



UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

## REFUGEES by numbers 2002

### INTRODUCTION

At the start of 2002 the number of people ‘of concern’ to UNHCR was 19.8 million—roughly one out of every 300 persons on Earth—compared with 21.8 million a year earlier.

The overall decrease of two million people reflected two conflicting trends: huge groups fleeing their homes during the year, but even greater numbers of uprooted persons returning from exile.

As conflict continued to grip many parts of the world, nearly 200,000 Afghans joined 3.5 million countrymen already living abroad as refugees, 188,000 Africans fled to neighboring countries as did 93,000 citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). An additional 511,000 civilians became ‘internally displaced persons’ (so-called IDPs) within Afghanistan, 190,500 in Colombia and 112,000 in Liberia.

However, there were also encouraging developments. More than one million Eritrean, 80,000 Bosnian and 42,000 Burundi IDPs went home as did 267,000 African refugees and an estimated 160,000 FYROM citizens. There was a decrease of 700,000 so-called stateless persons, mainly in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the number of refugees returning home but still needing assistance almost halved from nearly 800,000 in 2000 to 462,700 in 2001.

The number of people seeking asylum worldwide dropped slightly during the reporting period, from 1,092,000 in 2000 to 923,000 in 2001 with the majority of claimants coming from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Yugoslavia and China.

The main host countries remained unchanged, with Pakistan sheltering 2.2 million persons, Iran 1.9 million and Germany 988,500.

**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PERSONS OF CONCERN  
WHO FALL UNDER THE MANDATE OF UNHCR [ by region ]**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total of Concern 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001*</b>	<b>Total of Concern 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002</b>
Asia	8,449,900	8,820,700
Africa	6,060,100	4,173,500
Europe	5,592,400	4,855,400
Northern America	1,051,700	1,086,800
Latin America & Caribbean	575,500	765,400
Oceania	84,500	81,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,814,200</b>	<b>19,783,100</b>

\* *Revised year-end figures.*

**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND  
TOTAL PERSONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR WORLDWIDE**

(all figures as at 31 December of each given year)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Refugee estimate</u>	<u>Total population of concern</u>
1980	8,439,000	—
1981	9,696,000	—
1982	10,300,000	—
1983	10,602,000	—
1984	10,710,000	—
1985	11,844,000	—
1986	12,614,000	—
1987	13,103,000	—
1988	14,319,000	—
1989	14,706,000	—
1990	17,370,000	—
1991	16,829,000	—
1992	17,802,000	—
1993	16,242,000	23,033,000
1994	15,637,000	27,419,000
1995	14,855,000	26,103,000
1996	13,312,000	22,729,000
1997	11,966,000	22,376,000
1998	11,430,000	21,460,000
1999	11,626,000	22,257,000
2000	12,062,000	21,814,000
2001	12,051,000	19,783,000

## Who does UNHCR help and how?

UNHCR provides protection and assistance not only to refugees, but also to other categories of displaced or needy persons. These include asylum seekers, refugees who have returned home but still need help in rebuilding their lives, local civilian communities which are directly affected by the movements of refugees and, perhaps most importantly, growing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). These are people who have been forced to flee their homes, but who have not reached a neighboring country and therefore, unlike refugees, are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid. As the nature of war has changed in the last few decades, with more and more internal conflicts replacing inter-state wars, the number of IDPs has increased significantly and they are now the second largest group of concern to UNHCR. The special U.N. Representative for Internally Displaced Persons estimates there are between 20-25 million IDPs worldwide, with major concentrations in Sudan, Angola, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bosnia-Herzegovina and countries of the former Soviet Union. UNHCR helps an estimated 5.3 million of these people.

### PERSONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR [ at 1<sup>ST</sup> January 2002, by category ]

Region	Refugees	Asylum seekers	Returned refugees	IDPs and Others of Concern*	TOTAL 1 <sup>ST</sup> JAN. 2002
Asia	5,770,300	33,100	49,200	2,968,000	8,820,700
Africa	3,305,100	107,200	266,800	494,500	4,173,500
Europe	2,227,900	335,400	146,500	2,145,600	4,855,400
Northern America	645,100	441,700	—	—	1,086,800
Latin America & Caribbean	37,400	7,900	200	720,000	765,400
Oceania	65,400	15,600	—	300	81,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,051,100</b>	<b>940,800</b>	<b>462,700</b>	<b>6,328,400</b>	<b>19,783,100</b>

\* Internally displaced persons, stateless and war-affected populations.

## Refugees: 12 million

UNHCR's founding mandate defines refugees as persons who are outside their country and cannot return owing to a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. Regional instruments such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration in Latin America expanded that mandate to include persons who have fled because of war or civil conflict. A total of 144 countries have signed the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol and recognize persons as refugees based on the definitions contained in this and the regional instruments. Figures used by UNHCR are based on these definitions and include persons in Europe and other areas of the world who have been allowed to stay for humanitarian reasons and those who have been granted 'temporary protection' on a group basis.

### 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	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 U.N. 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 industrialized countries on the basis of recent refugee arrivals and asylum seeker recognition.

**MAJOR REFUGEE ARRIVALS DURING 2001<sup>1</sup>**

Origin	Main countries of asylum	Total
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

<sup>1</sup> *Ten largest movements.*

## Returnees: 462,700

The majority of refugees prefer to and do return home as soon as circumstances permit, generally when a conflict has ended, a degree of stability has been restored and basic infrastructure is being rebuilt. UNHCR encourages voluntary repatriation as the best solution for displaced persons. The agency often provides transportation and a start-up package which could include cash grants and practical assistance such as farm tools and seeds. On occasion, it extends this help to include the rebuilding of homes, schools, clinics and roads. Field staff monitor the well-being of 'returnees' in delicate situations. The duration of such activities varies, but rarely lasts longer than two years when longer-term development assistance from other organizations is more appropriate. In the latest reporting period, the number of people needing help dropped by nearly one-half, from 786,000 in 2000 to 462,700. Statistics on number of returnees reflect the number of persons going home during a 12-month period.

### MAJOR VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION MOVEMENTS [ in 2001, by destination<sup>1</sup> ]

To (Country / Territory of Origin)	From (Main Countries of Asylum)	Total
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

<sup>1</sup> Ten largest movements.

## **Resettlement:**

Some refugees cannot or are unwilling to return home, usually because they would face continued persecution. In such circumstances, UNHCR helps to find them new homes, either in the asylum country where they are living or in third countries where they can be permanently resettled. Though many nations have agreed to accept refugees on a temporary basis during the early phases of a crisis, only 17 nations worldwide now participate in official resettlement programs and accept quotas of refugees on an annual basis.

<b>MAIN COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES [ in 2001 ]</b>
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<b>United States</b>	<b>68,400</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>12,200</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>6,500</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>1,300</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>1,100</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>760</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>740</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>630</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>530</b>

## **Asylum seekers: 940,800**

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in a second state, they apply for 'asylum'—the right to be recognized as bona fide refugees and receive the legal protection and material assistance that status implies. Approximately 923,000 people applied for asylum worldwide in 2001 compared to just over 1,092,000 in 2000, the majority coming from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Yugoslavia, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Russian Federation, Somalia and Iran. The number of asylum seekers whose cases were still pending at the end of the year was 940,800 compared to 900,700 at the beginning of 2001.

In the last five decades, several million people were granted asylum but because of such huge numbers and the increasing ease of travel and communication some states worked to 'harmonize' or toughen their domestic refugee legislation and asylum criteria, sometimes resulting in a decrease in recognition rates.

During the 1990s Balkan crises and subsequent emergencies, when millions of people fled their homes, UNHCR recognized the outflow of such large numbers could overwhelm the asylum process in receiving countries. The agency suggested a simpler and faster process of offering the arrivals 'temporary protection' insisting, however, that asylum remained the cornerstone of its mandate to protect refugees.

**ASYLUM APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED IN SELECTED INDUSTRIALIZED  
COUNTRIES<sup>1</sup>  
[ in 2001 ]**

Country of Asylum	Main Countries of Origin	Asylum applications
United Kingdom	Afghanistan / Iraq / Somalia / Sri Lanka / Yugoslavia	88,300
Germany	Iraq / Turkey / Yugoslavia / Afghanistan / Russian Fed.	88,290
United States <sup>2</sup>	Mexico / China / Colombia / Haiti / Armenia	86,180
France	Turkey / D.R. Congo / China / Mali / Algeria	47,290
Canada	Hungary / Pakistan / Sri Lanka / Zimbabwe / China	44,040
Netherlands	Angola / Afghanistan / Sierra Leone / Iran / Guinea	32,580
Austria	Afghanistan / Iraq / Turkey / India / Yugoslavia	30,140
Belgium	Russian Fed. / Yugoslavia / Algeria / D.R. Congo / Iran	24,550
Sweden	Iraq / Yugoslavia / Bosnia-Herzegovina / Russian Fed. / Iran	23,520
Switzerland	Yugoslavia / Turkey / Bosnia-Herzegovina / Iraq / FYR Macedonia	20,630
Czech Republic	Ukraine / Moldova / Romania / Viet Nam / India	18,090
Norway	Russian Fed. / Croatia / Somalia / Iraq / Ukraine	14,780
Denmark	Afghanistan / Iraq / Bosnia-Herzegovina / Yugoslavia / Somalia	12,400
Australia	Afghanistan / Iraq / China / Indonesia / Fiji	12,370
Ireland	Nigeria / Romania / Moldova / Ukraine / Russian Fed.	10,330

<sup>1</sup> Countries with more than 10,000 asylum applications.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated by UNHCR on the basis of 1.4 asylum applicants per application.

## **IDPs and Others of Concern: 6.3 million**

UNHCR extends protection or assistance to certain groups who were not included in the Office's original mandate, but whom the U.N. Secretary-General or the U.N. General Assembly have requested the agency to assist. They include certain groups of war-affected populations, 'stateless' citizens of the former Soviet Union who have not been able to obtain the nationality of any of the new countries which emerged after the dissolution of the USSR, and an estimated 5.3 million internally displaced persons. These so-called IDPs are the fastest-growing group of uprooted persons in the world. Because they, in effect, 'fall between the cracks' of current humanitarian law and assistance, a widespread international debate has been underway for several years on how best to help all IDPs and who should be responsible for their well-being.

The number of IDPs of concern to UNHCR dropped by more than 800,000 during the year, but this overall figure reflected two opposing trends. Well over one million mainly Eritreans, Bosnians and Burundis returned home, but on the downside 511,000 more Afghans and 190,500 Colombians, among others, were newly uprooted, bringing the total of displaced persons in those two countries alone to nearly two million.

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

*Groups over 100,000.*

NOTE: The figures included here do not necessarily represent the total number of IDPs in the countries concerned.

## Numbers at a glance

- 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 industrialized 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).

**BASIC FACTS**  
[ as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002 ]

- Number of UNHCR offices worldwide including Headquarters: 268 in 114 countries
- UNHCR staff members, including short-term staff: 5,523
- Staff members in the field: 4,654 (84% of total)
- Ratio of staff members to people of concern to UNHCR: 1 per 3,582
- Total UNHCR budget for 2002: US\$ 1,044.5 million
- Total budget for 2001: US\$ 925.4 million
- Number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working as implementing partners in July 2002: 510
- Total number of NGOs as implementing partners in 2001: 573
- States party to the 1951 Convention and/or to the 1967 Protocol: 144