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Background Guide

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Should we reassess the Geneva Conventions of and the 1967 Protocol while proposing amendments that will be enforced by International Law?

1951



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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the UN Refugee Agency is a United Nations organization that is “obligated to ensure the protection of refugees at the issue of a country or by the UN itself.”

Not only do they guarantee safety but give support and assistance to these individuals in ameliorating the conditions they are facing. This agency takes actions internationally to solve refugees’ difficulties worldwide. The UNHCR was formed by the General Assembly on December 14th, 1950, five years after the initial creation of the United Nations itself. The main

headquarter of this committee is located in Geneva, Switzerland and it is an active part on the UN today. Antonio Guterres, who joined the UNHCR in 2005, is now the the High Commissioner and it is evident that the primary function of the UNHCR is to maintain the rights and well-being of refugees globally.

Employed are around 8,600 people in more than 125 countries of the UNHCR and within the last sixty years, the UNCHR has helped over tens of millions of people, and it has been acknowledged with two Nobel Peace Prizes.

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status of human beings on our planet. Basically, we are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world in fact, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol were created in order to provide assistance for these refugees. They define clearly who is considered a refugee and what rights they possess including the legal obligations of 148 states who are party to either one or both of these instruments.



It should be noted that the 1967 Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the Convention. In fact, in the aftermath of World War I, millions of people fled their homelands becoming refugees. Governments responded by drawing up a set of International Agreements to provide travel document for these people who were, effectively, the first refugees of the 20th century. The process began under the League of Nations in 1921 but by July 1951, at

a diplomatic conference in Geneva, it was adopted at the convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention), which was later amended by the 1967 Protocol.

Initially, the 1951 Convention was more or less limited to protecting European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but the 1967 Protocol expanded its scope to include much of the displaced people from around the World.



The 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the only global legal instruments explicitly covering the most important aspects of a refugee's life" and one of the aspects to consider in this deliberation is the status and effectiveness of it today in 2014.

The Current Significance of the Geneva Convention

"Today, the Geneva Conventions remains the foundation of contemporary worldwide humanitarian law and acts as a fundamental guideline for securing persons who are facing threats to their person and security.

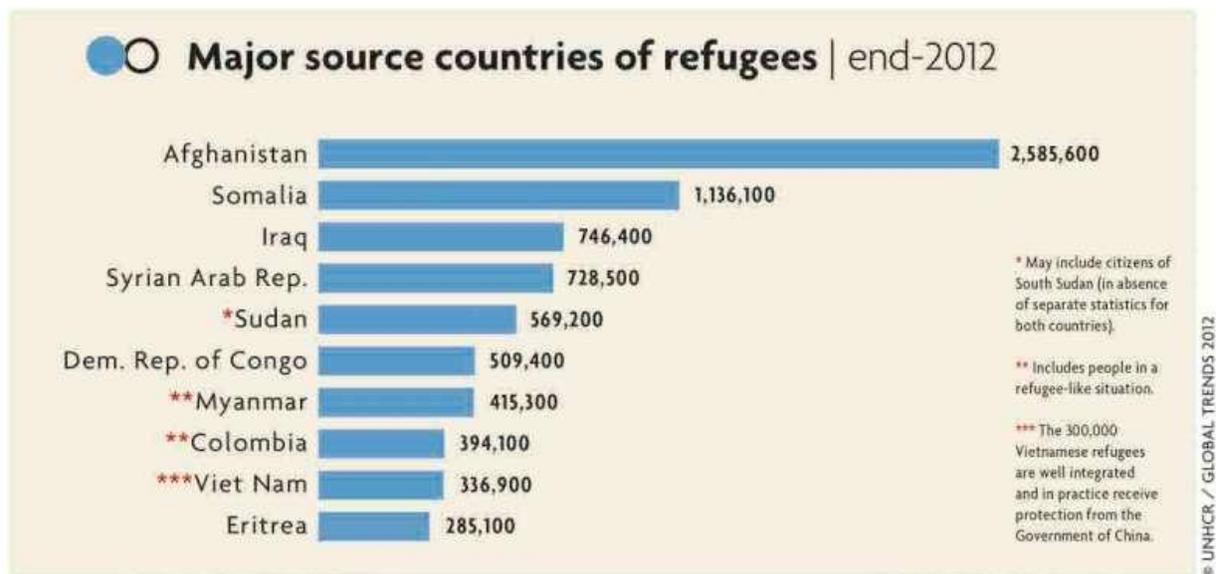
From a series of world crises such as the clashes in Afghanistan (2001-2002), the Iraq war (2003-2004), the clash in Southern Lebanon (2006) and the clash in the middle of Russia and Georgia (2008), the world has become a hostile place for the refugees."

Conclusion:

The UNHCR is working to provide services for millions of people globally, and assists about 2,000 new refugees daily. The Commission's devoted effort has impacted millions of individuals and that includes disenfranchised persons who wish to reestablish and continue their

lives in normal environments devoid of war, and the cruelty of displacement from their homes due to actions which could be avoided. Of course, refugees may be seen from natural disasters as well such as tsunamis, hurricanes, and volcano eruptions.

Unfortunately, there still remains huge numbers of people experiencing horrible situations who are in need of assurance and that's why the UNCHR is there for them.



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