

### **NGO Statement on International Protection**

Dear chair,

Last year, the number of people forcibly displaced rose to unprecedented levels with 108.4 million globally, including 62.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>1</sup> Conflict remains the predominant root cause of forced displacement, natural disasters had a much larger geographical footprint last year <sup>2</sup>and the adverse impacts of climate change are increasingly key drivers, as is statelessness. The protracted nature of forced displacement situations is increasing and will likely persist.

To address the intricate nature of global displacement, a unified and holistic approach is crucial. Solutions should encompass local integration, voluntary returns, resettlement, and the right to nationality. Engaging more deeply to tackle root causes and adopting complementary strategies remains crucial.

#### **The imperative of durable solutions**

In 2022 only 5.7 million IDPs and 339,000 refugees were able to safely return to their country or place of origin.<sup>3</sup> An additional 114,300 refugees were resettled to third countries during the same year i.e., less than 1% of the entire refugee population.

The figures above highlight a pressing concern. For many forcibly displaced and stateless persons, returning to their country of origin is not an option due to the absence of safe and dignified conditions. Resettlement opportunities are extremely limited. Additionally, formal legal or social integration in host communities often remains a distant prospect.

Despite notable efforts from some states, progress towards durable solutions remains modest and out of reach for most forcibly displaced persons. They often experience many challenges such as economic hardship, marginalisation and fractured social ties, family separation, disruptions in education, and an inability to access rights and services. With forced displacement becoming increasingly protracted, this will further hinder possibilities for refugees to become self-reliant and to realise their full potential.

#### **Spotlight on Asia**

Two years after the Taliban de facto authorities took over, the economy remains in a dire state, and humanitarian needs have intensified. This situation has impeded people's ability to afford essentials, intensifying food insecurity. Concurrently, Afghans face numerous protection challenges, such as the ongoing discrimination against women and girls, notably the hindrance of girls accessing secondary and higher education. These challenges not only propel refugees to flee but also harm IDPs and do not foster an environment conducive to returns.

NGOs urge UNHCR and donor states to continue supporting humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and to enhance the asylum and protection space for Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> [UNHCR, Global Trends Report 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\), 2023 Global Report on Internal Displacement \(GRID\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations website, Forced displacement, Fact & Figures](#)

UNHCR should uphold their non-return advisory for Afghanistan, which was reaffirmed in February 2023. and press host countries to register and recognise undocumented Afghans. Moreover, they should work with NGO partners to assess the needs of displaced Afghans to determine the requisite support. We encourage The Government of Pakistan – generous and historic supporters of Afghan refugees – to refrain from deporting Afghans at this time, irrespective of their status, and while such returns could place Afghans at grave risk.

We appeal to the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to champion principled responsibility-sharing across the international community. It should also drive resource mobilization and long-term support for displaced Afghans, ensuring their ability to access fundamental rights. Additionally, there should be a commitment to increase resettlement and complementary pathways. We anticipate that the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) will serve as a pivotal moment for the Support Platform Core Group members to synchronize their resources and strategies, maximizing impact and support.

For decades, Rohingya and other minority groups in Myanmar have faced persistent persecution and systematic discrimination. This has led to significant internal displacement within Myanmar and the large-scale exodus of Myanmar’s minority populations to neighbouring countries.

Forcibly displaced populations in this region encounter protection issues and their rights are denied despite the international community's efforts. This situation is exacerbated by the compounding factors of statelessness, political turmoil in Myanmar, and prolonged uncertainty. Consequently, these populations are frequently compelled to undertake perilous journeys in pursuit of safety and a stable future.

The humanitarian community calls upon the UNHCR and Member States to take immediate action to address the ongoing challenges faced by civilians within Myanmar. It is essential to ensure accountability, promote the release of individuals detained for their political beliefs, and facilitate access to humanitarian aid for those in need, emphasizing support for internally displaced persons.

We encourage the international community to spearhead the establishment of a Support Platform for Rohingya Refugee Response, drawing inspiration from the successes of other Support Platforms. Its main goal should be to encourage regional strategies for displaced Rohingya and increase international support, particularly for the response within Bangladesh as well as focusing on transitional solutions<sup>4</sup>, in addition to durable solutions. Unlike, local solutions which typically imply a long-term approach, often suggesting de facto integration, transitional solutions may or may not carry this same implication of longevity or integration.

## **Key Issues to Foster Durable Solutions**

### **1. Education and Skills Development:**

Many host countries do not provide quality education for displaced and stateless children. By ensuring proper education, these individuals can acquire the skills needed to rebuild their lives and contribute significantly to their host communities.

### **2. Livelihood Support:**

Transitional solutions need to prioritize livelihood support programs, encompassing the right to work, vocational training, microfinance initiatives, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Host states should

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<sup>4</sup> [The Diplomat, Developing Transitional Solutions for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh, June 2023, Iffat Anjum](#)

recognize and support these endeavours, understanding the economic and social benefits that come from empowering displaced and stateless persons in these areas.

### **3. Psychosocial Support and Protection:**

Displaced and stateless individuals often grapple with the emotional aftermath of their experiences, making robust psychosocial support services indispensable. Integrated activities, which include legal aid, child protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence, community engagement, and advocacy efforts, remain essential. There is a pressing requirement for investment in awareness-raising and first-response efforts.

### **4. Social Inclusion and Refugee-Centred Approach:**

Displaced and stateless persons should be at the forefront of decisions regarding their futures. The international community has a responsibility to respect and support these decisions. We also have a responsibility of building bridges between displaced and host communities for promoting social inclusion.

### **Complementary Pathways: Expanding Hope and Opportunity**

As the GRF approaches, there is a pressing need to highlight the viability and importance of complementary pathways for displaced persons. While these pathways should never act as a replacement for asylum obligations or resettlement, they offer additional avenues for displaced persons to find safety and stability. Examples of such pathways include skilled refugee labour arrangements, education pathways, and community sponsorship programs. Additionally, expanding family reunification visas and ensuring statelessness determination procedures are developed and lead to residency and pathways to citizenship can further support and enhance these goals.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, we remind the international community of the critical role it plays. Long-term humanitarian and development assistance, aligned with core humanitarian principles, is of utmost importance. Such assistance must remain free from political influences, ensuring it is never wielded as a tool to influence the actions or policies of authorities.

Solely relying on humanitarian assistance isn't sufficient to achieve lasting solutions. There is a pressing need for constructive diplomatic engagement. To ensure the continuation of inclusive policies, the international community must champion effective and principled burden-sharing. This approach guarantees that displaced and stateless persons maintain consistent access to essential services and international protection.

As representatives of the worldwide NGO community, we wish to underscore that durable solutions and safe, legal pathways with transitional solutions for forcibly displaced and displaced populations are essential.

In advance of the GRF, NGOs call upon states to reinforce their commitment to these durable solutions, broaden complementary pathways, and champion transitional solutions. We are committed to work in tandem with UNHCR, states, and all relevant stakeholders to transform these principles into tangible actions, benefiting forcibly displaced and stateless individuals and communities globally.

Thank you.