



Refugees are people who have **fled** from their country because of wars, political or religious conflicts, natural disasters or because they fear **persecution** from **governments**. **Internally displaced people** have lost their home, but they **remain** in their own country.

**Officially**, there are about 35 million people who have had to leave their home countries. **In addition**, 73 million people have become **homeless** in their own countries. Most of them come from Syria (5.5 million), Ukraine (5.3 million) and Afghanistan (4.7 million). About a third of all **forcibly** displaced people are children.

Over 800,000 people **flee** from their homes and become refugees every year. Most of them **escape** wars and conflicts in Africa and the Middle East. During 2011 thousands fled from North African **dictatorships** during what was called the Arab Spring. Since the **outbreak** of **civil war** in Syria almost 9 million people have fled their homes. Most of them live in camps in neighboring countries.

Most Afghani refugees cross the border into neighboring Pakistan. In Europe, Germany is home to over 500,000 Afghan citizens and over a quarter of a million have come to the United States.

In Africa, civil wars and **armed** conflicts have left millions homeless, **especially** in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Somalia.

**According to** the United Nations there are over 10 million **stateless** people around the world. Kurds and Palestinians, for example, do not belong to a **certain** country.

People do not become refugees only because of war or other political conflicts. Over 12 million people are **thought to be** homeless or in **refugee camps** in the **Horn of Africa** because of **drought** and natural disasters.

About 5 million Ukrainians have lost their home since the outbreak of war in 2022. Most of them have found **temporary** homes in countries of the European Union.

In Venezuela, violence, **inflation**, **gang warfare** and high crime rates, as well as **shortages** of food and medicine have **forced** millions to **seek refuge** in other countries. About 2,000 people are leaving the country every day.

## Who is a Refugee?

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International **law defines** a refugee as a person who has fled from their homeland and cannot come back for many reasons. They are **protected** by the Geneva **convention**, which makes sure such people are not **forced** to return to the country they have fled from.

Protecting refugees around the world is a **task** done by the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees). The organization tries to help them get back to the country of their **origin**, if possible. It also helps them seek asylum or **integrate** in the



country they have fled to. Many countries do not always give refugees the same **rights** that they give their **natural citizens**.

Today, it is hard to keep refugees apart from **economic immigrants**, those who leave their home country **voluntarily** to go somewhere else in search of a better life and more **income**.

## Major Refugee Movements in History

Refugees have always been a part of history. In the Middle Ages people became refugees because they did not **agree** with the religion of their country. Roman Catholics made Jews leave Spain, French Catholics **expelled** Protestants from France.

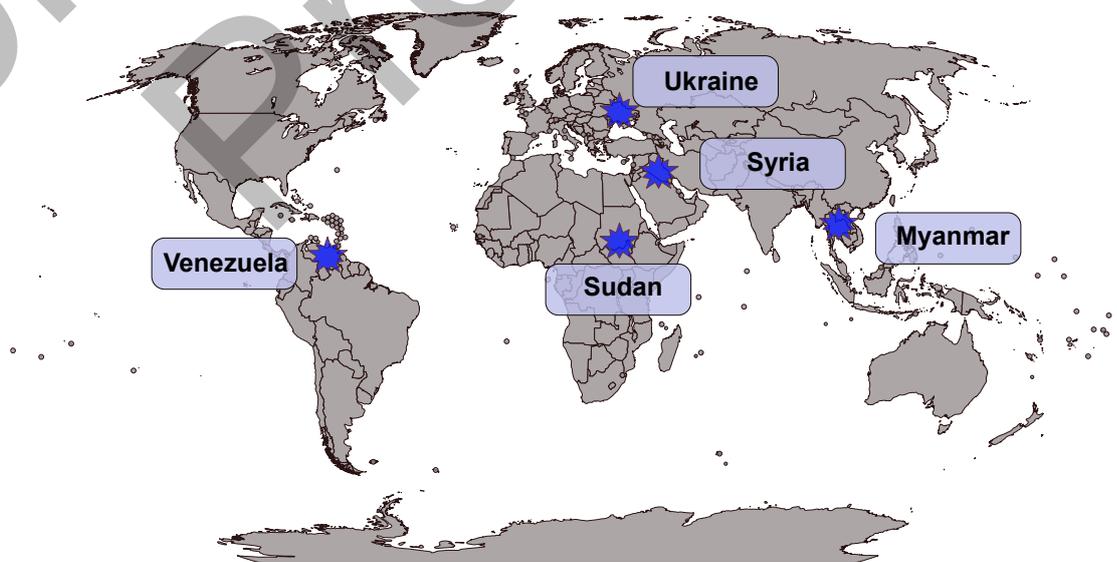
During the Russian Revolution about 1.5 million people left their country because they were against Communism. Over a million Armenians fled Turkey because they were in fear of being **persecuted**.

By the end of World War II there were over 50 million refugees and **displaced** people in Europe alone. Many were Jews who fled from the Nazis in Germany. Germans also had to leave areas where they had **settled** before the war.

When a Communist **government** took over China in 1949 two million people fled to Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 1947 almost 20 million Muslims and Hindus were forced to **cross borders** between India and the new state of Pakistan.

After World War II over 3 million East Germans **escaped** to West Germany. The movement was **halted** in 1961 when the Berlin Wall was built.

During 1994 hundreds of thousands of Rwandans escaped the **genocide** and terror in their country.



### Refugee hotspots around the world

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