

**Human  
Rights**

*Correspondence*  
**SCHOOL**

LESSONS  
Series 27

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# Rights of Refugees

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Human Rights Correspondence School

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*A Project of the*



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# Lesson Series 27: Rights of Refugees

## Introduction

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This Human Rights Correspondence School lesson on refugees provides information and statistics as well as case examples on refugees and their situation. Every part of the lesson has some accompanying questions for discussion. Questions are not all inclusive, they are only starting points for the discussion and for bringing out your own views and knowledge on the matter. The idea is to start from your own experiences and knowledge, so that discussion is created and you can learn from each other. Feel free to use information and cases according to your own needs and use other examples if needed. This lesson is mainly based on the web pages of UNHCR and Human Rights Watch.

The lesson has the following parts:

- Why do people flee? starts with stories from Bhutanese refugees and gives general information on why there are refugees in the world.
- Refugees in Asian introduces some recent cases from the continent that hosts the majority of the world's refugee population.
- Refugees in hosting countries discusses problems refugees face in hosting countries. It includes two stories from refugees: one presents an inhumane situation in Australian detention centre and the other tells a Vietnamese success story.
- Helping the refugees is a brainstorming session on how to work for helping refugees.
- Who is a refugee? is the final part and has definitions and statistics from UNHCR.

# 1 Why do people flee?

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## 1.1 Refugee stories from Bhutan

*From South Asia Forum for Human Rights*

### Story 1

“My father was born in Bhutan and his age is 63. Every day the office bearers used to come and threaten me to leave the village. They not only intimidated me, but the Bhutanese army one day suddenly came and burnt all the 27 houses of the village. They accused me of being a Nepali citizen and asked me to hand over our girls and wives to serve them. They demanded that 15- 20 ladies be handed over. In these circumstances we left our village. Our relatives are still there and we have our registered land there.”

### Story 2

“My husband and I had heard that the armies were coming to confiscate our goods, so we both went to take our valuables to my parents’ house. On the way back, we were arrested on the banks of the Thulopinkwa river by about ten army personnel. The soldiers started beating us, asking us if we had gone to see the party people and where the leaders were. They asked us about the campsites of our party people. We said we did not know. The soldiers tied our hands behind our backs and dragged us along. We were beaten all the time. We were taken to Sarbhang, about 30 km away and kept in a school that had been turned into an army barrack for about a month. I was locked inside a room and my husband was tied to a pillar in the compound. I could see him through the window. He was beaten until he vomited blood. He was also made to sit on the ground and was kicked. He was refused food for one week. Every night two or three soldiers came and raped me. This happened every night for a whole month. I was given food every night at about midnight. If I asked for water, I was beaten with chains that the soldiers used to tie on their guns. When I was released... I stayed for one month until I realised I was pregnant. I was so ashamed that I could not face the other villagers so I left Bhutan in early January 1991. I left my children with my mother in-law in Bhutan. I went to jungle hoping I would die there. Then I went to Kachugoan in Kokrajhar, Assam where I stayed with some relatives. My sister and a male relative came to Kachugoan by chance and I bumped into them there. They paid for me to come to Maidhar. As a result of rape, I had twins, one of which died and one survived. I do not know if I will see my husband again.” *(From Amnesty International Report, Dec. 1992)*

**Story 3**

“One day in January 1992, Mr. Uday Bhattraï, a local court official, came to my house accompanied by twelve army personnel, asked me to list my property and ordered me to leave the country within four days. The next day army personnel came and took me to the village headman (Gup). They harassed and threatened me by telling me of the dire consequences I’d have to face if I did not leave the country. They made me wait at the Gup office till mid-night. Two days later, the “Gup” took me to Dungkhag Court at Damphu, Chirang Bhutan, and handed me to the “Thrimpon” (Chief district court official). The “Thrimpon” ordered me to leave the country within four days, saying that it was an order from the King and the Royal Bodyguards. I refused to leave my motherland and told him that I was a bona-fide citizen of Bhutan who had landed property since generations. Moreover, I told him that my son Mr. Narayan Sharma had been arrested by the government and was imprisoned in Chemgang central prison because of his involvement in the human rights movement. When I repeatedly refused to comply with his order to leave the country, he took me to a court room and kept me in solitary confinement for the rest of the day. At dusk, he ordered me to return home in Lamidara which is about 35 kms form Damphu, I went home on foot, reaching there at midnight. After three days, army personal once again came to my home. They threatened me and looted all my movable household belongings. When the complaint of the Civil Administrators’ excesses reached Thimphu, a high level delegation led by Home Minister Dago Tshering reached Chirang on January 13, 1992 for investigations. We were informed that we could express our grievances to the visiting minister. Accordingly, I wrote a petition, met the minister and submitted the same. The minister assured me that I could stay in Bhutan. However, as soon as he left for Thimphu, army personnel entered my house and ordered me to leave the country. I steadfastly refused to do so. However, as they continued to threatened me I ultimately told them that if it was the command of the King to evict me from the country and if I were to be penalized for refusing to do so, then I would appeal to the Royal government to release my son from the Thimphu central jail, where he had since been transferred from Chemgang, and was undergoing rigorous imprisonment since a peaceful demonstration in September 1990. The court official told me that my son would be released only on the condition that I leave the country. After a few days, my son was released. The very day that he came home, at mid-night, army personnel came to my house, threatened my family, then threw us out of our home which they proceeded to lock up. At mid-night, I along with the helpless members of my family left my beloved homeland. After a difficult four days trek, we reached the Indian border town, along with my son, my daughter-in-law and my 17 month old grandson. We were joined by other forcibly evicted Bhutanese nationals who helped us reach a refugee camp in Jhapa, eastern Nepal.”

### **Questions:**

1. Do you think these Bhutanese stories are typical refugee stories?
2. What other reasons might there be for leaving the country and seek asylum?
3. Do you know refugees in your country (or someone who has fled abroad)?  
What made them seek asylum?

## **1.2 Reasons for leaving**

According to official definitions a refugee is someone with a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, who is outside of his or her country of nationality and unable or unwilling to return. Refugees are forced from their countries by war, civil conflict, political strife or gross human rights abuses. Nowadays the biggest masses of refugees are caused by armed conflicts.

Racism is a one of the biggest causes of refugee crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people have left their homes because of racial discrimination or ethnic violence, such as ethnic minority groups in Burma and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced persons are the victims of racial discrimination, racist attacks, xenophobia and ethnic intolerance also in the hosting countries. Racism is both a cause and a product of forced displacement, and an obstacle to its solution.

Women just like men are persecuted for political, ethnic or religious reasons. Women may also be persecuted or discriminated because of not being able to fill strict social demands of the society. Persecution may emanate from a government authority or from non-state actors. Sexual violence, such as rape, may constitute persecution. The country deciding on refugee status also makes the decision on whether gender discrimination is accepted as a basis for asylum. The same goes for sexual minorities. Homosexuals may be eligible for refugee status on the basis of persecution because of their membership of a particular social group. This also depends on the hosting government's decision.

## 2 Refugees in Asia

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Asian countries host almost half of the world's refugee population. Here are some of the recent refugee crisis situations in Asia:

- Tens of thousands of Nepali speakers began leaving southern Bhutan 10 years ago. Human rights organisations and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said there was a situation of an eviction of an ethnic and religious minority. Negotiations between Bhutan and Nepal have been going on for years over how to classify the refugees in camp, how to separate Bhutanese citizens who were forced to leave from those the government accuses of crimes. Today there are 100 000 Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal.

- Tens of thousands of North Koreans are fleeing hunger and repression and coming to Northeastern China for food, work and refuge. China views them as illegal immigrants and often sends back those that get caught. China has refused to let UN refugee agency officials screen fleeing North Koreans to see whether they deserve political asylum, but has relented in several cases of North Koreans who have made it into diplomatic missions, allowing them passage abroad.

- More than 1,000 indigenous Montagnards fled the Central Highlands to Cambodia after Vietnamese security forces forcibly put down demonstrations by thousands of hill tribe villagers in February 2002. More than 400 refugees were forced to return to Vietnam, when a refugee repatriation agreement between the United Nations, Cambodia and Vietnam collapsed. These incidents were only the latest of many incidents involving Montagnards who have fled persecution in Vietnam since the fall of Saigon in 1975.

- Thailand has around 131 000 Burmese refugees in camps along the border. Asylum seekers are mostly ethnic minorities of Karens and Karennis who are fleeing conflicts, human rights abuses and ethnic insurgency in Burma. Repatriation is constantly being discussed in Thailand.

- Close to a million people have been displaced by Sri Lanka's two-decade old ethnic conflict. They have been living in refugee camps or welfare centres in Sri Lanka and southern India or sought political refuge in the

West. The conflict also displaced 800,000 Sri Lankan Tamils within their own country. Since the cease-fire agreement was signed, more than 230,000 internally displaced people have spontaneously returned home and about 1,000 have come back from India. However, the return is not yet possible for all because of destroyed infrastructure, landmines and uncertainty on whether cease-fire will hold.

· An estimated 220,000 East Timor residents, who fled to West Timor in the immediate aftermath of the 1999 independence referendum, have already gone back to East Timor. Some 30,000 still remain in refugee camps in the Indonesian province of West Timor.

· Australia has offered refugee status for more than half a million people since 1945. Thousands of illegal migrants are arrested every year for trying to slip in to Australia. Most refugees are from Asia and the Middle East. Detained migrants are held in detention facilities, many of them in desert areas, while their cases are considered. Conditions at the camps have been denounced as harsh and there have been violent protests by inmates.

· There are 3,5 million Afghan refugees around the world. Afghanistan also has some 700,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) driven from their homes by two decades of war and the worst drought in living memory. 250,000 have already returned to their homes with support from relief agencies and UNHCR plans to help 1,2 million Afghans to return home during 2003.

### Questions

1. Is your country affected by a refugee crisis? Do refugees arrive in your country? Do people flee from your country to seek asylum abroad? Where have they come from and for what reasons?
2. Are there internally displaced persons in your country? Do you know personally any refugees or IDPs?
3. Is there something in common with countries of origin? What about with hosting countries?

## 3 Refugees in hosting countries

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### 3.1 Story from an Australian detention centre

“While we were living in Woomera detention about ten months, I and my son were being separated from my husband by transferring us to the Woomera housing project. During this period, ACM (Australian Correctional Management) made a lot of harassment and misbehaviour on us. For example once ACM did not allow us to see the father for almost one and half months. Although I requested many times the answer was no. I spent all of my time doing service for the ACM, I was looking after unaccompanied minors and the other children while the hunger strike was on in Woomera.”

“I gathered these orphan children with me and gave them comfort, fed them and I also did some other human and charity help to this town housing project. After that I got the permission to visit my husband and I went to see him having prepared homemade food. Unfortunately I was insulted and tortured by ACM guards, who refused to hand over my food to him. Gradually they were starting to show very cruel attitude for us and harden the rules. Granting permission for visits was also stricken and little by little we were separated from each other. As a result of this unbearable mental harassment by separating us, and on going physical and mental torturing conditions at Woomera, he got depressed. Not only, that depriving the association of the father, my son was also starting to show signs of mental sicknesses.”

“Gradually I understood this separation might be harmful for my family life and my husband’s and son’s mentality as well, so I requested to be back in the Woomera detention center. It was refused by DIMIA and ACM tried to keep us as it is. After compelling so hardly I got the opportunity to resettle at Woomera. We were brought to Oscar compound, where they have arranged to keep the people who have undergone punishment with minimum facilities.”

“In this compound my son was day by day becoming more depressed and sick until he started to harm himself. My husband got very serious mentally illness and was hospitalised to mental hospital in Adelaide city. They brought him back to the detention centre after few days. My husband was very sick, depressed and saddened. My son was completely mentally ill due to treating us in this horrible manner.”

“We had been continuing this life since January of 2003, among many difficulties such as room searching, abusing, ill-treating and many others. After couple of incidents in Woomera on the 02<sup>nd</sup> of January early in the morning about 35 CERT ACM guards raided our room when we were sleeping. In savagely behaviour they assaulted us and handcuffed us. They did not allow us to wear clothes and use even slippers. We were frightening and horrified, our situation was just panic and we were not sure what they are going to do for us. Later we realised that they are going to take us to Baxter detention center. Thus about 35 ACM guards were beating and dragging us, I am and my husband were boldly injured. Moreover, my 12 year old son also was beaten, punching in his head in very barbaric action. He got panic because of he is suffering from headache and mentally illness and my husband too.”

“Since after we came to Baxter detention, situation has become much worst. We have undergone ACM routine checkup every 15-minute. They open our door and peep through it during day and night. All the time when I heard the noise of opening the door I wake up. My son also could not take rest and at night he is having very bad nightmares and suddenly wakes up with screaming. When I was out in the daytime, he had cut his hands very badly. Because of this problem, my husband also has got more mental shock and some times is unconscious and tries to walk without clothes out from the room due to sever depression.”

“I am also human person and could tolerate all these troubles up to some extent. I do not see any further action, to be taken either to cure my husband or treating to my son, to become normality by neither ACM staff nor DIMIA (Department of Immigration) at Baxter. They just consider this a normal incident for them and do not pay attention to overcome this situation. There is no way for me to send my son for school. Because of inadequate activities, he shows inclined tensioned attitudes, is stuck and staying in the room always. I do not know what to do. I feel some time why has it happened, all mysterious things to my family. When we can become to normal situation? Will it happen by keeping us in the locking surrounding and dehumanising us? We would also like to have freedom and to live like others live. It is up you to decide what you should do for all these inhuman treatments and disrespect for the humanity! For The Sake Of God, we are looking forward when we can get rid of this evil hand.” *(From Baxter News)*

**Questions:**

1. Australia is criticized by the human rights organisations for its handling of refugees. Why do you think Australia has chosen these refugee policies?
2. How does your own country treat refugees? Are there any similarities to Australia? Do you think your country's refugee policies should be stricter or less strict? Why?
3. What other problems do refugees face on their way and in the hosting country?
4. Why are refugees more vulnerable for human right violations?
5. Are refugees equal with other citizens?
6. What stereotypes are there of refugees?
7. What makes refugees different from other people?

**3.2 Refugee's rights: political and humanitarian**

Enshrined in Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the right “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”. Victims of human rights abuses must be able to leave their country freely and to seek refuge elsewhere. Asylum seeker has a right to review if the case is first rejected. Countries may also not forcibly return refugees to a territory where they face danger.

Like everyone else, refugees have right to physical safety and basic human rights such as freedom of thought, of movement and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Refugees, especially the elderly, women and children, are often vulnerable to violence. Rape is a common element of persecution and a common reason driving families from their homes. In the wars of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century civilians have increasingly become the targets of warfare. Civilians may be sexually assaulted during their flight and on arrival in their country of asylum by officials, locals or other refugees. Governments should work to protect refugees from further human rights violations. In the hosting country refugees have also right to education, medical care and work. Refugees have an obligation to abide to the laws of the hosting country. (UNHCR, HRW)

The main goal of UNHCR is to make every refugee self-sufficient as soon as possible. Voluntary repatriation is the preferred long-term solution for the majority of refugees. However, because of an ongoing threat of persecution or other reasons, some civilians cannot repatriate and are unable to live permanently in their country of asylum. Racism often prevents some refugees from returning home. In those circumstances, resettlement in a third country may be the only feasible option. (UNHCR)

Governments often treat refugees as a threat or a burden. Governments have ordered border closures strict visa requirements and fines on airlines transporting refugees making it harder for asylum seekers to reach their country. As a result many desperate people turn to smugglers and traffickers, which causes further problems of organised crime. On arrival refugees are often greeted with punitive measures, arbitrary arrests and detention. Social and economic rights are denied and negative portrayals of refugees are represented in the media. Racist violence is increasing around the world. Many countries in the developing world have in the past been welcoming to refugees, but with their own social and economic problems they have become more opposed to hosting large refugee populations. In the worst cases the most important right is violated and the refugees are returned to unsafe countries. Since September 11, many countries have pushed through emergency anti-terrorism legislation that curtails the rights of refugees. (HRW, UNHCR)

### 3.3 Story of Leba Tonnu

*From UNHCR: Prominent Refugees, [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch).*

During the communist take-over of Vietnam in 1975, Dr Leba Tonnu was stripped of her status as a dentist and forced to work as a janitor. Two years later, Tonnu, her husband and their two sons joined thousands of others in fleeing the repressive regime, but were caught and imprisoned. It was only on their second attempt, in 1979, that they escaped successfully.

The family, with fake Chinese papers, escaped in a 10-metre wooden boat carrying about 140 other fleeing Vietnamese. When the engine failed, they drifted in stormy seas for 13 days until they managed to make their way to the shores of Malaysia's Tioman island. But they were forced back out to sea, so in desperation they destroyed the boat. Tonnu remembers seeing nothing but black sea and black sky. Reaching the shore, they arrived at Cherating, a refugee camp run by UNHCR, where they remained for four months, sleeping on plastic sheets on ground that had been a garbage dump.

In September 1979, her family became the first Vietnamese, refugees brought to Canada, through private sponsorship by a Quebec family who assisted them financially for one year, helping them to adapt and begin their lives in a new country.

Not long after they arrived, Tonnu was delighted to find she was pregnant. However, her joy was tempered by the discovery that her husband was sick and required open-heart surgery.

During her first two years in Drummondville, Quebec, Tonnu had to re-study dentistry as her qualifications were not accepted in Canada. She worked as a dentist's assistant by day and prepared herself for the National Board Examination in Dentistry at night, teaching herself French and English along the way. After six years, she obtained her Dental Certificate Degree and set up her practice in Toronto.

In 1990, using her gift as a singer and her husband's talent on the flute and oboe, she formed the Hong Lac Vietnamese Music and Dance Ensemble. "Its main goal is to help young Vietnamese Canadians learn about their culture by exposing them to traditional Vietnamese music and dance," she says. "We want to keep the culture alive for children born here." The Hong Lac Ensemble has performed across the country and has represented Canada internationally, winning the praise of both the Vietnamese and the international arts communities.

### Questions

1. Why are refugees often seen as burdens?
2. Could refugees be more than just a burden and benefit their new home country?
3. Do you know other success stories of refugees who have made a new life for themselves?
4. What kind of help do refugees need in hosting countries?

## **4 Helping the refugees**

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### **Questions for brainstorming session**

1. How to encourage governments to adopt policies that help refugees find safety?
2. How to support non-governmental organizations with their work on refugees?
3. How to educate the public about refugee issues?
4. How to help refugees in your own community?
5. How to influence the attitudes of people in your own community?
6. How to do fundraising for refugees (through NGOs and UNHCR)?
7. How to get support from business corporations?

## 5 Who is a refugee - definitions and statistics

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### 5.1 Definitions

A refugee is a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...”

(The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees)

#### Questions to start with:

1. How would you define a refugee? What makes people refugees? What kind of people become refugees?
2. Who is not a refugee in your opinion?
3. What is the difference between a refugee and a migrant?
4. Who decides and should decide if someone has a right to refuge or asylum?

**Governments are responsible for their people’s safety and for the safety of refugees.** People become refugees, when they are forced to leave their countries, because governments are not able to protect their basic human rights and physical security. A refugee is someone with a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or for his or her political opinion and actions, who is outside of his or her country of nationality and unable or unwilling to return. Countries are not allowed to forcibly return refugees to a territory where they face danger. Countries may also not discriminate between groups of refugees.

**Right to asylum is a human right.** Enshrined in Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the right “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” This principle recognises that victims of human rights abuses must be able to leave their country freely and to seek refuge elsewhere. There have always been refugees throughout history, when people have escaped persecution, but their status was officially recognised only after the World War II. The right to asylum was included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was started in 1950 and a year later the United Nations adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. It is a legally binding treaty and has been ratified by 140 countries (February 2002).

**Who decides?** The government of the receiving country decides whether the asylum seeker is eligible for a refugee status. Governments establish status determination procedures to decide a person’s legal standing and rights in accordance with their own legal systems. Persons who are rejected and seen as not in need of international protection are in a situation of illegal aliens, and may be deported. There are recommendations and guidelines from UN on how these procedures should work. Every asylum case is handled individually. People who apply for refugee status need to establish individually that their fear of persecution is well founded. Exceptions are made in certain cases, if there is no time to go through cases individually because of a mass exodus.

#### **Who is not a refugee?**

The 1951 Geneva Convention does not specifically mention civilians fleeing conflict. Originally it speaks only of people fleeing because of persecution. However, in recent years major refugee movements have resulted from civil wars, ethnic, tribal and religious violence. Some countries argue that civilians fleeing war or who fear persecution by non-governmental groups such as militias and rebels should not be given refugee status. UNHCR’s view is that the origin of the persecution should not be decisive, but rather whether a person deserves international protection because it is not available in the country of origin.

- A refugee is a civilian. Soldiers taking part of military actions can not be refugees.
- Usually escaping military service is not a reason to receive refugee status. In cases where conscientious objection is not possible or where a conflict violates international norms, draft evaders who fear persecution may be eligible for refugee status.
- Persons who have participated in war crimes, violations of humanitarian and human rights law or terrorism are excluded from the possibility of receiving refugee status.
- A criminal who has received a fair trial for a common law offence and who flees his country to escape jail is not necessarily a refugee.
- Economic migrants are not refugees. Economic migrants leave a country voluntarily to seek a better life and it is safe for them to return to their country of origin.

**Internally displaced persons.** A person becomes a refugee only after crossing international borders and is only then eligible for international protection. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) usually flee their homes for the same reasons as refugees, but remain within their own country and are thus subject to the laws of that state. If civilian is fleeing persecution or conflict within her own country, getting help is much more difficult. UNHCR estimates there are 20-25 million IDPs in the world.

**Temporary protection** is at times offered by nations when they face a sudden mass influx of people, which can not be handled by regular systems. This has happened for example during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and later in Kosovo. In such circumstances people can be speedily admitted to safe countries, but without any guarantee of permanent asylum. Temporary protection should not be prolonged and people should be given the right to claim full refugee status.

### Questions

1. Is there something missing from official definitions or should something be changed? Are all possible cases of refugees covered? Are all causes of fleeing covered?
2. Do you think refugee status is sometimes granted on false cases?
3. Do you think people try to use refugee status for economic gain?
4. Are there problems in the procedures of determination in your country?

## 5.2 Where and how many are they?

There are refugees on every continent and almost in all countries. In 2001, the biggest refugee populations came from Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, Sudan, Angola, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, D.R. Congo, Viet Nam and Eritrea. Palestinians are the world's oldest and largest refugee population, and make up more than one fourth of all refugees. However, Palestinians are covered by a special mandate under UNHCR and not always included in the official refugee statistics. Asia hosts 48,3 percent of all refugees, followed by Africa (27,5 percent), Europe (18,3 percent) and North America (5 percent). Most of the refugees live in developing countries.

### UNHCR statistics 2002 ([www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch))

- At the start of the year 2002, the number of people of concern to UNHCR was **19.8 million**. They included 12 million refugees (61%), 940,800 asylum seekers (5%), 462,700 returned refugees (3%), 5.3 million internally displaced persons (25%), 241,000 returned IDPs (1%) and 1 million others of concern (5%).

- The figure of 19.8 million uprooted persons was a fall of two million compared with the previous year and reflected two conflicting trends: while large groups of people continued to be uprooted, even larger numbers, especially IDPs, returned home.

- **The global refugee population of 12 million remained virtually unchanged from the previous year, with half a million people fleeing their countries during 2001 and nearly as many going home.**

- At the end of 2001, **Asia hosted the largest refugee population (48.3%)**, followed by Africa (27.5%), Europe (18.3%) North America (5%), Oceania (0.6%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (0.3%).

- When all persons of concern to UNHCR are included, Asia hosted 44.6%, Africa 21.1%, Europe 24.6%, North America 5.5%, Latin America and the Caribbean 3.8% and Oceania 0.4%.

- During 2001, nearly 500,000 refugees returned to their home country. Almost 100,000 refugees were resettled in 2001, including around 30,000 people assisted by UNHCR, a 25% agency decrease compared to 2000.

- Currently, an estimated 7.7 million people under UNHCR's care are **children** below the age of 18. The percentage of children compared with the overall refugee population ranges from 57 percent in Central Africa to 20 percent in Central and Eastern Europe.

· **Refugees above 60 years of age** constitute more than 15 percent of the refugee population in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, whereas in Africa they generally represent less than 5 percent of the refugee population.

· In most regions, **women and girls** of all ages constitute between 45-55 percent of the refugee population.

· The number of asylum applications submitted in 30, mostly industrialised countries rose from 570,100 in 2000 to 614,100 in 2001. The 7.2% increase was largely because of a higher number of applications in North America and Central Europe. The number of applications in the European Union fell 2 % from 391,460 to 384,530.

· Compared to the size of the national population, the main refugee hosting countries during 2001 were Armenia, with 70 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, followed by Congo (40 per 1,000), Yugoslavia (38 per 1,000), Djibouti (37 per 1,000) and Zambia (27 per 1,000).

### Questions:

1. Based on the facts and figures, what is the significance of the fact that:
2. 45-55% of refugees in all regions are women and children?
3. The main refugee hosting countries in 2001 are “poor countries” - Congo, Yugoslavia, Djibouti, Zambia?
4. Most refugees stay in their own regions, mainly in Asia and Africa?

## Appendix

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### ORIGIN OF MAJOR REFUGEE POPULATIONS IN 2001 [Ten largest groups<sup>1</sup>]

Country of Origin <sup>2</sup>	Main Countries of Asylum	Total
Afghanistan	Pakistan / Iran	3,809,600
Burundi	Tanzania	554,000
Iraq	Iran	530,100
Sudan	Sudan Uganda / Ethiopia / D.R. Congo / Kenya / C.A.R.	489,500
Angola	Zambia / D.R. Congo / Namibia	470,600
Somalia	Kenya / Yemen / Ethiopia / USA / United Kingdom	439,900
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yugoslavia / USA / Sweden / Denmark / Netherlands	426,000
Democratic Rep. Congo	Tanzania / Congo / Zambia / Rwanda / Burundi	392,100
Viet Nam	China / USA	353,200
Eritrea	Sudan	333,100

<sup>1</sup> An estimated 3.9 million Palestinians who are covered by a separate mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are not included in this report. However, Palestinians outside the UNRWA area of operations such as those in Iraq or Libya, are considered to be of concern to UNHCR. At year-end their number was 349,100.

<sup>2</sup> This table includes UNHCR estimates for nationalities in industrialised countries on the basis of recent refugee arrivals and asylum seeker recognition.

## MAJOR REFUGEE ARRIVALS DURING 2001

**Ten largest movements.**

<b>Origin</b>	<b>Main Countries of Asylum</b>	<b>Total</b>
Afghanistan	Pakistan	199,900
FYR Macedonia	Yugoslavia	93,200
Angola	Zambia / D.R. Congo	44,800
Sudan	Kenya / Ethiopia / Uganda / D.R. Congo	35,000
D.R. Congo	Tanzania / Zambia / Rwanda / Burundi	32,700
Central African Rep	D.R. Congo	26,500
Burundi	Tanzania / Zambia	15,700
Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire / Sierra Leone / Guinea	11,700
Rwanda	Uganda / Tanzania	6,500
Senegal	Gambia	2,000

## MAJOR VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION MOVEMENTS

**[in 2001, by destination: Ten largest movements]**

<b>Origin</b>	<b>Main Countries of Asylum</b>	<b>Total</b>
Sierra Leone	Guinea / Liberia	92,300
FYR Macedonia	Yugoslavia / Albania	90,000
Somalia	Ethiopia	51,300
Eritrea	Sudan	32,700
Burundi	Tanzania	27,900
Afghanistan	Iran / Pakistan	26,100
Yugoslavia	Germany / Bosnia-Herzegovina / FYR Macedonia	25,600
Rwanda	D.R. Congo / Tanzania	21,700
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yugoslavia / Croatia / Germany	18,700
East Timor	Indonesia	18,200

## ESTIMATES OF MAJOR POPULATIONS OF IDPs OF CONCERN TO UNHCR<sup>1</sup> [at 1<sup>ST</sup> January 2002]<sup>2</sup>

Country	IDPs
Afghanistan	1,200,000
Colombia	720,000
Sri Lanka	683,300
Azerbaijan	573,000
Russian Federation	443,300
Bosnia-Herzegovina	438,300
Georgia	264,200
Yugoslavia	263,600
Angola	202,000
Liberia	196,100

<sup>1</sup> The figures included here do not necessarily represent the total number of IDPs in the countries concerned.

<sup>2</sup> Groups over 100,000.

Latest statistics available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

## 6 Main sources for this lesson

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UNHCR [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

Human Rights Watch [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

Bhutanese Refugees [www.geocities.com/bhutanese-refugees](http://www.geocities.com/bhutanese-refugees)

South Asia Forum for Human Rights [www.safhr.org](http://www.safhr.org)

Baxter News, newsletter by refugee detainees at Baxter detention centre in Australia