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**UNHCR News**

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**PLACE:** Geneva / Rio

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*UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, tracks worldwide data on refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people, based on reporting from our more than 120 country offices and information from governments and partner organizations. The information below summarizes the most recent findings (as of end 2015), and was published on 20 June 2016 in UNHCR's annual [Global Trends Report](#):*

## **With 1 human in every 113 affected, forced displacement hit record high in 2015**

Conflict and persecution caused global forced displacement to escalate sharply in 2015, reaching the highest level ever recorded and representing immense human suffering.

UNHCR's annual [Global Trends](#) report (published on 20 June 2016) reported 65.3 million people forcibly displaced as of the end of 2015, compared to 59.5 million just 12 months earlier. 2015 marked the first time that the threshold of 60 million was crossed.

This total of 65.3 million comprises 3.2 million people in industrialized countries who as of end 2015 were awaiting decisions on asylum (the largest total UNHCR has recorded), 21.3 million refugees worldwide (1.8 million more than in 2014 and the highest refugee total since the early 1990s), and 40.8 million people who had been forced to flee their homes but were within the confines of their own countries (an increase of 2.6 million from 2014 and the highest number on record).

Measured against Earth's 7.349 billion population, these numbers mean that 1 in every 113 people globally is now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee – a level of risk for which UNHCR knows no precedent. In all, there are more forcibly displaced people today than the populations of the United Kingdom, France or Italy.\*

Forced displacement has been on the rise since at least the mid-1990s in most regions, but over the past five years the rate of climb has increased. The reasons are threefold: Situations that cause large refugee outflows are lasting longer (for example, conflicts in Somalia or Afghanistan are now into their third and fourth decades, respectively), dramatic new or reignited situations are occurring frequently (today's largest being Syria, but also in the space of the past five years South Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, Ukraine, Central African Republic, etc.), and the rate at which solutions are being found for

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refugees and internally displaced people has been on a falling trend since the end of the Cold War. As recently as 10 years ago, at the end of 2005, UNHCR recorded an average of six people displaced every minute. Today that number is 24 per minute – almost double the typical frequency at which adults breathe.

### **3 countries produce half the world's refugees...**

Among countries covered by the Global Trends report several stand out: Syria at 4.9 million, Afghanistan at 2.7 million and Somalia at 1.1 million together accounted for more than half the refugees under UNHCR's mandate worldwide. Colombia at 6.9 million, Syria at 6.6 million, and Iraq at 4.4 million meanwhile had the largest numbers of internally displaced people. Yemen was the biggest producer of new internal displacement in 2015 – 2.5 million people, or 9 per cent of its population.

### **... And they're mostly in the Global South**

Europe's struggles to manage the more than one million refugees and migrants who arrived via the Mediterranean dominated the attentions of many in 2015, nonetheless the report shows that the vast majority of the world's refugees were elsewhere. In all, 86 per cent of refugees under UNHCR's mandate in 2015 were in low and middle income countries close to situations of conflict. This figure rises to over 90 per cent of the world's refugee total if the Palestinian refugees under the responsibility of UNHCR's sister-organization UNRWA are included. Worldwide, Turkey was the biggest host country with 2.5 million refugees. Lebanon, meanwhile hosted more refugees compared to its population than any other country (183 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants). Relative to the size of its economy the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted most (471 refugees for every dollar of per capita GDP, measured at price purchasing parity).

### **Asylum claims rise**

Among industrialized countries, 2015 was also a record year for new asylum claims, with two million requests (contributing to the 3.2 million cases still pending as of the end of the year). Germany received more asylum requests than any other country (441,900), largely reflecting its readiness to receive people who were fleeing to Europe via the Mediterranean. The United States had the second highest number of asylum claims (172,700), many of these

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individuals fleeing gang violence in Central America. Substantial asylum applications were also seen in Sweden (156,000) and Russia (152,500).

## **About half the world's refugees are children**

Children constituted 51 per cent of the world's refugees in 2015 according to the data UNHCR was able to gather (complete demographic data was not available to the report authors). Worryingly, many were separated from their parents or travelling alone. In all there were 98,400 asylum requests from children who were unaccompanied or separated from their families. This is the highest total UNHCR has seen – and a tragic reflection of how global forced displacement is disproportionately affecting young lives.

## **Unable to go home**

While global displacement totals were higher than ever, the number of people able to return to their home or find another solution (local integration in a country of first refuge or resettlement elsewhere) was low. 201,400 refugees were able to return to their countries of origin in 2015 (mainly Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia). This was higher than the total in 2014 (126,800), but still substantially down compared with the peaks of the early 1990s. Some 107,100 refugees were admitted for resettlement in 30 countries in 2015 – representing just 0.66 per cent of the refugees under UNHCR's mandate (by comparison, 26 countries admitted 105,200 refugees for resettlement in 2014, representing 0.73 per cent of the refugee population under UNHCR care). At least 32,000 refugees became naturalized over the course of the year, the majority in Canada and with smaller numbers in France, Belgium, Austria and elsewhere.

## **Additional Information**

In June this year, UNHCR launched a global [#WithRefugees](#) Petition campaign which will be delivered to UN Headquarters in New York ahead of the UN General Assembly high-level summit on Refugees and Migrants on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The campaign asks governments to:

- Ensure every refugee child gets an education.
- Ensure every refugee family has somewhere safe to live.
- Ensure every refugee can work or learn new skills to make a positive contribution to their community.

Please help us by adding your name to the [Petition](#).