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country report

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Ten key insights from UNHCR's new global trends report

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On 13 June 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented its new [global trends report](#). Ten key findings from the report:

1. 12th consecutive annual increase in number of people forcibly displaced: A total of 117.3 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2023 which constitutes an increase of 8% (8.9 million) compared to the end of 2022. While yet another rise, it is less steep than in the previous year where 19 million people (+21.4%) were forced to flee their homes, the largest ever increase between years. An estimated 40% of all displaced in 2023 were children (while accounting for 30% of the world's population), 50% were women and girls. The proportion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence rose to 68.3 million which constitutes an increase of almost 50% over the last five years. 31.6 million were refugees under the UNHCR mandate, in addition to 6 million refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and 5.8 million were in need of international protection¹ which brings the global refugee population to 43.4 million, an increase of 7% compared to the previous year. In the last decade the number has more than tripled. 6.9 million people were asylum seekers (+ ca. 26%) and 4.4 million were stateless in 2023. By the end of April 2024, UNHCR

estimates that forced displacement has likely exceeded 120 million which is equivalent to the 12th largest country in the world, around the size of Japan.

- 2. Key factors for the increase in 2023:** The conflict in Sudan stands out as a key factor driving displacement over the course of the last year with 10.8 million Sudanese uprooted at end-year. Currently, Sudan is considered the world's largest hunger crisis with more than 26 million (more than half of the population) facing crisis level of hunger (IPC 3 and above), 755'000 people even catastrophic hunger (IPC5) and 14 areas are at risk of famine². With 1,7 million people (75% of the population) displaced within three months alone and 96% of the population currently facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC4) and 22% catastrophic hunger (IPC5), the Gaza Strip stood and still stands out as another major displacement situation³. In addition, millions were internally displaced in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Myanmar. Syria remained the largest displacement crisis worldwide with 13.8 million displaced in and outside the country.
- 3. The main countries of origin in 2023:** Around 73% of all refugees under UNHCR mandate and people in need of international protection came from just five countries which include Afghanistan as the largest country of origin and

¹ This category was introduced in mid-2022 and refers to people who are outside of their country or territory of origin because they have been displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories (asylum-seekers, refugees, people in refugee-like situations) but who likely need international protection. It includes Venezuelans who were previously listed separately, but who did not officially apply for asylum but are in need of international protection under the

criteria set out in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, a regional agreement that is broader in scope than the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees.

² See the latest analysis from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) on Sudan [here](#) and the latest data from the World Food Program (WFP) [here](#).

³ More information is available [here](#).

Syria (6.4 million each), Venezuela (6.1 million), Ukraine (6 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million). In the sixth place is Sudan with 1.5 million (+79%), followed by Myanmar, DR-Congo, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. A total of 87% originated from these 10 countries, consistent with the previous year.

4. The main host countries in 2023: With 69%, most people fleeing conflict or persecution were hosted by a country neighbouring their own. In absolute terms, Iran replaced Türkiye as the host country most affected by the crisis in Afghanistan. It hosted 3.8 million Afghan refugees at year-end, closely followed by Türkiye with 3.3 million people. Colombia received 2.9 million (mostly Venezuelans), Germany hosted 2.6 million and Pakistan 2 million people, followed by Uganda, Russia, Chad, Peru and Ethiopia and Bangladesh⁴. In total, there were 7.4 million refugees⁵ in the EU at the end of 2023 of which Germany hosted the most, followed by Poland and France. Worldwide, Germany hosts around 8% of the world's refugees while being the only country which does not share a border with a major country of origin. The highest IDP numbers were recorded in Sudan (9 million), Syria (7.2 million), and Colombia (7 million), followed by the DRC, Yemen, Somalia, Ukraine, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Myanmar.

5. Regional differences, unequal distribution remains: A significant imbalance in the distribution of refugees remained throughout the year with a small number of countries shouldering most of the responsibility. 80% of the world's refugee population was hosted by countries that together produced less than 20% of the world's income. Low and lower-middle income countries who accounted for 0.5% and 8% of the global GDP respectively, hosted 17%

and 28% of the global refugee population while high income countries in comparison, who accounted for 60% of the global GDP hosted 25%.

6. Asylum seekers: 3.6 million new individual asylum applications were registered in 2023 (+40%) in addition to repeat or appeal applications which makes it the largest number of individual asylum applications ever recorded and represents a one-third increase in comparison to end-2022. More than half of them were received in just five countries: the USA (1.2 million, +61%), Germany (329.100), Egypt (183.100), Spain (163.200) and Canada (146.800). At the same time, 6.9 million asylum seekers were waiting for a decision which is an increase of 26% compared to last year. While the number of substantive decisions grew over the past year, applications have continued to outpace substantive decisions since 2006. Refugees who were recognized on a group basis almost tripled and originated mainly from and were hosted in African countries.

7. Conflict driven displacement at all-time high, respect for international law imperative: There is a clear link between the frequency, duration, and intensity of conflicts with the number of people forced to flee each year. Hence, forced displacement is increasingly a consequence of the failure to uphold peace and security wherefore UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi underlined that "(...) is high time for warring parties to respect the basic laws of war and international law." According to common article 1 of the Geneva Convention, this includes the duty of states with influence over the parties to the conflict to ensure respect. Increasingly, countries in conflict situations overlap with those who are particularly exposed to climate-related hazards.

⁴ Türkiye predominantly hosted Syrian refugees. Germany hosted mainly refugees from Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan; Pakistan hosted first and foremost Afghan refugees; Uganda by and large refugees from South Sudan and the DRC. The vast majority of refugees in Russia came from Ukraine and some from Afghanistan. Most refugees from Chad originated from Sudan

and some from the Central African Republic. Most people in Peru who were in need of international protection originated from Venezuela, some from Colombia and Cuba as well. Ethiopia hosted mainly South Sudanese and Somali refugees and Bangladesh predominantly Rohingya from Myanmar.
⁵ With asylum seekers the number stood at 8,4 million.

8. Climate Crisis increasingly affects forcibly displaced:

At the end of 2023, almost three quarters of forcibly displaced were living in countries with high to extreme exposure to climate-related hazards. The latter increasingly exacerbate protection needs and risks while giving rise to new, onward, and protracted displacement. Countries who were most severely affected by the climate crisis and conflict included the DR-Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen with Sudan standing out. According to the report, hazards are likely to increase over time across a range of countries, especially in Central America, West and East Africa and Southern Asia. While most displaced due to the adverse effect of climate change and disaster remain as IDPs within their own country, some cross an international border and may be eligible for refugee status or international protection, the report states.

9. Underfunding, reliance on few donors:

UNHCR estimates the financial needs for 2024 at 10.76 billion US dollars. Out of this number, only 26% have been covered until end-June 2024, less than at a similar point in time in previous years. This echoes similar trends in other humanitarian agencies and signals the stress the whole humanitarian financing system is facing. Currently, voluntary contributions stand at an estimated 2.7 billion with only 6% unearmarked. As in previous years, the US remains by far the most important financial supporter (as of end-June: 22.7% of contributions, almost half compared to the previous year with fears it might shrink further next year), followed by the European Commission (10,5%), Sweden (6.8%), Denmark (5.6%), France (5.3%), Japan (4.5%), Netherlands and Norway (4% each) as well as Germany (3.1%).

17 EU member states provided 30.9% of the funding, together with the European Commission even 41.4%. All other state donors together (the US excluded) covered only half of this, around 20.5%. Private donors contributed 12% so far.

10. Some progress towards longer term solutions:

Overall, 6.1 million forcibly displaced returned in 2023 representing a glimmer of hope. However, it has to be taken with a grain of salt since 4 in 5 out of the 1.1 million refugees who returned were Ukrainians or South Sudanese (returning from war-torn Sudan). The surge in number of Afghans returning from Pakistan was partly through deportation and the implementation of an illegal foreigners' repatriation plan. Hence, most of the returns were not in safety and dignity and may therefore not be sustainable. In addition, 5.1 million IDPs returned over the previous year, mainly from Ukraine and the DRC. While in general the numbers of refugees (-22%) and IDPs (-39%) returning decreased as well as the number of refugees being naturalized (-39%), resettlement efforts saw an increase of 39% while still addressing only 8% of the people in need. The most important legal pathway for refugees over the past year has been family reunification.

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