 million people who are seeking asylum — refugee status — and 45.7 million people who are displaced within their own countries because of violence, instability, or natural disasters (Baldock, 2000)

Each year, the United Nations and people around the world recognize the plight of refugees on June 20, World Refugee Day.

The Syrian civil war has led to the largest refugee crisis in modern times. The economic collapse of Venezuela has also led to massive displacement. Conflicts in South Sudan, Myanmar, and Democratic Republic of the Congo have caused millions of people to flee in the past few years. Refugee displacements from Afghanistan and Somalia date back decades, and the humanitarian needs continue (Shranz & Vellend, 2019).

The hereunder are some other countries where masses of people have been displaced either internally or have fled from violence:

- Iraq — About 2.4 million Iraqis are displaced. Iraq also hosts 250,000 Syrian refugees.

- Central African Republic — About 593,000 people have fled from violence in Central African Republic, and about 600,000 people are displaced within the country.
- Central America —The number of people fleeing violence has increased tenfold in the past five years. Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have seen a spike in violence from criminal groups within that timeframe.



FAQ 3 – Do refugees have a special status? What is their legal protection?

The rights that people have vary significantly according to their legal status. Obtaining refugee status is usually an individual process and can take several months or longer, depending on the country and the specific situation of the asylum seeker. While refugee status comes with a wide range of rights and often includes additional support measures (including language courses), registered asylum seekers or people who have not yet submitted their asylum application may be subject to restrictions including:

- Being confined within the limits of a reception centre
- Not being able to travel outside the municipality or the region
- Not being allowed to work.

However, regardless of the legal status, everybody is entitled to basic rights such as accommodation, food, healthcare and education for children.

States have been granting protection to individuals and groups fleeing persecution for centuries; however, the modern refugee regime is largely the product of the second half of the twentieth century. Like international human rights law, modern refugee law has its origins in the aftermath of World War II as well as the refugee crises of the interwar years that preceded it. Article 14(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted in 1948, guarantees the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries. Subsequent regional human rights instruments have elaborated on this right, guaranteeing the “right to seek and be granted asylum in a foreign territory, in accordance with the legislation of the state and international conventions” such as the American Convention on Human Rights, art. 22(7); African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, art. 12(3).

The controlling international convention on refugee law is the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and its 1967 Optional Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1967 Optional Protocol). The 1951 Convention establishes the definition of a refugee as well as the principle of non-refoulement and the rights afforded to those granted refugee status. Although the 1951 Convention definition remains the dominant definition, regional human rights treaties have since modified the definition of a refugee in response to displacement crises not covered by the 1951 Convention (Council of Europe, 2010)

The 1951 Convention does not define how States parties are to determine whether an individual meets the definition of a refugee. Instead, the establishment of asylum proceedings and refugee status determinations are left to each State party to develop. This has resulted in disparities among different States as governments craft asylum laws based on their different resources, national security concerns, and histories with forced migration movements. Despite differences at the national and regional levels, the overarching goal of the modern refugee regime is to provide protection to individuals forced to flee their homes because their countries are unwilling or unable to protect them (Mort & Werbmeer, 2016).

Legal Protections

International and regional instruments relating to refugees include:

- 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- 1967 Optional Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man
- American Convention on Human Rights
- Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama (Cartagena Declaration)
- African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa
- Arab Charter on Human Rights

- Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Council Regulation EC No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third country national
- Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa
- Convention on the Rights of the Child



FAQ 4 – What organizations can support migrants / refugees?

Fortunately, the well-being of refugees is a significant issue for multiple compassionate organizations. We are putting great emphasis on the fact that this list of organizations that help refugees is incomplete. Please note that we recognize the importance of the work done by any other NGOs that are not mentioned herein.

1. **Sunrise USA**

One of the organizations that help refugees is founded in 2011 by a group of Syrian-American professionals, Sunrise-USA is now one of the leading NGOs in the United States focused on providing humanitarian assistance to Syrians both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

2. **Karam Foundation**

This is a non-profit organization on a mission to build a better future for Syria. By developing innovative education programs for Syrian refugee youth, distribute smart aid to Syrian families, and fund sustainable development projects initiated by Syrians for Syrians.

3. **Islamic Relief**

As an independent faith-based humanitarian and development organization, Islamic Relief has been serving humanity for 32 years. With an active presence in over 40 countries across the globe, they strive to make the world a better and fairer place for the three billion people still living in poverty, including many refugees.

4. **Project Amal Ou Salaam**

Their name means Project Hope and Peace. They are a grassroots organization dedicated to empowering Syria's children, including refugees, to rebuild their country and work for peace.

5. **Refugees International**

They advocate for lifesaving protection and assistance for displaced people and promote solutions to displacement crises. They shine a light on the real problems and make recommendations to policymakers at the highest levels that help shape the response to those in need.

6. **UNHCR**

For over 65 years the United Nations has been one of the organizations that help refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been protecting the rights and well-being of refugees all over the world.

7. **IRC**

The International Rescue Committee helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and regain control of their future.

8. **ORAM**

ORAM's mission is to enable the international community to protect exceptionally vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. To this end, they are dedicated to delivering innovative tools, cutting-edge research and empirically-based assessment programs for refugee professionals around the world.

9. **World Relief**

This faith-based organization's mission is to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable, such as refugees.

10. **Refugee One**

They create an opportunity for refugees fleeing war, terror, and persecution to build new lives of safety, dignity, and self-reliance.

11. **HIAS**

They protect the most vulnerable refugees, helping them build new lives and reuniting them with their families in safety and freedom. Another goal is to advocate for the protection of refugees and assure that displaced people are treated with the dignity they deserve.

12. **Save The Children**

Save the Children invests in childhood – every day, in times of crisis and for our future. In the United States and around the world, they give children a healthy start, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm.

13. **ASSAF**

ASSAF was founded in 2007 to aid refugees and asylum seekers in Israel. In Hebrew, the acronym for ASSAF stands for the Aid Organization for Refugees. Their goal is to promote the rights of refugees in their encounters with the state authorities.

14. **Vluchtelingen Werk**

This is one of the Dutch organizations that help refugees. VluchtelingenWerk Nederland looks after the interests of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands, from the moment they enter the country until they're fully integrated into the Dutch society.

15. **CARE**

They're a global leader within a worldwide movement dedicated to saving lives and ending poverty.

16. **Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres)**

Their goal is to help people worldwide where the need is greatest, delivering emergency medical aid to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from health care.

17. **World Vision**

This faith-based organization partners with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

18. **World Help**

They're a Christian humanitarian organization committed to serving the physical and spiritual needs of people in impoverished communities around the world.

19. **Concern Worldwide**

An international humanitarian organization dedicated to tackling poverty and also the suffering in the world's poorest countries.

20. **Mercy Corps**

A leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In a disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, they partner to put bold solutions into action—helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

21. **Zakat Foundation of America**

An international charity organization that helps generous and caring people reach out to those in need. Their goal is to address immediate needs and also ensure the self-reliance of the poorest people around the world with Zakat and Sadaqa dollars of privileged Muslims and the support of other generous donors.

22. **Life**

Life for Relief and Development is a non-profit humanitarian charity founded in 1992 by concerned Arab American professionals in response to the humanitarian crises that developed in Iraq as a result of the 1991 Gulf War.

23. **International Medical Corps**

They assist those in urgent need anywhere, anytime, no matter what the conditions, providing lifesaving health care and health care-related emergency services—often within hours.



FAQ 5 - Do migrants and refugees take jobs away from local people?

Migrants accounted for 47% of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe over the past ten years according to the OECD. Migrants often take jobs that others are less willing to do or take, and can help fill gaps in the job market. They can complement the local labour force rather than competing with it by providing skills at all levels that are needed in most developed countries. Last but not least, migrant entrepreneurs help to CREATE jobs! Unemployment is a larger problem that exists apart from arrivals of migrants and refugees yet is it easier for some politicians to blame migrants/refugees in order to shift attention away from structural problems and economic policies. But whether employed or unemployed, states have obligations - under international human rights and refugee law - to protect the rights of migrants (whether regular or irregular) and refugees (Lean & Peredo, 2006)

