



United Nations Association of New Zealand

**The Refugee Crisis: An Examination of the Involvement of International Organizations  
and the New Zealand Government**

Internship Report

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## Introduction

The global refugee crisis is a topic that everyone appears to have heard of, yet few understand. The crisis is one of the world's most significant humanitarian issues to which there is no easy solution. Too often however, the crisis' ambiguity has become an excuse for state actors to not do anything. Resultingly, it is often international organizations (IOs) that provide aid, resources, and support to refugees during both times of conflict and peace. This essay will address the involvement of specific humanitarian NGOs in the global refugee crisis with an examination of government policies operating within the national scale of New Zealand.

Ultimately, this work aims to increase understanding of the global refugee crisis and the IOs involved. The work will firstly provide a broad overview of the crisis, specifically examining core IOs and their alleviation initiatives. Following this, the work will investigate New Zealand's involvement in attenuating the refugee crisis, including the work of IOs on a national scale and relevant government policies.

## PART ONE: Laying the Foundations

### What is a Refugee?

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is a foundational document within refugee protection, and responsible for the universal definition of a refugee, being:

someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, n.da).

Whilst highly influential within refugee law, this definition itself is highly contested. One of the most prominent critiques is that the 1951 definition excludes certain individuals from being legally recognised as refugees due to not meeting the exact definition. An example of this is the increasingly prominent issue of climate-displaced refugees.

Refugees differ from migrants, who are rather individuals who "choose to move not because of a direct threat or persecution but mainly to improve their lives" (Habitat for Humanity Great Britain, n.d, "what is a migrant").

Whilst often referred to in tandem, there is a critical distinguishment between the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. Asylum-seekers are individuals "whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed" (UNHCR, n.db, para. 1). By contrast, refugees already have a processed claim and are guaranteed protection under their 'refugee title' within international law. Ultimately, all refugees were, at one point, asylum seekers, but not all asylum seekers are refugees (Habitat for Humanity Great Britain, n.d).

It is also important to note that refugees differ from internally displaced persons (IDPs). IDPs do not cross national borders, instead being "displaced in their own country" (IDMC, 2017, p. 6). There is significant debate surrounding the prioritisation of refugees compared to IDPs and how much, if any, responsibility the international community holds to IDPs.

Whilst these concepts have been profoundly beneficial in international humanitarian law (IHL), the definitions can often be intertwined with each other, resulting in circumstances when the classification isn't explicit, and similarly situations in which individuals fit into none of the categories. Ultimately, as the global refugee population grows, the definitions are being put under increasing pressure to accommodate and address the crisis. In order to provide an extensive examination, this essay will focus on the global response specifically to those who are legally recognised as refugees; however, it will also make note to the asylum seekers who do not hold this recognition.

### **Brief Historical Account of Refugees**

The World Wars resulted in "the creation of the highest number of refugees the world has ever seen" (Refugee History, "World Wars," n.d). Resultingly the League of Nations launched 'The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees' (OHCHR). However, due to the office's "limited geographical scope," it was deemed "neither effective nor enduring" (Koser, 2018, p. 733).

The aftermath of WW2 demonstrated the incapability of the OHCHR and resulted in the founding of the intergovernmental United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) in 1943 (Koser, 2018, p. 733). The UNRRA was to assist not only refugees, but all who had

been displaced "under Allied control" specifically within Europe (UNHCR, n.dc, p. 14). However, due to controversies surrounding repatriation, the office was abolished in 1947.

In 1947, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was established as a temporary post-war office seeking to assist European refugees. The IRO took further steps than any previous refugee body in seeking to protect refugees and help their reintegration back into 'everyday life' through providing support in areas such as registration, classification, and "legal and political protection" (UNHCR, n.dc, p. 16). Similarly, during 1950s the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) began operating to provide specific relief to Palestinian refugees (Koser, 2018, p. 734). The growth of the global refugee population and its geographical scope demonstrated the need to found a larger refugee agency, resulting in the establishment of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in 1951, which also led to the elaboration and oversight of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

### **Current Legal Infrastructure for the Global Refugee Crisis**

The consequences of WW2 demonstrated a clear need for a legal protection of refugee populations rooted in international humanitarian law (IHL). This need resulted in the development of two of the most significant pieces of infrastructure within the refugee framework; the 1951 Convention, and the creation of the UNHCR. The 1951 Convention is influential due to its provision of an internationally recognized definition of a refugee, and using this, the creation of a universal framework for refugee protection within IHL. The Convention is also significant because of its conception of the principle of non-refoulement. The principle of non-refoulement underpins all refugee law in preventing states from returning or transferring individuals, both refugees and asylum-seekers, to locations "where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of irreparable harm" (OHCHR, n.da, para. 3). The 1951 Convention itself states:

No Contracting State shall expel or return (*'refouler'*) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (UNHCR, 1951, p. 233).

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) had been established a year prior, yet the 1951 Convention gave the UNHCR a legal legitimacy that remains present to date, as demonstrated by its continued underpinning within all international refugee protection. Whilst the UNHCR and the 1951 Convention have both proven influential in mitigating the refugee crisis, the legislature is not perfect. The refugee infrastructure is often limited to the extent that states are willing to participate. Ultimately, the refugee crisis has been a long and complicated process that continues to evolve with the emergence of new circumstances and challenges.

## PART TWO: Brief Summary of the Global State of Refugee Crisis

### Current Conflicts

The Cold War marked the start of a steady incline in the global refugee population. In 2020, the refugee population was 20.7 million, a number which, with increasing conflict, is continuing to ascend (UNHCR, 2022a). Refugee populations are created by a range of factors that often differ from country to country, the most common being: conflict, persecution, discrimination, racism, and different forms of oppression (New Zealand Red Cross, n.da).

Whilst the global refugee population is largely diverse, there is a geographical trend showing that 68% of the global refugee population originates from "just five countries:" Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar (Panico, 2022, p. 9, 2022).

Syria is the most significant contributor, accounting for over "25% of the total global refugee population" (Concern USA, 2022, "Syria"). Venezuela is the second largest contributor to the refugee population, accounting for 5.4 million Venezuelan refugees currently due to socio-political instability (World Vision, 2022, "Venezuela"). Afghanistan has a population of 2.6 million refugees, with one of "the largest long-term refugee situations in the world" (World Vision, 2022, "Afghanistan").

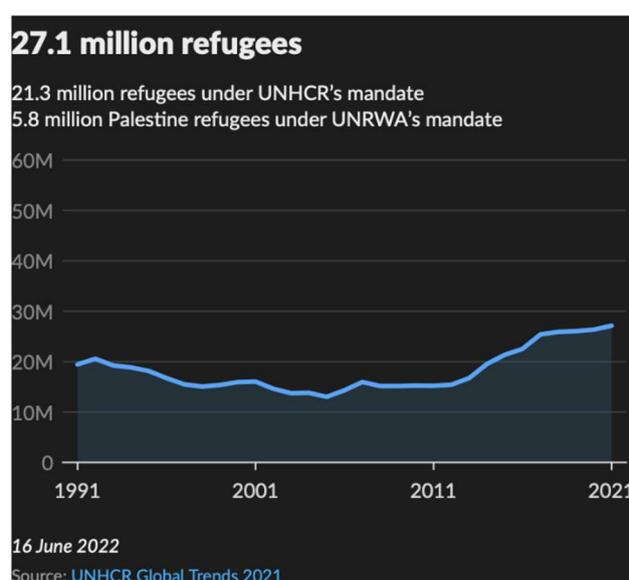


Figure 1. 89.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced. (Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2022a).

Whilst each refugee population is subject to different circumstances and challenges, there are some factors that remain consistent within all of these populations. All feel an uncertainty for the future, and all feel the innately human desire to belong 'somewhere'.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has likewise expanded the global refugee population, as over 7.5 million *registered* refugees leave Ukraine in search of asylum in Europe and further overseas (CSIS, 2022). Whilst there is a geographical trend surrounding refugees' country of origin, the unexpected nature of conflict, natural disasters and other reasons for displacement demonstrate the importance of remembering that the creation of refugee populations is not bound to geography.

### **Current Issues**

There are several sub-issues within the global refugee crisis. Refugee Camps are a significant issue, holding 6 million refugees, they are designed to be a temporary housing solution, yet the average time a refugee spends in a camp is currently over 20 years (UNHCR for USA, n.d; Starvaggi, n.d, para. 2). In addition, there is a global issues surrounding a lack of material resources, legal and 'paperwork' issues, and significant barriers involved in receiving asylum. Behind these policy issues, however, is the overarching problem that we are attempting to 'solve' the refugee crisis through the provision of short-term solutions rather than the robust long-term solutions the crisis requires.

## **PART THREE: An Analysis of the Work of International Organizations within the Global Refugee Crisis**

The IOs working to alleviate the refugee crisis range in specificity and scale, operating at both global and regional levels. NGOs are a critical type of IO that are often understated yet have been a driving force behind much of the progress regarding refugee rights and humanitarian protection.

The role of NGOs has been widely recognised for their provision of material resources, yet undoubtedly overlooked in their influence within the realm of governance and policy-making. Whilst NGOs do undoubtedly provide "emergency assistance in the form of clean

water...shelter, (and) blankets," they are also often involved in legal processes that help refugees to secure asylum (UNHCR, n.d., para. 1). Ultimately, NGOs form the global humanitarian network which remains essential to the implementation of practical action.

NGOs also play preventative roles in diminishing the crisis, such as advocacy, both in the public and governmental domains. Advocacy is vital to ensuring governments remain accountable to their policies and "to improve the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations" (Roots, 2018, para. 1). Clearly, the idea that NGOs lack influence is entirely amiss. Instead, the realm of NGOs is full of diversity, with significant variation in the provisions they supply. Despite this variation, however, the deep-reaching influence of NGOs remains constant, and without NGOs, the "UNHCR would be totally impotent" (Berthiaume, 1994, intro).

Part of what makes the role of NGOs so vital to the alleviation of the refugee crisis is the appointed importance of NGOs according to the 1950 UNHCR statute. Whilst the UNHCR has emerged as "the guardian of the 1951 Convention" in ensuring that all refugee IHL is upheld, its statute itself similarly emphasises the importance of NGOs being involved in such processes (UNHCR, 2021a, background notes). Article 8 of the UNHCR statute shows this, stating that "the UNHCR must seek solutions to the refugees' problems in collaboration with, among others, non-governmental organisations" (Berthiaume, 1994, para. 20). This collaboration is part of the Convention's structural solution to the refugee crisis, which is informed by the involvement and contributions of the ever-growing humanitarian network. This explicit inclusion of NGOs in the UNHCR statute demonstrates how NGOs' role in mitigating the global refugee crisis cannot be overstated.

This section will examine a select few of the most significant IO actors involved in mitigating the global refugee crisis, three of these actors being NGOs. Whilst there is an uncountable number of actors responding to the crisis, this report will assess those which appear most relevant to the discussion of the global scale of the refugee crisis. The IOs chosen are: the UNHCR, Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

## **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

The UNHCR is a branch of the wider United Nations (UN) body and undoubtedly the most prominent government agency involved in the underpinning of all international refugee law. The UNHCR claims to have helped "well over 50 million refugees to successfully restart their lives" (UNHCR, n.de, para. 9). Furthermore, helping "more than 400,000 refugees and asylum seekers" process and renew documentation in 2021 (UNHCR, 2021a, sec. 3). The UNHCR achieves its success through involvement and collaboration with humanitarian NGOs and has formed a network of over 900 partners (UNHCR, n.de). However, the categorization of the UNHCR is hazy, and whilst it is formally identified as a "multilateral, intergovernmental institution," it similarly possesses 'organization-like' qualities (DESA, 2020, para. 2). Despite the UNHCR's significant contribution in alleviating the refugee crisis, its work remains highly politicised.

In its mission statement, the UNHCR states that its "primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees" (UNHCR, 2007, para. 2). To ensure the practical implementation of this mission statement, in 2007, the UNHCR created a "10-Point Plan in Action." Under the 10-Point Plan, the UNHCR promotes "three durable solutions" to the refugee crisis: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement (UNHCR, n.df, p. 186). Voluntary repatriation involves the ability for refugees to migrate back to their home state to "rebuild their lives in a stable environment" (UNHCR, n.dg, para. 2). In instances where repatriation is not possible due to factors such as ongoing conflict, the UNHCR suggests local integration as an appropriate solution. Local integration involves merging asylum seekers into local communities as a way of starting a new life (UNHCR, n.dh). Resettlement is "the organized movement of refugees from refugee camps, urban areas or other temporary situations to a third country where they can live permanently" (Roads to Refugee, n.d, para. 12). Resettlement occurs in instances when neither the refugee's country of origin nor the country the refugee sought protection in are appropriate locations for permanent residence (UNHCR, n.di).

One of the issues with the three durable solutions plan is its reliance on a "close cooperation" between humanitarian-aid NGOs, "countries of origin (and) host states," an ordeal that, in politically unstable countries, appears optimistic to say the least (UNHCR, n.df, p. 186). The ideology behind the three durable solutions has the potential to be effective yet is limited in

what it seeks to achieve. Furthermore, the three solutions don't address the underlying conflict-orientated cause of refugee populations.

The UNHCR has sought to bring attention to the refugee crisis on international levels. This is demonstrated through the international agreement of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which in 2018 introduced a responsibility-sharing framework surrounding the crisis (UNHCR, n.dk). The GRC seeks to enhance the legitimacy of international refugee rights through its provision of "a limited intergovernmental measure (...) to encourage greater attention, resources, and responsibility-sharing" in an attempt to enhance current refugee rights (Cahn-Gambino, 2021, para. 12). The GCR also seeks to align shared goals between the GCR and the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is undoubtedly clear that such a global issue requires a global response, and the UNHCR's role in ensuring the refugee crisis remains an issue on the global negotiating table is imperative to making this happen.

### **Amnesty International**

Amnesty International is one of the world's most influential transnational NGOs for advocacy surrounding humanitarian issues and human rights breaches. Amnesty defines itself as "a global movement that mobilizes the humanity in everyone so that we can all live with care and respect for each other" (n.da, para. 3). The IOs mitigation approach largely involves building awareness of the refugee crisis and then using that awareness to drive change. This approach to advocacy and campaigning has protected many individual refugee cases and has similarly shaped national policies. An example of this advocacy is the Australian governments reduction of the cost of Australia's Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Program (CRISP), therefore making the program more accessible for community establishment. As well as raising awareness for refugee individuals, Amnesty has specific changes that it calls upon governments to make. The four most significant changes are: opportunities for community sponsorship of refugees to live within their country, family reunification, scholarships, and study and medical visas for refugees (Amnesty, n.db).

Another way in which Amnesty is responding to the refugee crisis is through its 'I Welcome' campaign (Amnesty, n.dc, para. 3). The 'I Welcome' campaign is a global movement in which individuals welcome refugees and displaced peoples through donating items, volunteering and

offering “a safe place” such as spare rooms or houses (Amnesty, n.dc, para. 3). Furthermore, Amnesty has been extremely influential in protecting refugee rights within New Zealand, as part four examines.

### **International Committee of the Red Cross**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the “world’s largest humanitarian network,” with its involvement in the global refugee crisis being one of the many humanitarian issues it mitigates (n.da, para. 1). The principle of humanity remains central to the ICRC’s approach to addressing refugee-related issues, stating that “its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being” (American Red Cross, n.da). This approach is increasingly necessary due to the forgotten, or perhaps disregarded, aspect of humanity within the global conversation surrounding the refugee crisis.

The ICRC is arguably most well-known for its provision of services and material resources to refugees, as seen in its response to the Syrian conflict. Within 2021, the ICRC delivered food parcels to over 3 million refugees, also providing support in key areas such as education and the restoration of livelihoods (ICRC, 2021a, p. 3). Likewise, the ICRC has worked to reunite family members who had been split up during the conflict through “24,000 oral greetings,” whilst similarly opening “more than 1,500 cases” for unaccounted Syrian family members (ICRC, 2021a, p. 4). The ICRC has also been involved in the judicial side of the crisis by “promoting awareness” about international humanitarian law to Syrian people and journalists to ensure that refugees know their rights and that these rights are being met (ICRC 2021a, p. 4).

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have similarly been influential in the current Ukrainian refugee crisis through the provision of supplies, health resources, shelter, and protection services to refugees (IFRC, n.d). The IFRC’s efforts have been vast, with a contribution of 53 million dollars’ worth of relief efforts to the crisis, which has enabled an estimated 5 million people receive relief assistance (American Red Cross, n.db, “Global Red Cross Response”).

## **International Rescue Committee**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a prominent NGO which helps individuals “upended by conflict and crisis to survive, recover, and regain control of their lives” (IRC, n.da, para. 1). Additionally however, the IRC holds a specific commitment to gender-based issues, seeking to “fight for a world where women and girls have an equal chance to succeed” (IRC, n.db, para. 3). The IRC has specific goals surrounding safety, health, education, economic well-being, and power to ensure such commitments are met (IRC, n.da).

Girl Shine is one of the IRC’s practical programs which seeks to “contribute to the improved prevention of, and response to, violence against adolescent girls,” particularly refugee populations and those in communities affected by crisis (IRC, 2018, p. 18). “The Girl Shine program is an evidence-based curriculum in Bangladesh designed to give young Rohingya girls the skills, knowledge, social networks, and self-confidence to help protect themselves from GBV (gender-based violence)” (UNHCR, 2021b, p. 1). The program has helped Rohingya girls fight GBV through the provision of practical knowledge and emotional skills to its 900 participants of “girls and their caregivers” (UNHCR, 2021b, p. 1).

The IRC has partnered with the UNHCR to use the Girl Shine program to gather data to prevent sexual violence, forced marriage, and other GBV (UNHCR, 2022b). This data collection seeks to combat the reoccurring problem contributing to many other refugee-related issues in which the data needed to inform policy is lacking, resulting in a lack of policy change (IRC, 2017, November 27).

Perhaps one of the most unexpected partnerships in the mitigation of the refugee crisis is the IRC's partnership with the children's program Sesame Street. 'Ahlan Simsim' (welcome sesame) is an Arabic show that seeks to help refugee children and caregivers by providing emotional coping strategies such as deep breathing and lessons on how to respond to fear and sadness (USAID, 2022). Whilst such a partnership might seem strange at first glance, a vast majority of refugees are children, an estimated 36.5 million, which equates to 41% of the global forcibly displaced population (UNHCR, n.dm). The IRC demonstrates how the wide variety of NGO approaches to alleviation creates a holistic approach to mitigation that the UNHCR could not achieve on its own.

## **International Organizations' Funding**

Before closing part three, it is essential to briefly analyse the funding of the IOs mentioned, as the funders and their motivations affect, and sometimes limit, the actions and programs each IO undertakes.

Due to the UNHCR's political ties with both the UN and national governments, it is no surprise that their funders form a web of politically motivated sources. In 2022, the UNHCR has a global budget of \$10.534 billion USD (UNHCR, 2022c). "Governments and the European Union" are some of the most significant donors to the UNHCR, equating to 89% of the UNHCR's 2019 income (UNHCR, 2021c, p.33). Similarly, within the UNHCR's 2019 budget, there was an 8% income from private donors, a 2% increase from UN funding, and 1% from the UN budget (2021c). Notably, the United States is the largest government funder, followed by the European Union (UNHCR, n.d).

By stark contrast however, Amnesty International refuses to accept funding from any government and political party, which allows them to "maintain full independence from any and all governments, political ideologies, economic interests or religions" (Amnesty International, n.de). Amnesty's 2020 donations total of €334 million further demonstrate the extensive power of NGOs and civil society (Amnesty International, 2020).

The ICRC accepts both private and government contributions, with governments contributing roughly "82% of the budget" (ICRC, n.d, para. 1). Interestingly, the ICRC provides a statement on the desire to diversify funding to ensure "a strong financial foundation and (to) preserve its operational independence" (ICRC, n.d, para. 4). The ICRC's funding is not neutral, partnering with institutions and governments such as the FCDO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (IRC, n.d). The IRC similarly accepts private donations and investments, which contributed to its 2020 annual income of £366,000 (IRC, 2020, p. 40).

## **PART FOUR: MITIGATION OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN NEW ZEALAND**

### **New Zealand Refugee History**

As with most of the world, New Zealand has long been involved in refugee-related issues, with "more than 20,000 refugees" having arrived in the country since 1944 (Beaglehole, 2005). In the 19th century, Jewish populations sought entry into New Zealand to escape Nazism (Beaglehole, 2005). The government implemented national policies such as the 1931 Immigration Restriction Act, which allowed the entry of about 1,100 Jews into New Zealand (Beaglehole, 2005). For comparison, during this time, Australia had admitted an annual quota of 15,000 European refugees per year, 4,000 being Jewish, and Canada had admitted "fewer than 5000" Jewish refugees (Neumann, 2015, para. 13). There was a vast global uncertainty surrounding the potential impacts of refugee influence. As one scholar states, "given the extent of dislike of foreigners and of cultural difference at this time, it is (...) remarkable that New Zealand accepted any Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors at all" (Beaglehole, n.d, para, 1). It is vital to note that the 1951 Convention was created in response to the post-WW2 refugee crisis. Resultingly, there was no refugee-resettlement framework in place during this time, and each nation simply responded to the issue as it saw fit.

The 1944 Warsaw uprising led New Zealand to accept 800 Polish refugees, 734 of these being orphan children, on the basis of a political emergency (Beaglehole, 2005). The resettlement was intended to be temporary; however, Poland's post-war annexing resulted in the refugees' permanent settlement within New Zealand (New Zealand Red Cross, 2021, para. 2). Between 1949 and 1952, the New Zealand government accepted 4,582 European displaced people, as well as undocumented asylum seekers that arrived from NGO ships (New Zealand Parliament, 2008).

In 1987, due to the influx of refugees, the government established a community-sponsorship of 800 refugees annually (Beaglehole, 2005). In 1997 however, the quota was reduced from 800 to 750 refugees annually as a way of "controlling the flow of refugees" (Beaglehole, 2005). It wasn't until 2016 when the quota was increased to 1,000 as a response to three years' worth of pressure and lobbying from the "Double the Quota" campaign (Double the Quota, n.d). Continued lobbying enabled the quota to rise again in July of 2020 to its current standing of 1,500 refugees annually (Parliamentary Service, 2020). Overtime the quota has evolved to

include specific brackets to help vulnerable refugees such as ‘women at risk,’ ‘handicapped’, and ‘medical’ refugees (Beaglehole, 2005, para 2). However, it should not be forgotten that these policies do not apply to individuals of non-refugee status, such as asylum seekers.

### The New Zealand Government’s Response to the Refugee Crisis

New Zealand has remained signatory to both the 1951 Convention, its 1967 protocol, and its quota of 1,500 refugees per year (UNHCR, 2011). However, with constant pressure from civil society, especially in the last decade, the government has become increasingly active in refugee-related issues, particularly through the implementation of internal refugee programs and relations with its Australian counterpart.

Under the quota, New Zealand predominantly receives refugees from Syria, Myanmar, and Afghanistan (based on the past six years, as pictured). However, New Zealand’s approved refugee applications are largely dependent on international need, the UNHCR, and the conflicts

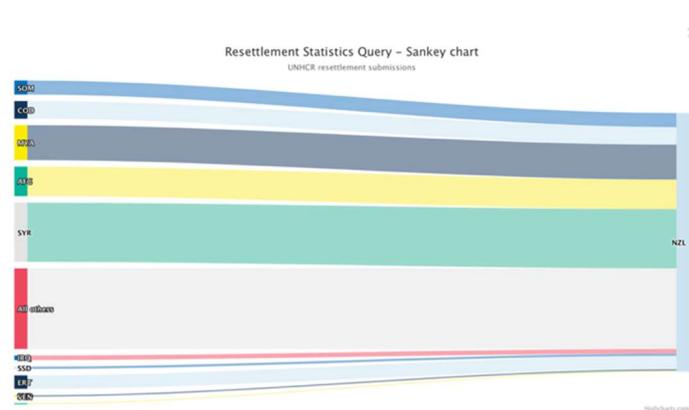


Figure 2. Resettlement Statistics Query – Sankey chart.  
(Source: Highcharts, as cited from UNHCR, 2022)

of a given year. An example of this is New Zealand’s 100% acceptance rate of Afghanistan asylum applications in 2022 following the 2021 Taliban takeover (WorldData, n.d). Whilst contested, there is a clear prioritization of refugees based on nationality and circumstance, which influences which individuals are accepted under the quota.

Furthermore, the international perception of specific refugees, nationalities and countries, further affects refugee programmes and selection. This is demonstrated in the way New Zealand has sought to collaborate with the Australian government in refugee resettlement. Since 2013, Australia has been sending asylum seekers offshore to detainment centres on Nauru and Papa New Guinea, where an estimated 112 individuals remain as of June 2022 (Refugee Council, 2022, para. 1). In 2013 the New Zealand government offered to resettle 150 of these refugees annually (UNHCR, 2020, p. 3). Despite the Australian government’s rejection of the proposal, the New Zealand government left the offer open. Urges from the

UNHCR to accept the offer and international criticism resulted in Australia's acceptance of the proposal in 2022. Whilst in infancy, under this deal, New Zealand will accept 450 refugees from Nauru within a three-year period (UNHCR, 2022a). It is important to note that these refugee 'places' will come out of the 1,500 Refugee Quota, which raises queries regarding refugee prioritization. Furthermore, the UNHCR has concerns about how this prioritization impacts the "geographical balance of the quota" (UNHCR, 2013, p. 2). This inter-governmental arrangement demonstrates the importance of responsibility sharing, however it also demonstrates the obstacle created by nations who do not believe in such a concept. Furthermore, it raises queries regarding what New Zealand seeks to receive from the arrangement.

The 2013 New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy (NZRRS) is a cross-government approach striving to improve refugee resettlement, "social integration and independence" (New Zealand Immigration, n.da, para. 2). The approach seeks to implement five goals to indicate the program's success: self-sufficiency, housing, education, health and wellbeing, and participation (New Zealand Immigration, n.da). These goals have not only enabled a holistic improvement of refugee resettlement but have similarly provided a clear indicator of the program's success (NZRRS, 2018).

The government has similarly introduced refugee resettlement programs such as the community organization refugee sponsorship (CORS) pilot program. The program seeks to provide an alternative resettlement pathway to the refugee quota through the involvement of "welcoming and connected communities in New Zealand" (New Zealand Immigration, n.db, para. 1). Whilst the program is in its early years, the private-funded model has proven successful as the government has extended the pilot program for the following three financial years, where 50 sponsored refugees will be accepted annually (Host International, n.d).

The UNHCR has given the government positive feedback regarding its policy that individuals born in New Zealand are automatically given New Zealand citizenship under the global principle of *jus soli* (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d). As well as this, refugees who have met the criteria and have remained in the country for five years are entitled to apply for permanent New Zealand citizenship, where they are no longer legally recognized as temporary residents but rather permanent citizens (UNHCR, 2011).

## The Work of International Organizations within New Zealand

Whilst IOs are influential within the international realm, many of the same IOs have also been influential in mitigating refugee-related issues specifically within New Zealand. As this report seeks to examine a global and local analysis of the mitigation of the refugee crisis, it will now assess the national influence of the relevant IOs from part three.

### UNHCR

The UNHCR's role within New Zealand primarily consists of its involvement in the Refugee Quota Program. The UNHCR's involvement in national refugee quotas vary from country to country, however within New Zealand the UNHCR is responsible for the referral of *all* legally recognized refugee submissions made to the Refugee Quota (New Zealand Immigration, n.d). The UNHCR's decision surrounding which refugees are chosen for resettlement depends on factors such as urgency, family links, and individual need, as demonstrated by "The Resettlement Continuum" (UNHCR, 2022d, p.2) The UNHCR has also played a supporting role in the creation of the CORS program, whilst providing advice to the government regarding infrastructure for refugee support.

The Resettlement Continuum

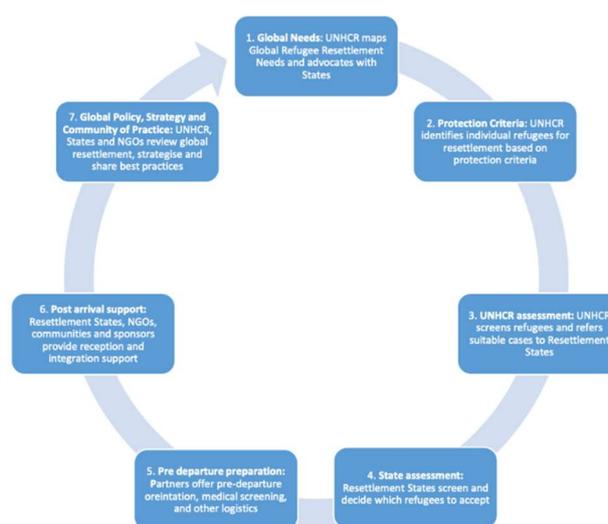


Figure 3. The Resettlement Continuum (Source: UNHCR, 2022d, p. 2).

### Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand

Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand operates as part of a global network and resultingly, much of Amnesty Aotearoa's response to refugee and asylum-seeking issues are through the involvement of global campaigns. In 2017, Amnesty Aotearoa joined the 2013 "Double the Refugee Quota" campaign, which contributed to the government's decision to increase the quota from 1,000 to 1,500 in July of 2020 (The New Zealand Government, 2018).

One of Amnesty Aotearoa's most ground-breaking efforts came from their 2021 report, 'Please Take Me to a Safe Place,' which detailed that asylum seekers were being held in New Zealand jails whilst refugee claims were processed, as well as other human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2021). The report stated that the treatment was a clear breach of human rights and a breach of the principle of non-refoulement. The report further called for the government to carefully examine the claims and to provide an increased standard of living, healthcare, and support for asylum seekers (Amnesty International, 2021, May 18). In May 2022, the claims made by the report were recognized by the New Zealand government and a review was ordered into the asylum process under Immigration New Zealand (Amnesty International, n.d.f). Ultimately, Amnesty Aotearoa's review ensured that New Zealand was held to the standards set by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Convention. The examination of asylum processes again illustrates the necessity of NGOs to not only respond to the refugee crisis through aid and support but also to put pressure on governments and institutional bodies to promote structural change.

Amnesty Aotearoa's 'Build Hope Campaign' also brought awareness to the Australian Nauru and Papua New Guinea detention centres, calling for Australia to accept New Zealand's offer. These are only some of the ways in which Amnesty Aotearoa has been involved in refugee and asylum seeking issues within New Zealand. The change brought about by Amnesty Aotearoa truly proves the power of civil engagement.

### **New Zealand Red Cross**

The New Zealand Red Cross is the biggest refugee support provider in New Zealand and strongly emphasises the reintegration of refugees, a factor that is often overlooked (2021, p. 38). This emphasis is shown by the New Zealand Red Cross' main refugee services; 'Pathways to Settlement,' 'Pathways to Employment' and 'Refugee Trauma Recovery' (2021, May, p. 38). The 'Refugee Trauma Recovery' service is particularly noteworthy for its specialisation in providing mental and physical support services for refugees exposed to situations of torture and trauma (New Zealand Red Cross, n.d.c). Ultimately, the New Zealand Red Cross is largely beneficial in its provision of refugee services that seek to integrate refugee individuals into New Zealand society.

## Points of Admiration and Improvements

Generally, New Zealand has a robust system of caring for refugees and ensuring successful integration into society, as demonstrated by CORS and the IO rehabilitation programs. The UNHCR similarly commends New Zealand for its "positive refugee protection environment," birth registration and the fulfilment of its obligations under the 1951 Convention (UNHCR, 2013, p. 2).

The biggest critique of New Zealand's approach to mitigating the refugee crisis does not lie in the care or reintegration of refugees but rather in the number of refugee intake. According to the UNHCR, New Zealand has a demographic of 0.31 refugees per 1,000 people (UNHCR, 2017, p. 210). Comparatively, that places New Zealand 95th globally for its national refugee intake (Marlowe, 2021, p. 5). Whilst New Zealand's response to refugee services is not minimal, the UNHCR recommends increasing the Refugee Quota to account for the refugees from Australia, stating that in doing so, New Zealand should focus on refugee urgency and vulnerability rather than "place of origin or connection with New Zealand" (UNHCR, 2013, p. 3). Whilst the UNHCR encourages the New Zealand government to increase the quota for more refugees to be accepted into the country, the processes of integration and resettlement must be robust enough to handle this. For instance, the current length of refugee support within New Zealand ends after 12 months, yet the implementation of a long-term approach to resettlement would be beneficial in ensuring refugees are properly integrated into New Zealand society (New Zealand Red Cross, 2021, p. 39).

Another critique of New Zealand's alleviation of the refugee crisis is not addressed to the government or IOs, but the wider New Zealand public. The culture of not wanting, or perhaps not caring, to 'responsibility-share' nationally starts from a culture of not wanting to 'responsibility-share' individually. One report asked New Zealand individuals what their opinions were on the statement: "New Zealand should accept refugees," resulting in 56% replying with 'yes,' 21% with 'no' and 20% 'not sure' (RASNZ, Kantar, 2020, p.22). Furthermore, when asked if the participants had ever spoken to "someone in New Zealand who is a former refugee," only 38% replied with 'yes' (RASNZ, Kantar, 2020, p. 17). The most significant barrier to the New Zealand public's support and involvement in mitigating the refugee crisis is simply a lack of awareness. People fear what they do not understand, and because of this, understanding the refugee crisis is especially important. The amplification of

refugee voices, involvement in practical programs such as CORS, and increased public discussion through literature such as this report all seek to raise awareness and, by doing so, take the first step needed to solve the refugee crisis.

### **Contribution to Literature**

This essay has sought to provide an informative, but brief, report on the state of the global refugee crisis, the role of IOs and New Zealand's positionality in mitigating the crisis. However, it is important to note that this work has only scraped the surface of the layers upon layers of history, conflicts, political agendas and biases that form and shape the current global refugee crisis. Within this complexity, the role of IOs has been constant, and their part in diminishing the global refugee crisis cannot be overstated. Ultimately, it is IOs that support the UNHCR and uphold the 1951 Convention. Because of this importance, IOs (and NGOs) must remain attentive to what is being advocated for. Ensuring that the rights of current refugees are acknowledged and respected is only one part of the solution.

Before closing, there are two topics that, whilst deserving of entire reports themselves, must be addressed. Firstly, upon analysing the IOs included in this report, it became apparent that IOs largely hold one of two different underlying approaches in mitigating the refugee crisis. Firstly, and most predominantly, IOs respond with the intention of alleviating the *current* refugee crisis. Whilst necessary, the aid and help provided to refugees should not be mistaken as a solution to the crisis itself but rather a band-aid upon a much deeper cut. The second response involves the intention of preventing the occurrence of *future* refugees through advocacy, policy change, and, most importantly, the promotion of peace. Whilst it is necessary to address the root issues of the refugee crisis, we cannot advocate for the lives of 'future refugees' if we do not recognise the humanity of current refugees. Resultingly, both approaches are vital to providing an adequate response in diminishing, and ending, the global refugee crisis.

### **The Importance of the Convention**

Within such a complex topic of global discussion, it seems appropriate to return the conversation back to its origins in the 1951 Convention. Whilst imperfect, accession to the 1951 Convention demonstrates a national commitment to the attenuation of the refugee crisis, and the assurance "that refugees are treated in accordance with internationally recognised legal

standards” (UNHCR, et al., 2011, p. 6). The 1951 Convention provides an international protection specifically for refugee individuals in ways that no other instrument has been able to do. Whilst the Article 33(1)’s principle of non-refoulement has been a specific example of this protection, the Convention similarly protects other kinds of refugee rights.

Article 3 of the Convention ensures that the refugee rights the Convention upholds are equated to all refugees with equal treatment, stating that “the Contracting States shall apply the provisions of this Convention to refugees without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin” (UN, 1954, p. 3). Article 3 is vital to establishing a baseline of equality as to how refugees are treated and assisted by states, IOs and generally within the international community. The article similarly prevents states from selectively providing assistance to refugees that provide a strategic advantage or benefit self-interest.

Article 4 of the Convention protects the religious rights of refugees, stating that refugees shall be given the “freedom to practise their religion and freedom as regards the religious education of their children” (UN, 1954, p. 3). This article is incredibly important in demonstrating that refugee’ rights must be protected not only during a certain period of their lives, such as during the process of asylum-seeking, but even after resettlement. Similarly, Article 27 requires contracting states to “issue identity papers to any refugee in their territory who does not possess a valid travel document” (UN, 1954, p. 8). This article restores the legal identity of refugee individuals and in doing so, gives the control back into their hands.

Likewise, there are other treaties that establish countries’ obligations to refugees, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC is one of the core international human rights instruments that gives explicit mention to refugee children in Article 22(1). The article requires state parties to ensure refugee children “receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments” (OHCHR, 1989, article 22 [1]). Like the 1951 Convention, Article 22 also references IO collaboration in order to ensure these rights are met, stating that “States Parties shall provide, as they consider appropriate, co-operation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations co-operating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child” (OHCHR, 1989, article 22 [2]).

Whilst it is not a convention, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is important in upholding the human rights of refugees. Whilst the declaration references refugees in Article 14, stating “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy other countries asylum from persecution,” refugees must not only be recognised for their refugee status but similarly for their entitlement to their rights as a human beings (UN, n.da). All of these international instruments, but especially the 1951 Convention, must remain part of any mitigation of the refugee crisis to ensure that refugees are protected from the moment they seek asylum, to their complete resettlement in their new homes.

## **PART FIVE: FINAL COMMENTS**

Humanity must remain a central factor when discussing the global refugee crisis. If the ability to see the value in each refugee individual is lost, then so is any hope of a solution. IOs hold significant influence in mitigating the refugee crisis, yet it is often civil society which drives and supports this influence. When we acknowledge that the refugee crisis is extremely personal, affecting each refugee individual in deeply life-changing ways, we similarly acknowledge that our response to the crisis can be personal. This interpersonal mindset creates stronger policy and more durable solutions, as demonstrated by the community sponsorship programs. Ultimately, people who "deserve to be free" remain at the very heart of the issue (Herron, 2022, para 15).

## **CONCLUSION**

The global refugee crisis remains one of the world's most significant challenges, a challenge that only appears to be getting bigger. Whilst the international community has come a long way in mitigating the crisis through the 1951 Convention, the UNHCR, and its collaboration with IOs and governments, much still needs to be done. This essay has sought to provide an informative report on the refugee crisis, and the role IOs have in its mitigation, both globally, and within New Zealand. This essay has drawn upon empirical and statistical data to demonstrate the extent of the crisis, however it is easy to fall into the trap of examining refugee statistics as data points and forgetting the humanity that lies behind the data. With this awareness, I encourage the data and this report to be received with the understanding that it is

not statistics, policies, biases, or beliefs that are most threatened by the crisis, but rather that it is truly *people* who remain at the heart of the global refugee crisis.

"He ata te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people" (Ngāroto, n.d, as cited in Te Aupōuri, 2021, p. 5).

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