



Forum: Third Committee of the General Assembly (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Issues)

Question of: Protecting minorities from forced relocation

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I. Description of the Issue

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Currently 89.3 million people worldwide are on the move having been forced to leave their homes for various reasons. Almost a third of these people, 27.1 million, are categorized as refugees, around 41 percent of whom are under the age of 18.¹

Minority and indigenous peoples are frequently among the most marginalized communities in many societies. They face exclusion from participating in socio-economic life, have limited access to political power, and often encounter obstacles in expressing their identities. These challenges are further exacerbated during instances of forced displacement.

Refugees belonging to minority or indigenous peoples are highly likely to be affected by both the immediate events that led to their displacement and the long-term consequences of discrimination. This increased discrimination can have a disproportionate impact on certain members of the community, particularly women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+).

While most individuals can rely on their own governments to guarantee and protect their basic human rights and security, there are situations where a state is unwilling or unable to provide such protection. In such cases, people may be compelled to flee and seek safety in another country. Presently, interethnic tensions and conflicts are erupting in almost every region of the world. These conflicts often stem from power struggles and are exacerbated by socio-economic inequalities.

¹ [Figures at a glance | UNHCR UShttps://www.unhcr.org > figures-g...](https://www.unhcr.org/figures-g...)



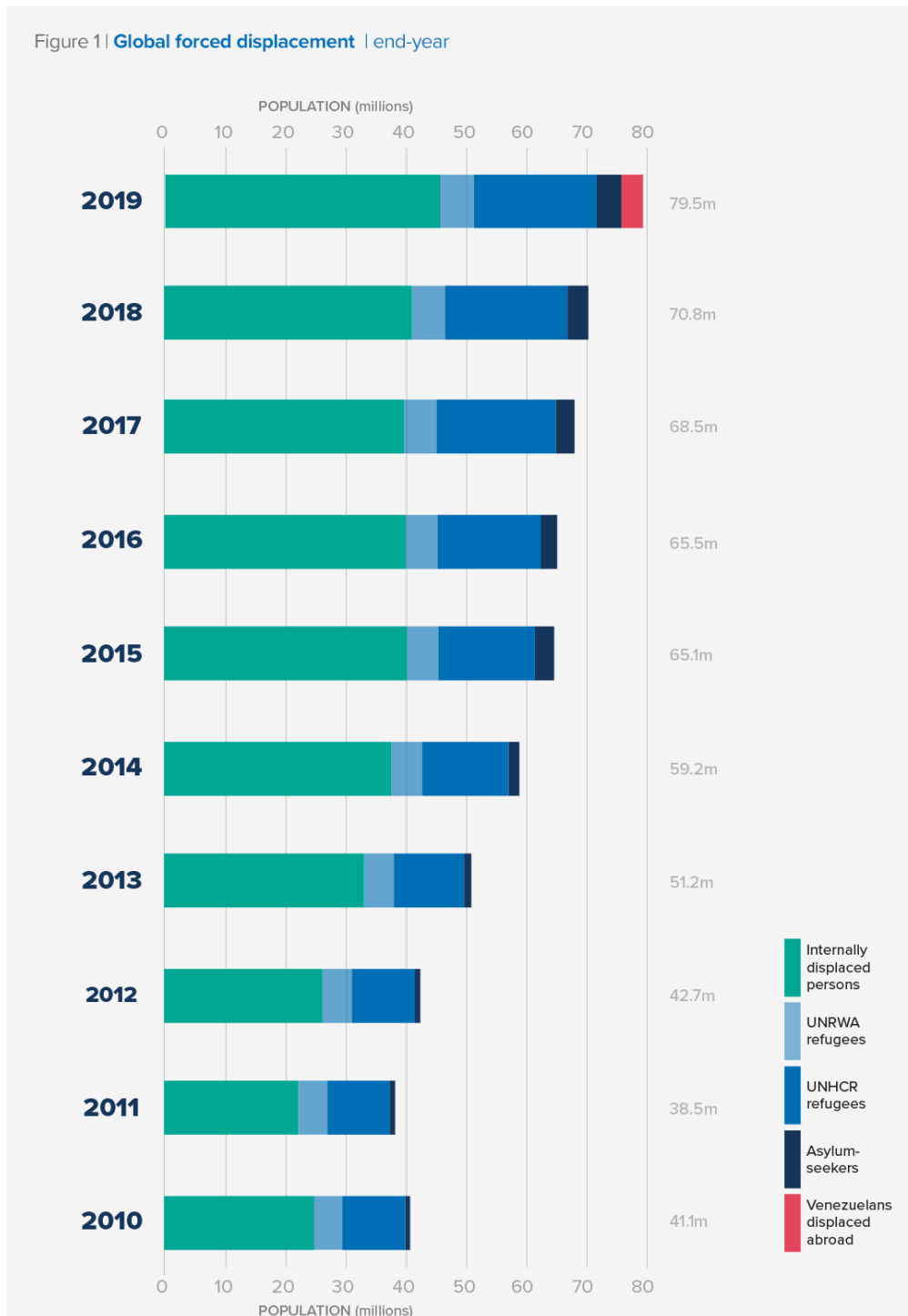
Moreover, minorities frequently bear a disproportionate burden of statelessness issues. More than 75% of the world's known stateless population belong to minority groups. This can be attributed to discriminatory nationality and citizenship laws, differences in citizenship laws among the various states with which a minority group may have ties, and often, misconceptions about their legal status. Furthermore, statelessness overlaps with and exacerbates the barriers already faced by minorities and other disadvantaged groups. It further restricts their access to services and the enjoyment of their human rights. As the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues notes, women belonging to minorities can be further marginalized by gender discrimination in relation to acquiring, changing or retaining citizenship and conferring citizenship of their children.² The Rohingya, the Roma, the Nubians, the Bidoon and the Yao are just a few examples of stateless groups in the world. In the case of the Rohingya, a group of Muslims of South Asian descent that populate western Myanmar and Bangladesh, this came about because Myanmar's government pushed many Rohingya out of Myanmar as they did not want to accept this ethnic group into their nation. As a result, many Rohingya suffer from intense discrimination, hatred, physical attacks as well as murder. With nowhere and no one to support them, the Rohingya are completely dependent on foreign aid.³

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minorities-discrimination-and-statelessness>

³ [stateless-groups-world-today](#)



Figure 1 | **Global forced displacement** | end-year



UNHRC, Global forced displacement 2010-2019 [1.080 × 1.556](#)



II. Definition of Key Terms

- A **minority** refers to a national or ethnic, religious, or linguistic group that is smaller in number compared to the rest of the population and shares a common identity. Generally, minorities do not hold dominant positions in the economic and political spheres within their country.
- **Indigenous peoples** have distinct social, cultural, economic, and political systems that are often closely tied to their traditional lands and natural resources. Moreover, they often possess a unique collective identity and maintain a deep relationship with their cultural heritage, languages, customs, and traditional knowledge.
- A **refugee** is a person who has been forced to leave their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution, conflict, or violence. They are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin and seek protection and asylum in another country.
- **Forced relocation/displacement** refers to the coerced or involuntary movement of individuals or communities from their homes or places of residence to another location against their will. It involves the use of force, threat, or other forms of coercion by authorities or powerful entities to displace people from their established communities.
- **Discrimination** is the unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, ethnicity or nationality. These are biased actions that result in differential treatment and denial of equal opportunity.
- **Marginalization** is the process by which individuals or groups are discriminated against in society, thereby excluding them from full participation and denying them equal access to resources, rights and opportunities.
- **Chronic poverty** is defined as a persistent state of poverty experienced by individuals or communities over a long period of time. It is about a long-term lack of basic needs, limited access to resources and opportunities, and the inability to escape the poverty trap.
- **Sexual violence** is any form of sexual abuse, assault or exploitation of a person without their consent. It includes acts such as rape, sexual harassment, human trafficking and forced prostitution and can have serious physical, psychological and emotional consequences for victims.



- **Statelessness** is the condition of a person who is not recognized as a citizen of any country.
- **Legal status** refers to a person's recognized position or standing within a country's legal framework. It sets out the rights, duties and entitlements that individuals are entitled to by law, including citizenship, residency and other legal protections.
- **Ethnic cleansing** refers to the deliberate and systematic mass expulsion or killing of members belonging to a particular ethnic or religious group within a specific area by individuals or groups from another ethnic or religious group.

III. Background information

Discrimination against minorities and indigenous peoples is prevalent in many societies, leading to their social, economic, political, and cultural marginalization. These marginalized groups are often subjected to various forms of human rights violations, violence, conflicts, ethnic and/or religious persecution, and in extreme cases, even genocide. Dependence on natural resources, which they have sustainably utilized for generations, makes them particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and development initiatives. Consequently, some groups have been compelled to flee their ancestral lands. Thus, minorities and indigenous peoples constitute a significant proportion of those seeking international protection.

Furthermore, due to discrimination and marginalization, these groups typically face limited access to education, healthcare, and documentation, necessitating special attention in situations of displacement. Members of minority and indigenous groups may be at risk of harm from both the surrounding or host population and their own family or community.

In cases where violence targeted them in their countries of origin, minority or indigenous communities may continue to face violence in their countries of asylum. Vulnerability to attack is particularly pronounced among children and women, but community leaders, men and youth who may be perceived as potential combatants are also at risk.



Moreover, chronic poverty puts minorities and indigenous peoples at greater risk of trafficking, including sexual exploitation. This risk increases during displacement, particularly for children, young adults and women belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples.

Sexual violence poses a significant threat to minorities and indigenous peoples, often resulting in weaker community protections compared to more dominant social groups. Displacement can result in the loss of crucial elements of the individual and collective identity of minorities and indigenous peoples, particularly when their identity is closely tied to a particular territory. The effects can be particularly detrimental to individuals who have experienced traumatic events or who are adjusting to an unfamiliar environment.

When interpreters belong to another community in the country of origin or asylum, members of minorities and indigenous peoples may not feel safe or comfortable speaking openly. Additionally, language barriers may arise as minorities and indigenous peoples may primarily speak a minority or indigenous language.

Individuals may choose not to disclose their affiliation with minority or indigenous groups due to fear of discrimination and a preference to remain concealed. Culturally appropriate outreach measures are essential to establish trust and encourage engagement in such cases. Additionally, statelessness disproportionately affects minorities and indigenous peoples. This may result from discriminatory nationality and citizenship legislation, variations in nationality laws across the states to which these groups are connected, and common misconceptions regarding legal status.

Minorities and indigenous peoples often have rights to land and territories that do not align with political borders. In addition, minorities frequently face disproportionate challenges regarding statelessness, often stemming from discriminatory nationality and citizenship laws. In some cases, disparities in nationality laws among the various states with which a minority group has connections can further complicate their legal status.



Arguably the most pressing instance of minority marginalization and forced displacement is exemplified by the Jews, particularly during the 1940s in Germany. The repositioning of the Jewish population unfolded as a gradual and protracted process, spanning multiple years, characterized by the increasing limitation of their rights and gradual exclusion from societal participation. Prior to the onset of hostilities, a significant proportion of the Jewish population had sought refuge abroad, especially in Poland, compelled by the increasingly intolerable living conditions strategically engineered by the regime as a precursor to forced relocation. After the initial of relocation to concentration camps, the regime began with the relocation of the Jewish population into concentration camps/workcamps on a much larger scale by arresting them and forcing them into these camps in which they were either forced to live under horrible living conditions to work them to death or they were killed right away.

Another minority that was relocated were Japanese-Americans during World War II. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, over 120,000 people of Japanese descent, including many U.S. citizens, were placed in so-called internment camps. This relocation was driven by prejudice, fear, and racial discrimination. The internment of the Japanese-American population lasted until 1945 and had severe consequences for those affected, including the loss of property, jobs, and personal freedoms. After the war, most of the interned individuals were released, but the relocation of the Japanese-American community had profound social and psychological effects that persisted for a long time. These events led to unimaginable suffering from trauma that affects the generations to come as the trauma is passed down through generations.



IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- **Afghanistan** holds relevance to the topic at hand due to the current political and social situation, resulting in a significant number of people fleeing the country. Minorities like the Hazara residents were pushed out by the Taliban.
- **Bangladesh:** Since Islam is the state religion, religious minorities such as Hindus or ethnic tribes are subject to violent hate crimes and everyday discrimination. The Hindu American Foundation reports that between 1964 and 2013, 11.3 million Hindus fled Bangladesh due to religious persecution and intolerance.
- **China's** relevance to the issue stems from its treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority. Reports indicate that China has detained Uyghurs in mass camps, raising concerns about potential human rights abuses and religious discrimination.
- Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in **Myanmar** have endured decades of persecution and systematic discrimination. While thousands of Rohingya have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced, more than a million languish in refugee camps in Bangladesh.
- **Pakistan** is relevant to the issue as it serves as a host for a significant number of Afghan refugees, including minorities and indigenous groups, who have fled violence and persecution in Afghanistan. In addition, similar to Bangladesh, religious minorities such as Hindus are subject to discrimination and hate crimes.
- **Sudan** faces ongoing conflict and human rights issues, particularly affecting minorities and indigenous peoples. Displacement, discrimination and human rights violations remain major problems in the country.
- **Syria** has been devastated by a brutal civil war that has led to widespread displacement, human rights abuses and discrimination against various ethnic and religious minority groups.



V. Timeline of Events

Event	Description
Period of 350 to 400 years	During the time of the transatlantic slave trade millions of enslaved Africans were shipped and sold.
1680-1715	The discrimination and relocation of The Huguenotten, a religious minority in France into the neighboring countries.
1830-1840	Indian removal act from the United States to relocate indigenous tribes away from their lands.
1941	The relocation and discrimination of the Japanese population in the United States due to the attack on Pearl Harbor.
12/18/92	The United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities to protect and promote minority rights.
1992-1995	During the Bosnian War, ethnic cleansing campaigns led to the forced displacement of Bosniaks and Croats by Bosnian Serb forces. Thousands were killed, and millions were uprooted from their homes and families.

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Apart from the general human rights principles that prohibit discrimination and affirm equality for all individuals, minorities and indigenous peoples have specific rights within the international human rights framework, as well as regional and national laws. These rights emphasize their entitlement to participation, the enjoyment of their own culture, the freedom to profess and practice their religion, and the use of their own language.



The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities has made great progress. Namely, the declaration recognizes the right of minorities to preserve and promote their culture, practice their religion and use their language. It emphasizes the importance of protecting the cultural identity and freedom of expression of minority communities. However, despite these efforts, challenges and gaps remain in fully implementing and ensuring the effective realization of these rights for minority groups.

VII. Possible Solutions

The United Nations recommends promoting public knowledge and participation, providing education for refugees, upholding self-declaration and protection, ensuring inclusion in decision-making, preventing and responding to violence, offering inclusive programs and services, preserving cultural heritage and identity, ensuring data security and access to services, preventing abuse and exploitation, promoting inclusion and information sharing, and raising awareness and advocacy. These measures aim to overcome barriers, protect rights, and create inclusive societies for minority and indigenous communities.

VIII. How to Prepare as a Delegate

In order to discuss this issue, all delegates should be aware of the urgency of protecting minorities from forced relocation. The delegates need to be informed about their countries' current situation/status, including social, economic, and political aspects. More specifically, all delegations should be aware of the influence they may or may not have on the issue, and need to know about initiatives and laws established. Moreover, it is also important to take an accurate look at the position of other countries, since that will help in the debates. As a delegate, strive to always establish new and better solutions for your country, but above all for the world. If you are looking for specific information on your country, make sure your sources are valid and trustworthy, such as governmental websites and news articles.

Furthermore ask yourself the following questions:



- How could the goal of protecting minorities from forced relocation be achieved? Who are key stakeholders, and how can they be integrated?
- What actions are already being taken to protect minorities from forced relocation?
- What international cooperation exists in addressing the issue of forced relocation of minorities? Which countries are actively involved?
- Who is responsible for enforcing states parties' legal obligations regarding the protection of minorities from forced relocation?
- How can a state be held accountable if it fails to follow the rules and regulations regarding the protection of minorities from forced relocation?
- How can the United Nations support and provide assistance to individuals who are most in need, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTI+ community?
- How can we ensure that the specific needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTI+ community are adequately addressed and cared for in our discussions and actions?
- What directives or agreements can we reach as representatives of our governments and as a committee to strengthen the protection of minorities from forced relocation?

IX. UN Declarations and Resolutions

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (A/RES/47/135).
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295).
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/147 on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



X. Useful Links

Here are some useful links that provide further information and resources related to the protection of minorities and relevant UN policies:

- UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (2018): [Link](#)
- Understanding Community-Based Protection (Protection Policy Paper, 2013): [Link](#)
- UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Members of Religious Minorities from Pakistan: [Link](#)
- Tip sheet on applying the UNHCR age, gender and diversity policy to Minorities & Indigenous Peoples: [Link](#)
- List of all UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability reports: [Link](#)
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) publication on Minority Rights: [Link](#)

These links provide valuable resources to deepen the understanding of minority rights, UN policies, and practical guidelines for promoting inclusivity and diversity.

XI. Sources

OHCHR Guide on Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: [Link](#)

United Nations - Fight Racism: Vulnerable Groups - Minorities: [Link](#)

OHCHR Publication on Human Rights, Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples: [Link](#)

As well as ones from useful links.

XII. Epilogue

To ensure comprehensive coverage of the forum's topics, each delegate is required to write at least **one draft resolution and a minimum of two, preferably three, position papers.**

These documents are crucial for meaningful discussions and effective problem-solving.



Please submit all draft resolutions and position papers by the **deadline of 09/08/23**. Late submissions will not be eligible for correction or consideration in decision-making processes regarding awards.

Speaking of awards, we will be recognizing the **best and most distinguished delegate**, as well as the **best first-timer** in the committee. These awards aim to acknowledge outstanding leadership and diplomatic skills.

I am excited to read your position papers and witness your research and preparation. If you have any questions or if there are any uncertainties feel free to reach out to me. I wish you success with your preparations for the conference and am really excited to get to know you all!

Kind regards,

Malina Willems

(President of the General Assembly)