

Impact of war and persecution

## More than 50 million displaced persons worldwide

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The total number of people displaced from their homes by war and political persecution now exceeds 50 million, the highest number since World War II, according to a report issued Friday. The report was released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The overall total of 51.2 million displaced people includes 16.7 million refugees, 33.3 million displaced inside their country of origin, and 1.2 million seeking asylum.

The report notes that if these 51.2 million were a separate nation, it would rank 26th in the world in population, just behind South Africa and ahead of South Korea. Half of all these displaced persons are children.

Some 10.7 million people were newly displaced in the course of 2013, for an average of 32,200 every day. This includes a record 8.2 million internally displaced, the highest figure ever reported by the UNHRC, and 2.5 million new refugees, the most since the Rwanda genocide of 1994. The number of new refugees more than doubled, compared to 2011 and 2012, when there were about one million new refugees each year.

The conditions under which displaced people live are deteriorating, with fewer resettlements of refugees than in all but three other years since the UNHCR began keeping such figures in 1989.

Nearly one-fifth of the world's displaced people come from a single conflict, the civil war in Syria, with nearly 3 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, while another 6.5 million are displaced within the country.

Syria has undergone the most dramatic change, as the report notes: "The Syrian Arab Republic has moved

from being the second-largest refugee-hosting country [mainly from Iraq] to being the second-largest refugee-producing country—within a span of five years."

The second largest displaced population, and the longest in exile, are the 5 million Palestinians, many of them descendants of those originally forced to flee in 1947 by Zionist atrocities during the establishment of the state of Israel.

Other huge refugee populations include 2.6 million Afghans, mainly in Pakistan and Iran, 1.1 million Somalis, mainly in Kenya and Ethiopia, and 1.5 million Iraqis (a total that does not include the estimated million or more displaced this month by the explosion of civil war in Sunni-populated northern and western parts of the country).

The report is largely a dry recounting of numbers of people, measured by country of origin and country of refuge, while avoiding any examination of the underlying causes of this escalating human tragedy. But some conclusions are suggested by the figures.

Nearly all the countries accounting for the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons are those targeted by American imperialism for military violence or economic blockade, or those saddled with US-backed repressive regimes that have carried out counterinsurgency campaigns against their own people.

These include five of the six countries with the largest totals of displaced people: Syria, with 9.2 million, Colombia, with 5.8 million, Afghanistan, with 3.6 million, Sudan, 2.6 million, and Somalia 2.4 million. To these should be added Iraq, with 1.5 million, Pakistan, 934,000 (mostly from the Pashtun-populated region along the border with Afghanistan).

In the band of countries across west and central

Africa, including Mali, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, French imperialism shares responsibility with Washington.

The first two countries are former French colonies, while the Congo was destabilized largely as a consequence of the genocide in neighboring Rwanda, in which French imperialism played an odious role. The US helped trigger the crisis in Mali through the US-NATO attack on neighboring Libya, which led to a flood of Islamist insurgents and weapons across the border.

Contrary to the myths peddled by the corporate-controlled media in Europe, the United States and Australia, refugees are not flooding into the wealthy countries.

The vast majority live in impoverished Third World countries (86 percent).

Only one advanced country, Germany, has as many as half a million refugees or displaced persons. Australia, home to an ever-escalating official hysteria over refugees, has only 48,000—less than one-tenth of one percent of the world's total.

The United States hosts less than 350,000 displaced persons, about one for every 1,000 people. Lebanon, by contrast, has 178 refugees for every 1,000 people.



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