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United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR)

Research Report

Topic 3: Concerned about the level of Russian IDPs (Internally displaced Persons)



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Introduction

The amount of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Russia has escalated considerably due to the war in Ukraine. While this report touches on the conflict it will also provide insight on events which have historically resulted in more Russia IDPs in the past. Furthermore, this report aims to provide information explaining IDPs, outlining the rise of Russian IDPs as well as providing resources to guide the creation of position papers.

Definition of Key Terms:

Internally Displaced Person

- Internally Displaced Persons refer to *“people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of armed conflict, or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an international border”*¹

Right of Return

- Refers to the manner in which displaced persons are guaranteed a voluntary return to their country of origin as protected by international law, once the reason for their displacement is irrelevant.

Conscription

- Refers to the compulsory enlistment of an individual to a nation’s military service.

Background Information:

*“Internal displacement was placed on the international agenda and recognized as an important issue of global concern in the early 1990s”*² Since then, the UNCHR - in conjunction with international non-governmental organizations - has worked tirelessly with IDPs as, historically, it has been difficult to tackle this issue. This is because internally displaced persons are not protected under an international universal treaty similar to refugees. In response to limiting the number of IDPs, the [“Guiding Principles”](#) have been created as “30 standards that outline the protections available to internally displaced people”³, the need for these standards became clear they were needs due to the emergence of several armed conflicts, ethnic prejudice, and human right violations that fills the early 1980s, thus the Guiding Principles were adopted in 1998

¹ “Glossary | DataBank.” *Worldbank.org*, 2015

² “An Institutional History of Internal Displacement.” *IDMC*, 2021

³ (International Displacement Monitoring center)

“Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.”). While these principles have helped with the process of aiding IDP, the UNHCR has had a conditioned involvement requiring the UN Secretary general and the consent of the state due to protocols of not infringing sovereignty which has previously limited the UNHCR’s involvement ⁴(Goodwin-Gill).

In regards to the Russian Federation there has been a long-standing history of internally displaced persons in the nation however in recent years this has arisen to gross proportions. In 2014, hundreds of thousands of Crimeans Tatars, a Turkic ethnic group were forcefully deported under the Soviet government, and ended in the death of over 100,000 people ⁵(“I’m Spoiled by My Ukrainian Love of Freedom’ in a Bitter Echo of Stalinist Deportations, Russia’s Mobilization Is Forcing Crimean Tatars into Exile — Meduza.”). It has been reported that more and more Crimean Tatars have been forcefully reported to Russia due to suspicion of terrorism, and may find themselves conscripted. Crimeans

This conscription is due to the Ukraine conflict, the greatest contributor in Russia’s history to have caused an alarming amount of IDPs. Civilians in Mariupol, Ukraine civilians “seeking evacuation were forcefully deported to the city of Taganrog”⁶(“I Don’t Know What to Do’ Taken to the Russian Far East, Refugees from Mariupol Were Promised Housing and Jobs. They Have yet to Receive Either. — Meduza). Ukrainian civilians have also been set in the crosshair of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, seeing as “Shelling has often prevented civilians from reaching territory controlled by Ukraine”. These displaced Ukrainians are subject to the local Russian authorities and have resulted in civilians being stuck in filtration camps. Due to this conflict, the amount of IDPs has increased in Russia from a couple thousand in the 2000s to several million as of June 2022⁷(Tarkhanova, Oleksandra).

⁴ (Goodwin-Gill)

⁵ “I’m Spoiled by My Ukrainian Love of Freedom’ in a Bitter Echo of Stalinist Deportations, Russia’s Mobilization Is Forcing Crimean Tatars into Exile — Meduza.” *Meduza*, 2022

⁶ “I Don’t Know What to Do’ Taken to the Russian Far East, Refugees from Mariupol Were Promised Housing and Jobs. They Have yet to Receive Either. — Meduza.” *Meduza*, 2022

⁷ “Citizenship, Displacement, and Russian Occupation in Ukraine.” *Harvard.edu*, 2022

Major Countries and Organisations Involved:

The Russian Federation

- Russian IDPs are the main concern of this issue, and typically come from neighboring countries either through means of conflict, forced deportation, and political unrest.

Relevant UN Resolutions OR Resources :

Relevant Resolutions

- Internally Displaced Persons No. 75 (XLV) – 1994
<https://www.unhcr.org/excom/exconc/3ae68c434/internally-displaced-persons.html>
- Proposed Resolution for Refugees and Displaced Persons 1949
www.unhcr.org/protection/historical/3ae68bed8/refugees-displaced-persons-france-draft-resolution.html

Relevant Articles

- Human rights concerns related to forced displacement in Ukraine Letter

www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/09/human-rights-concerns-related-forced-displacement-ukraine.

- UNHCR's role with internally displaced Persons
www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b31b87.html.
- Russian Federation IDP Fact Sheet & Global Report 2005
<https://www.unhcr.org/449267830.pdf>
- Refugee Response Plan to Ukraine Conflict
<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

1.) The Cluster Approach

- “A cluster is when a group of agencies work together to set up and deliver an area of assistance, such as shelter, health care, camp management, or protection (“United Nations”)

The cluster approach has been used in the past in order to enable a response in a non-refugee humanitarian emergency, “clusters are often co-led with government and/or co-chaired with

NGO partners.”⁸ (“UNHCR|Emergency Handbook.”). This method is defined through the steps below:

- “1. Support service delivery by providing a space in which to agree approaches and eliminate duplication.
2. Inform strategic decision-making of the HC/HCT by coordinating needs assessment, gap analysis, and prioritization.
3. Plan and develop strategies, including cluster plans, and arrangements for adhering to standards and meeting funding needs.
4. Advocate on behalf of cluster participants and affected populations.
5. Monitor and report on the cluster strategy and its results, and recommend corrective action where necessary.
6. Undertake contingency planning and, preparedness actions, and build capacity where the cluster has resources to do so.” (ibid.)

2.) The Right of Return

- The right of return allows for “displaced persons have a right to voluntarily return in safety to their homes or places of habitual residence as soon as the reason for their displacement ceases to exist”

Possible Solutions:

- One could define the reasoning for Russian IDPS as illegitimate which would may allow for civilians to gain the right of return.
- Relocation, IDPs may gain the financial or legal means to relocate themselves to a differing territory with organizational relief

⁸ “UNHCR|Emergency Handbook.” *Unhcr.org*, 2023

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