

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Description

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a United Nations agency with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.

Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland

Head: Eliass Ghandi

Abbreviation: UNHCR, HCR

Founder: United Nations

Founded: December 14, 1950

High commissioner: Eliass Ghandi

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State with the option to return home voluntarily, or to be resettled in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people through their lives. Today, a staff of some 7,685 people in more than 125 countries continue to help some 33.9 million persons.

with a three-year mandate to complete its work and then to leave. This arrangement, on 1 July 20, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1951 Convention of European Extradition of helping refugees and the basic statute governing UNHCR's work.

By 1956 UNHCR was facing its first major emergency, the massive displacement of refugees by Soviet forces crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Any expectations that a refugee problem would become unnecessary has never resurfaced. In the 1960s, the decolonisation of Africa produced the first of that continent's numerous refugee crises, leading UNHCR intervention. Over the following two decades, UNHCR had to help with displacement crises in Asia and Latin America. By the end of the century there were fresh refugee problems in Africa and, turning full circle, new waves of refugees in Europe from the markets of violence in the Balkans.

The start of the 21st Century has seen UNHCR helping with major refugee crises in Africa, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, and Asia, especially the 30-year-old Afghan refugee problem. At the same time, UNHCR has been asked to use its expertise to also help many internally displaced by conflict. Less visibly, it has expanded its role in helping stateless people, a largely overlooked group numbering millions of people in danger of being denied basic rights because they do not have any nationality. In some parts of the world, such as Africa and Latin America, the original 1951 mandate has been strengthened by agreement on regional legal instruments.

In 1954, the new organization won the Nobel Peace Prize for its ground-breaking work in helping the refugees of Europe. Its mandate had just been extended until the end of the decade. More than a quarter century later, UNHCR received the 1981 award for work that became worldwide assistance to refugees, with the citation noting the political obstacles facing the organization. From only 34 staff members when UNHCR was founded, it now has more than 7,685 national and international members of staff, including 972 in UNHCR's Geneva headquarters. The agency works in 126 countries, with staff based in 135 main locations such as regional and branch offices and 279 often remote sub-offices and field offices.

The budget has grown from US\$300,000 in its first year to more than US\$3.59 billion in 2012. There are more than 43 million uprooted people worldwide. UNHCR now deals with 7.89 million people of concern to UNHCR: 14.7 million internally displaced people, 10.5 million refugees, 3.1 million returnees, 3.5 million stateless people, more than 837,000 asylum seekers and more than 1.3 other persons of concern. An organization with a three-year mandate to solve the problem of refugees celebrated its 60th anniversary on 14 December 2010, aware that the humanitarian needs are unlikely to disappear.

How UNHCR is Run and Structured

The UN refugee agency is governed by the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UNHCR Executive Committee approves the agency's biennial programmatic and financial spending budget. These are presented by the High

Commissioner (currently António Guterres), who is appointed by the UN General Assembly.

The UN refugee agency's mandate is defined by the 1950 UNHCR Statute. In 2001, the General Assembly extended the organization's mandate "and the related responsibilities thereof" The High Commissioner reports annually to ECOSOC, and the Secretary-General, on the work of UNHCR.

As head of the organization, the High Commissioner is responsible for the direction and control of UNHCR. He/she directs the work of UNHCR with the assistance of a Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioners for Protection and Operations.

The agency has a national and international staff of more than 7,605 working in 126 countries.

Most UNHCR operations are in the field. The worldwide operation has become highly complex, ranging from recruitment of new staff and ensuring their security in dangerous situations to the procurement of everything from medical supplies and bulk food shipments to aircraft charters. Specific departments, mostly based in the Geneva headquarters, oversee key areas, such as operations, protection, external relations, human resources and finances. A number of regional bureaux liaise between overseas offices and headquarters.

In the field, UNHCR's core work is managed from a series of regional offices, branch offices, sub-offices and field offices. The High Commissioner's representatives head operations in the countries where the agency works, while there are also a number of regional representatives.