

CHAPTER 3

Solutions

Lasting solutions require collective commitment so millions of displaced people can rebuild their lives

Finding durable solutions to displacement is a core part of UNHCR's work. These are intended to enable millions of displaced people around the world to rebuild their lives in dignity and safety.

Resolving situations of forcible displacement requires collective commitment to address the protection needs of refugees and other displaced people through a range of options and opportunities. Traditionally, these have included voluntary repatriation, resettlement to a third country and local integration. Historically, many displacement situations have been resolved through these solutions, such as following the high levels of displacement from the Balkans and the Great Lakes region of Africa during the 1990s, but in recent decades such solutions have proved more elusive. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework was developed partly to help address the need to

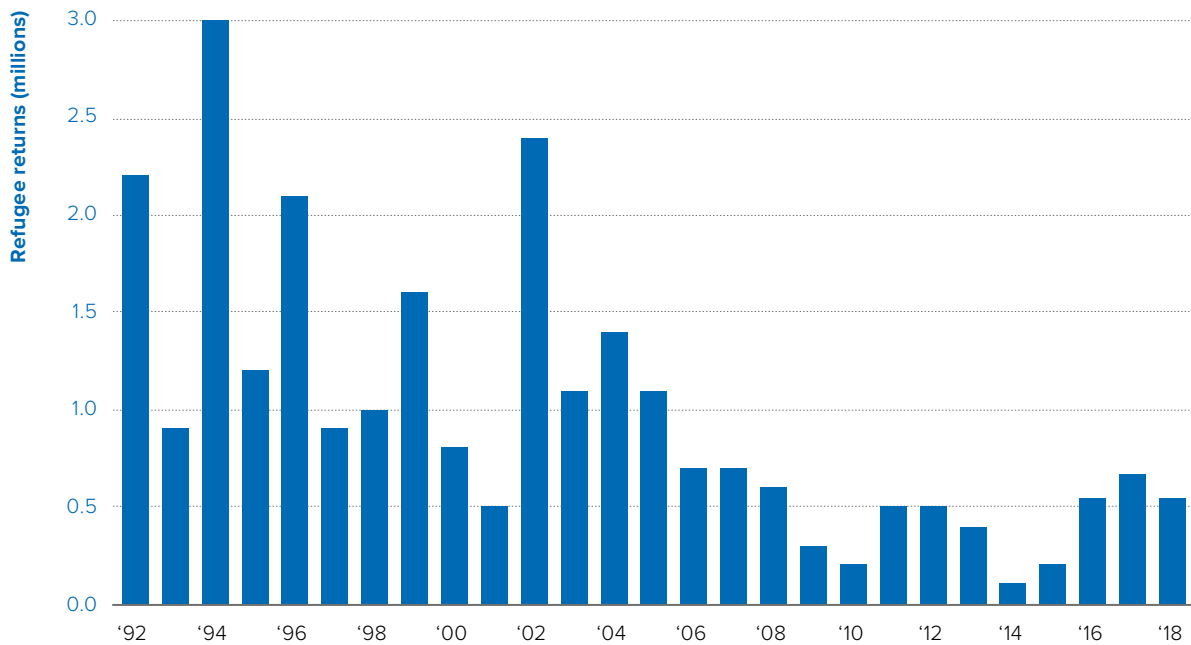
strengthen solutions including expanding access to resettlement in third countries and other complementary pathways, as well as fostering conditions that enable refugees to return voluntarily to their home countries.³²

UNHCR is responsible for leading international coordination of protection for IDPs under the cluster system, including ensuring that IDPs can access a safe, voluntary, and dignified solution to displacement.³³ The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's framework on durable solutions outline how these can be attained so that IDPs no longer

³² See: www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html

³³ See: siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1265299949041/6766328-1265299960363/SG-Decision-Memo-Durable-Solutions.pdf

Figure 10 | **Refugee returns** | 1992-2018



have specific assistance or protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.

Solutions to displacement for refugees and IDPs should be addressed jointly. For the purposes of statistical reporting, however, the return of IDPs to their locality of origin is discussed in Chapter 4, and the remainder of this chapter will focus on durable solutions for refugees.

Returns

During 2018, the number of refugees who returned to their countries of origin stood at 593,800. This constitutes a decline compared with 667,400 in 2017, especially given that the refugee population has continued to increase. Thus, this figure represents a further decline as a proportion of the global refugee population [Figures 10 and 11].

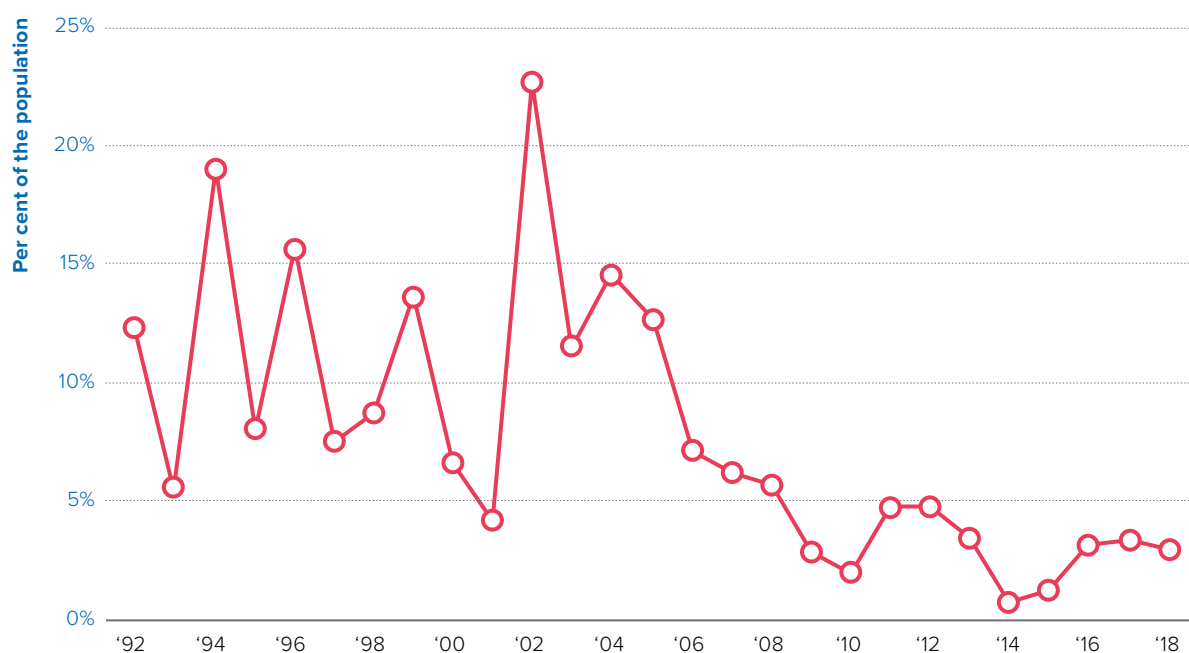
Voluntary repatriation remains the durable solution of choice for the largest number of refugees and requires appropriate measures to ensure that any choice is voluntary, free from coercion, and based on objective information with conditions allowing safe and dignified returns. Over the years, UNHCR

worked with States to facilitate numerous voluntary repatriation programmes that enabled millions of refugees to return home, assisted with small-scale and individual repatriations, and contributed to the reintegration of returnees to ensure that their return was a sustainable solution.

In 2018, UNHCR observed a number of self-organized returns, sometimes under pressure, to areas where circumstances were partially improving but where peace and security were not fully established. Such challenging situations often are not conducive to a safe and dignified repatriation. For returns to be sustainable, it is critical that they do not take place precipitously or prematurely in the absence of conditions for sustainable reintegration. Although UNHCR does not promote returns to countries of origin in such circumstances, the Office nevertheless recognizes the right of all individuals to return voluntarily to their country of origin and monitors the progress of returns while also advocating for improved conditions.

Refugees returned to 37 countries of origin from 62 former countries of asylum during 2018, as reported by UNHCR offices and after reconciliation of departure and arrival figures. It should be noted that countries of origin reported only arrivals of returning refugees with no distinction between those who

Figure 11 | Refugee returns as a proportion of the overall refugee population | 1992-2018



returned through organized voluntary repatriation, through self-organized returns or in conditions not conducive for sustainable return in safety and dignity. Thus the reported statistics refer to returns of all types and not necessarily to voluntary repatriation, and the data have not necessarily been verified by UNHCR in all cases.

Returns to Syria constituted the largest such number in 2018, with 210,900 refugees returning, mostly reported from Turkey (177,300).³⁴ Much smaller numbers were reported from Lebanon (14,500), Iraq (10,800), Jordan (8,100) and Egypt (300). UNHCR's position vis-à-vis returns to Syria throughout 2018 and up to present has been that there are not sufficient guarantees or conditions in place to facilitate large-scale repatriation in safety and dignity. Significant risks remain for civilians across the country and premature return could have a negative impact on refugees and, if significant in scale, could further destabilize the region.

UNHCR neither promoted nor facilitated refugee returns to Syria in 2018. However, many self-organized returns or returns organized by host countries or other actors occurred and returnees were assisted through ongoing humanitarian programmes.³⁵ A Return Perception and Intentions Survey conducted among Syrian refugees in 2018

found that 76 per cent of Syrian refugees hoped to return to Syria one day, a significant increase from the 51 per cent reported in 2017. Although most surveyed refugees aspired to go home, only a few saw return as a near-term possibility within a 12-month period. Indeed, 85 per cent of respondents stated they did not have intentions to return to Syria in the next 12 months, while 11 per cent were undecided, and 4 per cent intended to return.³⁶

The second largest number of refugee returns in 2018 was reported by South Sudan, with 136,200. The largest number returned from Uganda (83,600), followed by Ethiopia (40,200), Sudan (5,200), Kenya (4,600), CAR (2,100) and DRC (400). As in the case of Syria, UNHCR did not facilitate or promote refugee returns to South Sudan in 2018. For those refugees who returned in circumstances that were challenging or not conducive to a safe and dignified return, UNHCR sought to monitor and assist the situations of returned refugees and IDPs within the country.³⁷

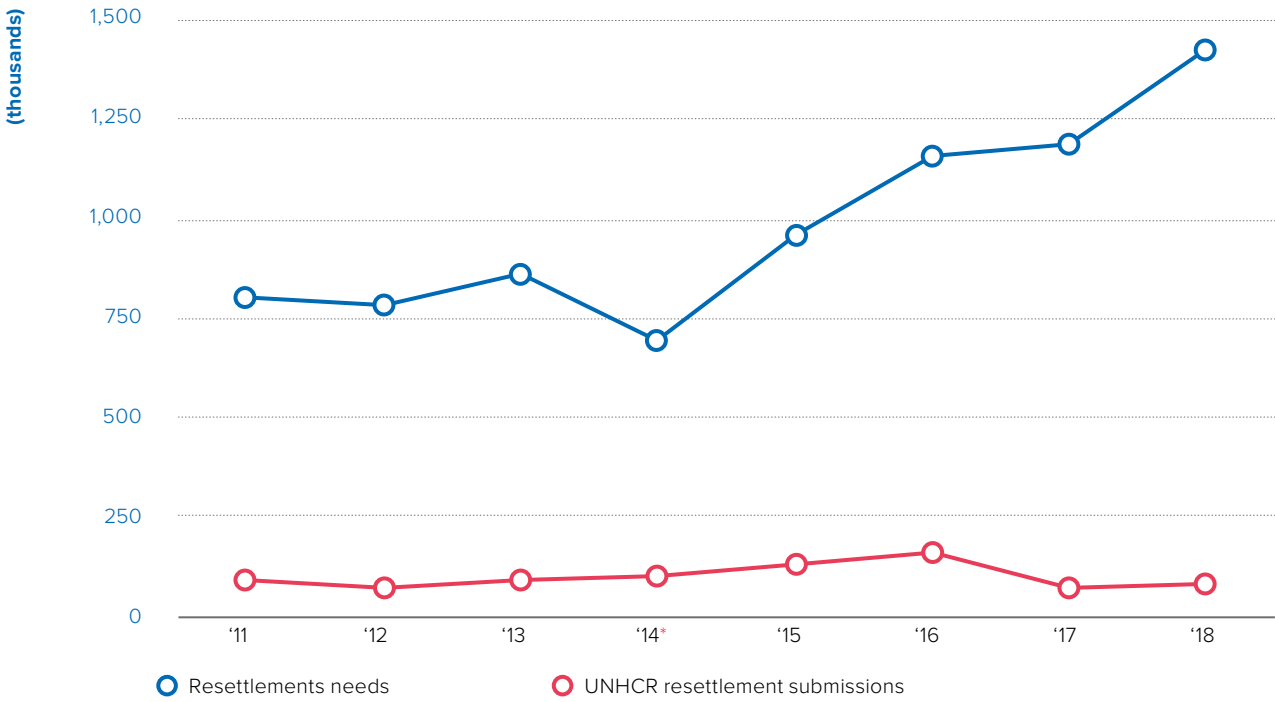
³⁴ While the Government of Turkey reported the total number of return departures of Syrians from Turkey, UNHCR verified 22,410 returns in 2018 from Turkey. See: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions

³⁵ See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63223>

³⁶ See: data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/66198

³⁷ See: reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20South%20SudanSpontaneous%20Returnees%2031%20January%202019.pdf

Figure 12 | **Gap between resettlement needs and UNHCR's annual submissions** | 2011-2018



* 2014 excludes resettlement needs of Syrian refugees due to the fluid and rapidly evolving situation at the time of estimating global needs.

During 2018, some 87,500³⁸ refugees returned to Somalia, the vast majority from Kenya (82,800) and with smaller numbers from Yemen (3,400) and Djibouti (800). Burundi reported the return of 45,500 refugees, 98 per cent of whom came back from Tanzania. There were 35,200 returnees to CAR, mostly from Cameroon (17,100), Chad (10,100), DRC (4,300) and Congo (3,500). Other countries with significant numbers of returnees were Colombia (23,900), Afghanistan (16,200), Mozambique (8,800), Mali (6,700), DRC (6,600) and Chad (6,400).

In terms of return movements by country of asylum, Turkey reported the largest number of departures, all to Syria (177,300). There were 83,600 refugees who repatriated from Uganda, nearly all of whom returned to South Sudan. Other countries reporting large numbers of departures were Tanzania (44,800, all to Burundi), Ethiopia (40,200 to South Sudan), Venezuela (23,900, all to Colombia), Cameroon (17,100, nearly all to CAR), Lebanon (14,500, all to Syria), Pakistan (14,000, nearly all to Afghanistan), Chad (11,800, with 10,000 to CAR and smaller numbers to Sudan), Iraq (10,800, all to Syria) and Sudan (10,100, mainly to Chad and South Sudan).


Resettlement

Resettlement remains a life-saving tool to ensure the protection of those refugees most at risk. As one of the key objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, resettlement and complementary pathways are also mechanisms for governments and communities across the world to share responsibility for responding to increasing forced displacement crises and help reduce the impact of large refugee situations on host countries.

UNHCR estimated that 1.4 million refugees were in need of resettlement [Figure 12].³⁹ However, only 81,300 places for new submissions were provided by 29 resettlement states in 2018. Although this represented an 8 per cent increase compared with 2017 (75,200), the gap between needs and actual resettlement places exceeded 90 per cent and continued to grow.

³⁸ The number of refugee returns to Somalia in 2018 is provisional and will be updated as it currently includes returns from earlier years.

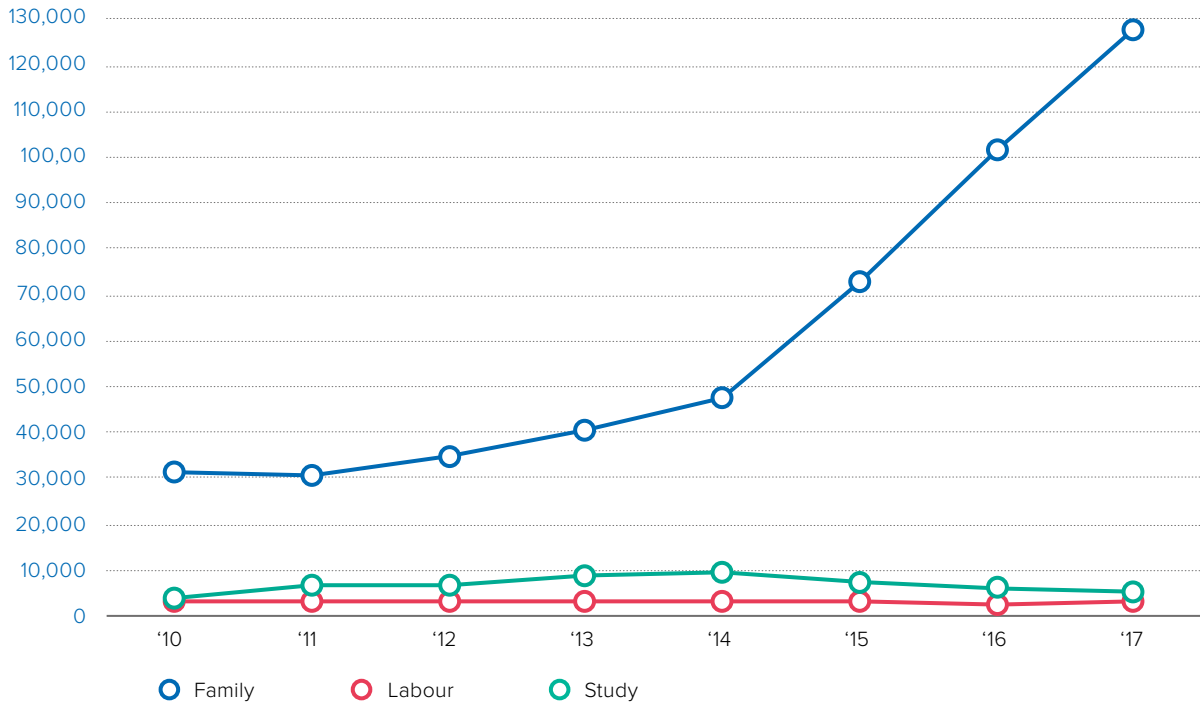
³⁹ See: www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5b28a7df4/projected-global-resettlement-needs-2019.html



AFGHANISTAN. Sadiq is an Afghan returnee who had been living in Pakistan. He now lives in Dasht-e Tarakhi, an informal settlement on the outskirts of Kabul which is mostly populated by returnees from Pakistan. UNHCR and its partners are helping returnees gain access to basic services, land and jobs.

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Figure 13 | **First permits granted by OECD countries to Afghans, Eritreans, Iraqis, Somalis, and Syrians by permit type** | between 2010 and 2017



Of the 81,300 submissions made in 2018, 68 per cent were for survivors of violence and torture, those with legal and physical protection needs, and particularly vulnerable women and girls. Just over half of all resettlement submissions concerned children.

A total of 82 UNHCR operations referred refugees to resettlement states in 2018. Turkey (16,000 submissions) and Lebanon (8,400) were the two largest resettlement operations and accounted for about one third of all submissions worldwide [Table 2]. Syrians constituted the largest refugee

population to be submitted for resettlement by UNHCR in 2018 (28,200 or 35 per cent of all submissions), followed by those from DRC (21,800 submissions) and Eritrea (4,300).

Based on official government statistics provided to UNHCR, 92,400 refugees⁴⁰ were resettled to 25 countries during 2018. Canada admitted the largest number of resettled refugees (28,100). The United States of America was second with 22,900. Other countries that admitted large numbers of resettled refugees during the year were Australia (12,700), the United Kingdom (5,800) and France (5,600).

Table 2 | **Resettlement submissions by UNHCR operation** | 2018

UNHCR operation	Resettlement submissions
Turkey	16,042
Lebanon	8,393
United Rep. of Tanzania	6,493
Jordan	6,387
Uganda	5,478
Other	38,544
Total	81,337

In addition to refugee resettlement, complementary pathways for admission of refugees are key to expanding access to third-country solutions.⁴¹ In 2018, UNHCR and Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a study that examined the use of complementary

⁴⁰ This figure includes refugees admitted with or without UNHCR's assistance.

⁴¹ The general framework of complementary pathways in the context of solutions for refugees is outlined in UNHCR's "Complementary pathways for admission to third countries: Key considerations" paper. See: www.unhcr.org/complementary-pathways.html

pathways.⁴² The study focuses on first-entry permits granted for family, study or work purposes in OECD countries to nationals from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia and Syria⁴³ from 2010 to 2017 [Figure 13].

Between 2010 and 2017, the combined total of submitted asylum applications in OECD countries of the five populations was more than 2.5 million, including 322,300 (13 per cent) on appeal following a negative decision at the first-instance. More than 1.5 million were granted either refugee status (890,000) or complementary forms of protection (633,000) during this period, and 566,900 first residence permits were granted to the five populations. Furthermore, 350,400 people from the five populations arrived in OECD countries through resettlement programmes from 2010 to 2017.

Local integration

One durable solution is the local integration of refugees. This is a complex and gradual process that involves refugees establishing themselves in a country of asylum and integrating into the community there. Separate but equally important legal, economic, social, and cultural aspects to local integration form part of the process, which over time should lead to permanent residence rights and, in many cases, the acquisition of citizenship in the country of asylum.

Measuring and quantifying local integration in a way that is comparable and consistent across different contexts is challenging. The International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics make several recommendations on appropriate indicators, but data availability on the situation of refugees is still very poor.⁴⁴ Naturalization – the legal act or process by which a non-citizen in a country may acquire citizenship or nationality of that country – is therefore used as a measure of local integration. However, even this proxy is limited by uneven availability of data and poor coverage as well as policy and legal changes over time. In particular,

it can be difficult to distinguish between the naturalization of refugees and non-refugees. Therefore, the data are only indicative at best and provide an underestimate of the extent to which refugees are naturalized. In view of the current challenges with the availability of relevant statistics on naturalization, UNHCR will explore with governments opportunities to address these gaps.

During 2018, a total of 62,600 refugee naturalizations were reported – lower than the 73,400 reported in 2017 – with 27 countries reporting at least one. Turkey reported the most naturalizations with 29,000 in 2018, all originating from Syria. Canada reported the second largest number, with 18,300, reversing that country's decline in naturalizations since 2015 and substantially higher than the 10,500 reported in 2017. Canada naturalized refugees from 162 countries with the highest number from Iraq (2,800). The Netherlands also reported an increasing number of naturalizations with 7,900 compared with 6,600 in 2017. Other countries that reported significant numbers of naturalizations of refugees in 2018 were Guinea-Bissau (3,500) and France (3,300). ■

⁴² See: www.unhcr.org/5c07a2c84. The findings will support the development of the three-year strategy envisaged by the Global Compact on Refugees to expand resettlement and complementary pathways. Data will be updated on a regular basis, with the report intended to be issued by UNHCR-OECD every two years. The next report will be completed in 2020, covering 2018-2019 data.

⁴³ These nationalities were selected because they account for more than half of the world's refugees under UNHCR's mandate and have a high recognition rate for those applying for asylum in OECD countries.

⁴⁴ See: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/9315869/KS-GQ-18-004-EN-N.pdf



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO.
Prosper, 25, fled his village in 2016 after receiving threats from an armed group. He lives with his wife, their three-year-old daughter, and a 12-year-old boy who joined them during their flight. Prosper explains how, unable to find the boy's parents, they decided to take him in.

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CHAPTER 4

Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Increasing numbers of people are being displaced within their own countries due to armed conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations

An estimated 41.3 million people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations at the end of 2018, according to estimates from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). This is an increase on the 40.0 million reported in 2017. The small declines of the previous years were reversed and the internally displaced population in 2018 was the largest ever reported by IDMC.⁴⁵

Since the inter-agency cluster approach was introduced in January 2006, IDP statistics have been collected jointly by UNHCR and cluster members.⁴⁶ The total reported by UNHCR offices stood at 41.4 million at the end of 2018, including those in IDP-like situations, compared with 39.1 million at the end of 2017 [Figure 14]. In 2018, 31 UNHCR operations reported an IDP population, compared with 32 the previous year and 29 in 2016.

As has been the case since 2015, Colombia continued to report the highest number of internally displaced people with 7,816,500 at the end of 2018 according to Government statistics [Figure 15].⁴⁷ During 2018, 118,200 new displacements were reported, with no returns or other decreases reported. The regions

most impacted by mass displacements included Colombia's north-eastern border with Venezuela, the southern border with Ecuador, the Pacific coast bordering Panama, and the northwest, comprising the departments of Norte de Santander, Nariño, Antioquia and Choco.⁴⁸

Similarly, Syria remained the country with the second highest level of internal displacement. During 2018, 256,700 new displacements were reported with the total displaced population reaching 6,183,900.^{49, 50} As the Syria crisis entered its eighth year, continued

⁴⁵ For detailed statistics on global internal displacement, see www.internal-displacement.org

⁴⁶ In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the "cluster" approach for handling situations of internal displacement. Under this arrangement, UNHCR assumes leadership responsibility and accountability for three clusters: protection, shelter, and camp coordination and camp management.

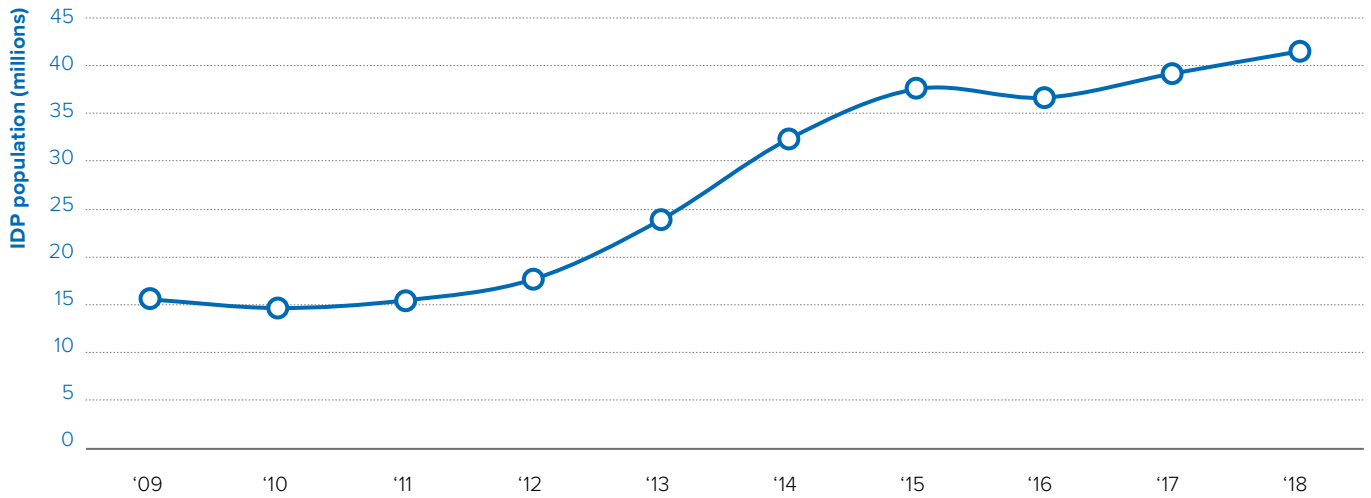
⁴⁷ The large number of registered IDPs in Colombia comes from the total cumulative figure from the Victims' Registry, which commenced in 1985. See: www.unidadvictimas.gov.co.

⁴⁸ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Colombia". See: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/colombia/document/humanitarian-needs-overview-2019>

⁴⁹ The population is as of end-August 2018.

⁵⁰ The IDP estimates were reported by the Government of Syria and did not include any reported IDP returns. However, OCHA reported 1.4 million spontaneous returns. See: reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_Syr_HNO_Summary.pdf UNHCR is working to reconcile these estimates.

Figure 14 | **IDPs of concern to UNHCR** (includes people in an IDP-like situation) | 2009-2018



hostilities in Eastern Ghouta and Afrin led to large-scale displacement to Rural Damascus and northern Syria. Escalated tensions in southern Syria forced people to flee toward the border with Jordan and the Golan area to the west. Sporadic artillery shelling and infighting among non-State armed groups in north-western Syria and south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor pushed successive waves of new displacement into Idlib Governorate, exacerbating existing pressures.⁵¹ While there were displacements in many regions of the country, more than half of the new displacements were recorded in Idlib Governorate.

The IDP population in DRC continued to increase, rising from 4,351,400 at the end of 2017 to 4,516,900 at the end of 2018. There were 322,000 reported new displacements in 2018 with South Kivu, North Kivu, Tanganyika and Kasai provinces being the most affected. Active conflicts and political uncertainties exacerbated by the ongoing electoral process continued to drive significant displacement.⁵² Nevertheless, improved security across some territories in Tanganyika facilitated some spontaneous returns.⁵³

Somalia experienced a significant increase in internal displacement with 602,700 new displacements during 2018. That brought the total displaced population to about 2,648,000, the fourth largest IDP population and an increase of 25 per cent over the course of 2018. The largest displaced population was

concentrated in south-central Somalia, while the majority of newly displaced people were living in Somaliland by the end of 2018. Armed conflict and food insecurity continued to spur large-scale displacement, largely toward urban areas, where approximately 80 per cent of Somali IDPs remained in 2018. Even where violence had ceased, many IDPs were reluctant to return due to fear of reprisal and limited availability of social services and livelihood opportunities. Sexual and gender-based violence, child recruitment, and attacks on civilian areas and infrastructure remained pervasive features of the humanitarian crisis as active conflict exacerbated existing risks.⁵⁴

In Ethiopia there was a dramatic increase in the internally displaced population, which more than doubled from 1,078,400 at the beginning of 2018 to 2,615,800 at the end.⁵⁵ The increase is accounted for by more than 1.5 million new displacements, mainly

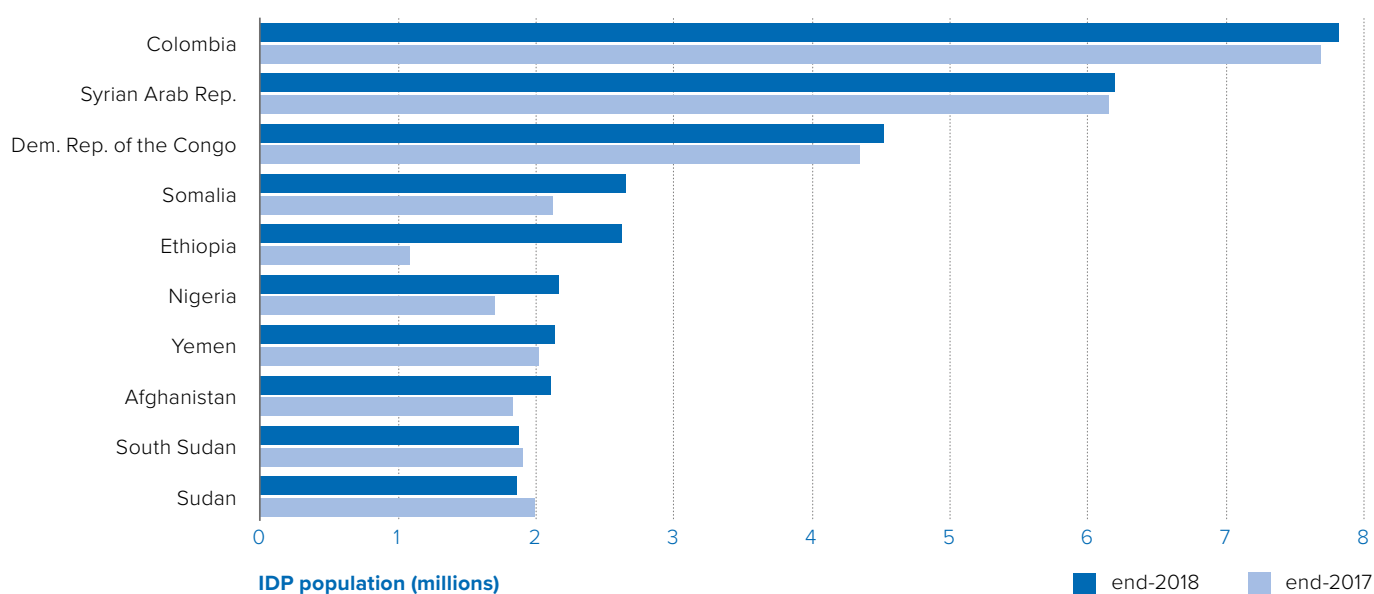
⁵¹ “2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Syria”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_syr_hno_full.pdf

⁵² “Global humanitarian overview 2019”. See: www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO2019.pdf

⁵³ “2018 Aperçu des besoins humanitaires: – République Democratique du Congo”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/drc_hno_2018_fr.pdf

⁵⁴ “2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Somalia”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/somalia_2019_hno.pdf

⁵⁵ This figure relates to displacement caused by conflict and does not include the displacement associated with natural disasters in Ethiopia.

Figure 15 | **Ten largest IDP populations** | end-2017 to end-2018

attributed to the conflict in the West Guji and Gedeo zones along the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) and Oromia Region border with the Somali Region. Although localized, small-scale displacements have always existed in the country due to community-level clashes over pasture and water rights along regional boundaries, large-scale intercommunal violence throughout 2018 resulted in massive displacement, with communities living along disputed boundaries most affected.⁵⁶

The internally displaced population also increased in Nigeria. At the end of 2018 there were 2,167,900 people displaced in the country, an increase of 27 per cent during the year. Internal movements included both 581,700 new displacements and 176,200 returns. Borno State saw the highest level of new displacement with 195,000 but also the highest levels of returning IDPs (80,100). Although regional military forces made gains against the Boko Haram insurgency in 2018 and managed to temporarily improve the security situation in certain areas of the Lake Chad Basin, conflict in north-eastern Nigeria has

been continuing for more than a decade and showed little sign of abating, with attacks by non-State armed groups throughout 2018 driving further displacement.⁵⁷

There were 2,144,700 internally displaced people in Yemen at the end of 2018. While this was a relatively small overall increase over the year, it masked a high level of movement, with 264,300 newly displaced and 133,600 returning to their localities of origin, often to areas still affected by conflict and with continuing humanitarian needs and limited humanitarian access. While many regions of Yemen were affected by displacement, Taizz and Al Hudaydah Governorate witnessed the highest level of new displacement, with the largest IDP population overall reported in Taizz Governorate. Approximately 60 per cent of the displaced population had been displaced since the start of escalations.⁵⁸

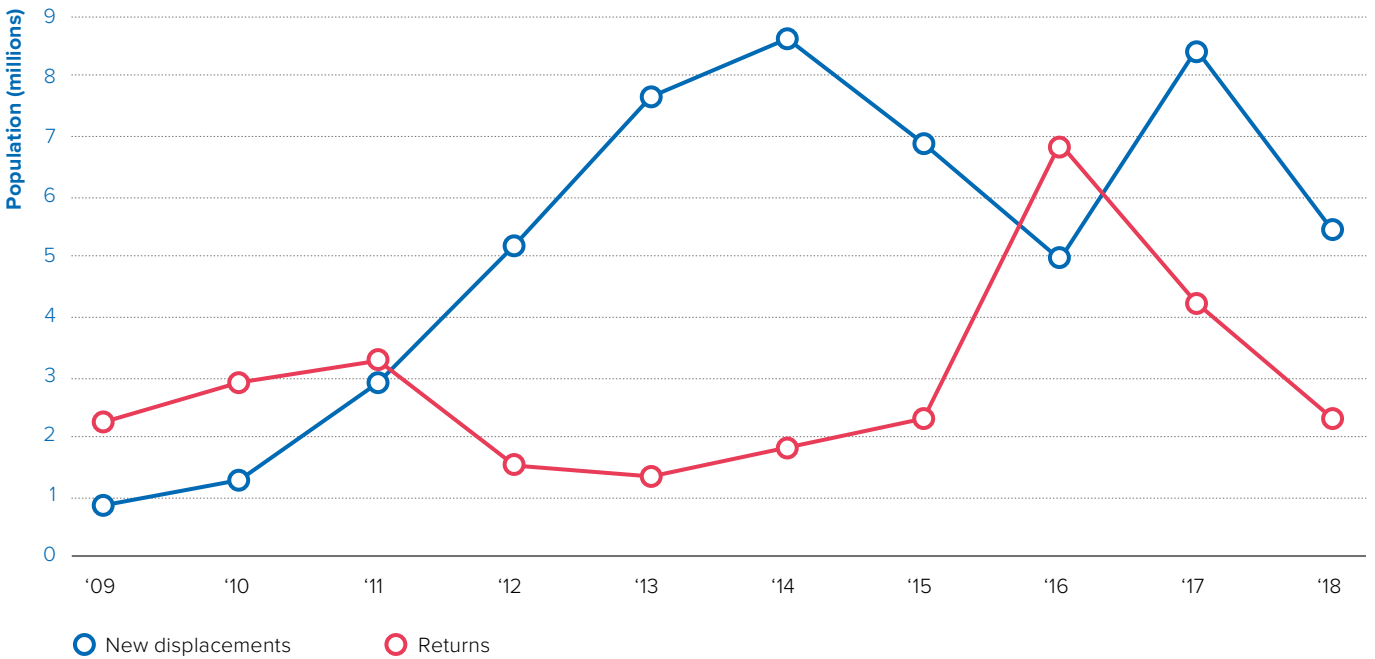
The internally displaced population in Afghanistan stood at 2.1 million at the end of 2018 compared with 1.8 million at the end of 2017. There were new displacements and returns throughout the year, often occurring simultaneously in the same province. While the IDP population in Ghazni Province increased slightly from 57,800 to 62,400, there were 37,000 new internal displacements and 33,200 returns. The province with the largest IDP population was Nangarhar with 279,700 people, followed by Helmand. With almost two thirds of the population

⁵⁶ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Ethiopia". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/ethiopia_humanitarian_needs_overview_2019.pdf

⁵⁷ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Nigeria". See: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/01022019_ocha_nigeria_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

⁵⁸ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Yemen". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_yemen_hno_final_1.pdf

Figure 16 | **New IDP displacements and returns** | 2009-2018



living in areas directly affected by conflict, population movement has become a permanent feature. A convergence of factors arising from escalating violence, forced displacement, loss of essential livelihoods, and limited access to basic services exacerbated chronic vulnerabilities related to poverty, food insecurity and unemployment.⁵⁹

In South Sudan the number of IDPs remained high, around 1.9 million, although decreasing slightly from 1,904,000 to 1,878,200 during the year. The majority of the internally displaced population was concentrated in the Greater Upper Nile states of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile. The decreases in the IDP population were due mainly to secondary movements to neighbouring countries, especially Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia, rather than returns. While South Sudan’s recently revitalized peace process offers new opportunities amid de-escalating tensions, the numbers of internally displaced have continued to remain high with five years of conflict having driven many families to flee on multiple occasions.⁶⁰

At the end of 2018, the internally displaced population in Sudan stood at 1,864,200, a decrease from the 1,997,000 at the start of the year. The vast majority of IDPs were in Darfur (88 per cent) and Kordofan (9 per cent). Some have been living in protracted

displacement for over a decade, while others were recently displaced amid continued conflict. Segments of this population made spontaneous returns to their areas of origin, but sporadic and localized clashes in Darfur’s Jebel Marra area continued to drive displacement in 2018.^{61, 62}

The number of IDPs in Iraq declined over 2018, decreasing from 2.6 million at the start of 2018 to 1.8 million at the end. There were close to 1 million returns during the year and 150,200 new displacements. Ninewa Province, which includes the city of Mosul, maintained the largest IDP population at 576,000, despite 437,000 returns during the year. Although the safe, voluntary and informed return of displaced

59 “2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – Afghanistan”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_2019_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

60 “2019 Humanitarian needs overview: – South Sudan”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/south_sudan_humanitarian_needs_overview_2019_final.pdf

61 “2018 Humanitarian needs overview: – Sudan”. See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/sudan_2018_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

62 “Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin, issue 20, 26 November – 23 December 2018”. See: reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_Sudan_Humanitarian_Bulletin_Issue_20_%2826_November_-_23_December_2018%29.pdf

people remained an overarching priority, it became increasingly clear that a significant majority of current IDPs may not return to their area of origin.⁶³ In the aftermath of the Government of Iraq's conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) armed group, protection remained a crucial humanitarian priority.⁶³

According to official statistics, 1.5 million people were registered as internally displaced with the Ukrainian authorities. Of these, the United Nations estimated that 800,000 resided permanently in Government-controlled areas, while others moved frequently across the "contact line" or registered as IDPs to maintain access to their pensions. Most of those displaced had been living in displacement since the peak of hostilities in 2014, unable to return home in the absence of a sustained peace.⁶⁴

Cameroon experienced a trebling of its internally displaced population from 221,700 at the start of 2018 to 668,500 at the end, with over half a million new displacements. While the majority of IDPs continued to flee violence from the Southwest and Northwest regions, the incidence of internal displacement in the Far North slowed gradually amid increasing numbers of returns to the region.⁶⁵ People in the Far North were especially vulnerable due to loss of property, limited access to services, and general mistrust and stigmatization by community members on suspicion of collaboration and affiliation with Boko Haram.⁶⁶

Other countries with significant IDP populations reported at the end of 2018 included CAR (641,000), Azerbaijan (620,400), Myanmar (370,300) and Georgia (282,400).

Over the course of 2018, about 5.4 million people were forced to move within their countries due to conflict and violence, according to data reported by UNHCR offices. [Figure 16]. This is a significant reduction compared with 2017 (8.5 million) and similar to 2016 (4.9 million).

The dramatic increase of over 1.5 million internally displaced people in Ethiopia was mainly the result of

inter-communal violence in various pockets of the country over territory, pasture and water rights in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist areas along regional boundaries.⁶⁶

Other countries with high levels of new internal displacement included Somalia (602,700), Nigeria (581,700), Cameroon (514,500), Afghanistan (343,300), DRC (322,000), CAR (266,400), Yemen (264,300), Syria (256,700), the Philippines (212,600), Iraq (150,200), Colombia (118,100), Mali (82,100), Niger (51,800), Burkina Faso (44,700), Libya (33,200) and Congo (30,200).

As in previous years, Iraq continued to have the highest number of returns in 2018 with close to 1 million people (945,000) returning to their localities of origin. This was followed by the Philippines with 445,700 returns, the vast majority of which were to locations on the island of Mindanao. CAR also saw 306,200 returns, followed by Nigeria (176,200), Yemen (133,600), Pakistan (83,500), Afghanistan (73,500), Cameroon (67,700) and Libya (43,700). ■

⁶³ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview:– Iraq". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_hno_irq_28122018.pdf

⁶⁴ "2019 Humanitarian needs overview:– Ukraine". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/ukraine_2019_humanitarian_needs_overview_en.pdf

⁶⁵ "2018 Aperçu des besoins humanitaires: – Cameroon". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/cmr_hno18_v1.3_light.pdf

⁶⁶ "Ethiopia humanitarian needs overview 2019". See: www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/ethiopia_humanitarian_needs_overview_2019.pdf

GREECE. Children play with a kitten at the transit site located above a fishing village in northern Lesvos. In September 2018, the reception and identification centre in Moria, on the island of Lesvos, hosted more than 8,500 asylum-seekers, almost four times its official capacity. Some 35,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece between January and September 2018 – an increase of 48 per cent compared to 2017.

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CHAPTER 5

Asylum-Seekers

1 in 5 asylum seekers come from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

This chapter presents the main trends in asylum applications and decisions in 2018. Note that it does not include information on mass influxes of refugees or those recognized as refugees on a group or prima facie basis.

During the year, some 2.1 million individual applications for asylum or refugee status were submitted to States or UNHCR in 158 countries or territories in 2018, a small increase from 2017 when there were 1.9 million.^{67,68} Of the provisional total of 2.1 million, 1.7 million were initial applications lodged in “first instance” procedures,⁶⁹ while the remaining claims were submitted at second instance, including with courts or other appellate bodies.⁷⁰

In many countries, UNHCR may undertake refugee status determination. In those countries, UNHCR offices registered 227,800 applications in 2018, of which 12,200 were on appeal or repeat [Table 3].

⁶⁷ As some countries have not yet released all of their national asylum data at the time of writing, this figure is likely to be revised later this year. In particular, it should be noted that South Africa is yet to submit national asylum data.

⁶⁸ Analysis of global levels and by country of asylum is based on individuals, with cases multiplied by the average number of persons per case. Analysis by country of origin is based on individuals and cases as reported by the country of asylum, since inflation factors are not available by country of origin.

⁶⁹ The data for some countries may include a significant number of repeat claims, i.e. the applicant has submitted at least one previous application in the same or another country.

⁷⁰ Statistical information on outcomes of asylum appeals and court proceedings is under-reported in UNHCR’s statistics, particularly in industrialized countries, because this type of data is often either not collected by States or not published openly.

Table 3 | **New and appeal applications registered** | 2013-2018

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
States	870,700	1,401,700	2,063,900	1,941,700	1,661,500	1,906,400
UNHCR	203,200	245,700	269,400	208,100	263,400	227,800
Jointly**	5,800	12,900	17,800	26,300	24,300	11,500
Total	1,079,700	1,660,300	2,351,100	2,176,100	1,949,100	2,145,600
% UNHCR only	19	15	11	10	14	11

* Provisional figures.

** Refers to refugee status determination conducted jointly by UNHCR and governments.

New individual asylum applications registered⁷¹

By receiving country⁷²

As in 2017, the United States of America continued to be the largest recipient of new asylum applications, with 254,300 registered during 2018 [Figure 17].⁷³ While this was a decrease compared with 2017 (331,700), it was similar to 2016 (262,000). As in previous years, El Salvador was the most common nationality of origin of applicants for asylum during 2018 with 33,400 claims, a decrease on the 49,500 submitted in 2017 and about the same as 2016 (33,600). Also, as in 2017, Guatemalans were the next largest group with 33,100 new applications. Venezuelans became the third most common nationality of applicants for asylum during 2018 with 27,500 applications, reflecting the continued deterioration of conditions in the country.⁷⁴ This was followed by applicants from Honduras with 24,400 applications and Mexicans (20,000). As in previous years, applicants from Central America and Mexico made up about half of all applications (54 per cent). Other countries from which there were significant applicants for asylum in 2018 included India (9,400) and China (9,400). Overall, claims were received from applicants from 166 countries or territories.

As a result of the crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the number of asylum applications increased sharply in Peru, which became the second largest recipient of asylum applications globally with 192,500. Nearly all such claims were submitted by Venezuelans (190,500). In 2017, by contrast, Peru received 37,800 asylum claims and 4,400 in 2016.

Germany continued to experience a decline in the number of new asylum applications received with 161,900 and became the third largest recipient of new

asylum claims. This compared with 198,300 in 2017, as well as the peak of 722,400 in 2016. As in previous years, Syrians made up the largest number of asylum claims with 44,200 although this declined to 27 per cent as a proportion of all claims. Also, as in 2017, Iraqis were the second most common nationality of origin with 16,300 claims in 2018, although this constituted a decline from the 21,900 in 2017. The number of applications from Iranians increased in 2018 to 10,900 to become the third most common nationality. Of note is the decrease in applications from Afghans: While there were 127,000 such applications in 2016, there were only 9,900 in 2018. Other nationalities with significant numbers of new asylum-seekers in Germany were Nigeria (10,200), Turkey (10,200), Eritrea (5,600) and Somalia (5,100).

The fourth largest recipient of new asylum claims in 2018 was France with 114,500 registered, a 23 per cent increase on 2017. Unlike previous years, applicants from Afghanistan were the most common with 10,300 new applications, compared with 6,600 in 2017. Albanians were the next most common nationality with 8,300 claims, followed by Georgia (6,800), Guinea (6,700), Côte d'Ivoire (5,300) and Syria (5,000).

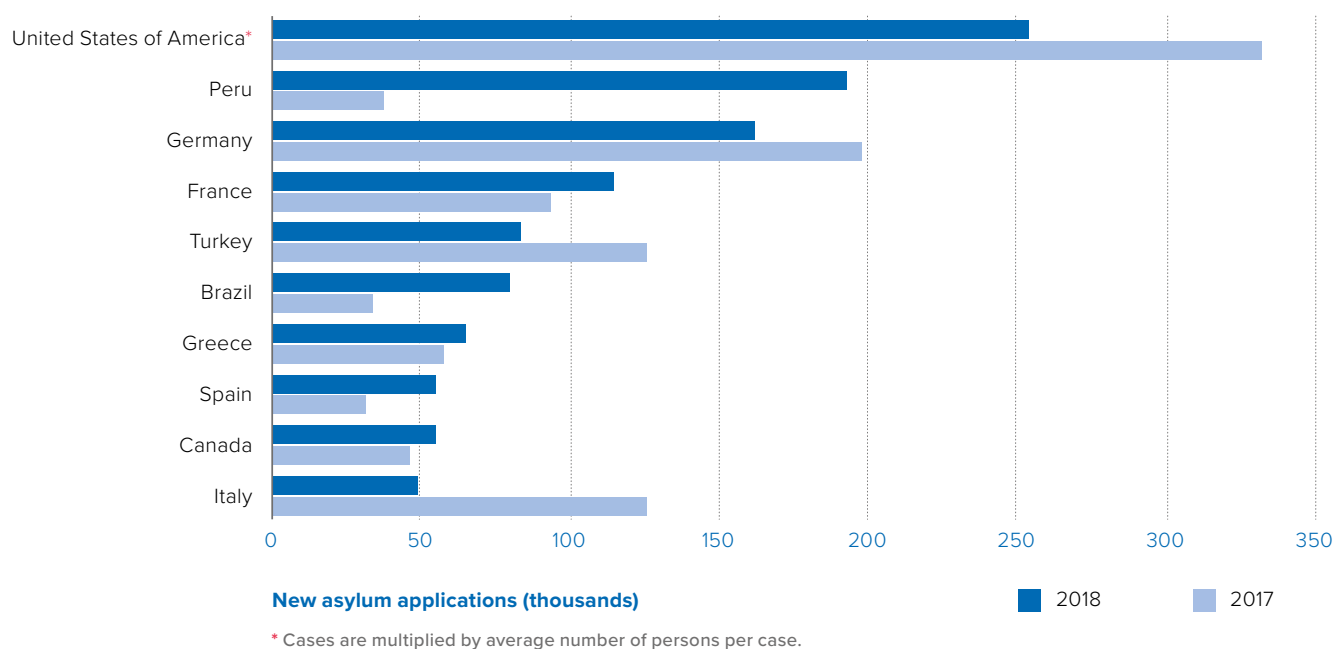
⁷¹ Figures quoted in this section relate to new asylum applications lodged at the first instance. Appeal, court, repeat, or re-opened applications are excluded, to the extent possible.

⁷² The number of applications reported for a country is based on individuals, with cases multiplied by an inflation factor when provided. Any further analysis by country of origin is based on individuals and cases, as inflation factors are not provided by country of origin.

⁷³ Estimated number of individuals based on the number of new affirmative asylum cases (96,600) and multiplied by 1.501 to reflect the average number of individuals per case (Source: US Department of Homeland Security) and the number of defensive asylum applications (109,300 individuals) (Source: US Department of Justice).

⁷⁴ The actual number of Venezuelan new asylum-seekers is likely significantly higher. Venezuelans are disproportionately more likely to submit affirmative asylum claims through the Department of Homeland Security (96 per cent of all claims) which reports to UNHCR claims by cases that often include more than one person rather than defensive claims through the Department of Justice which are reported by individuals. In contrast, 23 per cent of Salvadoran new asylum claims, 29 per cent of Guatemalan claims and 23 per cent of Honduran claims were submitted through the Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 17 | Major recipient countries of new asylum applications | 2017-2018



Turkey continued to receive individual asylum claims from nationalities other than Syrians who receive protection under the Government's Temporary Protection Regulation. Turkey thus became the fifth largest recipient of new asylum claims with 83,800 submitted in 2018. (These figures pertain to claims submitted to UNHCR as of 10th September 2018, after which UNHCR Turkey phased out its role in registering foreigners wishing to apply for international protection and the Government of Turkey moved to a fully decentralized procedure for all persons seeking international protection.) Afghan asylum-seekers continued to submit the most claims in 2018 with 53,000, compared with 67,400 in 2017. Similarly, asylum claims from Iraqis remained the second most common and declined from 44,500 in 2017 to 20,000 in 2018. There were also 6,400 claims from Iranians. These three countries accounted for nearly all newly received individual asylum claims in Turkey (95 per cent).

Brazil received 80,000 applications in 2018 to become the sixth largest recipient of asylum claims, a rise from 33,800 in 2017 and 10,300 in 2016. Like Peru, Brazil also witnessed a steep increase in asylum applications from Venezuelans, who accounted for more than three quarters of such claims in 2018 (61,600). There were also 7,000 applicants from Haitians.

Greece saw a continuation of the trend of increasing new individual asylum claims from 57,000 in 2017 to 65,000 in 2018 (compared with 11,400 in 2015). As in previous years, the most common nationality of origin was Syrian (13,200), although this constituted a decrease from the 16,300 submitted in 2017, and thus represented a decreasing proportion of claims. In contrast, there were increases in claims submitted by Afghans (11,800 in 2018 and 7,500 in 2017) and Iraqis (9,600 in 2018 and 7,900 in 2017), the second and third most common nationalities of origin, respectively.

During 2018, Spain received 55,700 new asylum claims, the eighth largest number globally and again a significant rise from 31,700 in 2017. The number of applications from Venezuelans, the most common nationality of origin, nearly doubled from 10,600 in 2017 to 20,000 in 2018. This was followed by Colombian applicants who also saw an increase from 2,500 in 2017 to 8,800 in 2018.

Canada was the ninth largest recipient of new asylum claims with 55,400 registered in 2018, a small increase on the claims registered in 2017 (47,000). Nationals of Nigeria submitted the largest number (9,600).

The number of new asylum applications in Italy more than halved to 48,900 in 2018, making it the tenth largest recipient of asylum claims. Pakistanis submitted the most applications with 7,300, followed

Table 4 | **New asylum claims registered in UNHCR offices with more than 10,000 claims*** | 2014-2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Turkey **	87,800	133,300	78,600	126,100	83,800
Malaysia	25,700	22,100	20,100	23,700	23,800
Egypt	10,000	21,100	28,500	27,800	23,000
Libya	2,900	100	1,900	6,600	16,300
Jordan	29,100	19,400	12,000	10,600	10,400

* Excluding appeal and review claims.

** Pertains only up to 10 September 2018.

by Nigerians with 5,100 new applications (compared with the 25,100 in 2017).

Other countries receiving large numbers of new asylum claims were the United Kingdom (37,500), Mexico (29,600), Australia (28,800), Costa Rica (28,000), Malaysia (23,800), Egypt (23,000) and the Netherlands (20,500).

Among countries where refugee status determination is carried out by UNHCR, the office in Turkey continued to receive the most claims with 83,800 [Table 4]. As noted, these claims were recorded only until 10 September 2018, when the Government of Turkey assumed responsibility for all applications. The UNHCR office in Malaysia received the next highest number of new applications with 23,800, followed by Egypt (23,000),⁷⁵ Libya (16,300) and Jordan (10,400).

By nationality

For the first time, asylum claims from Venezuelans dominated the global asylum statistics with 341,800 new claims in 2018, accounting for more than 1 in 5 claims submitted [Figure 18]. The new individual claims are in addition to an estimated 2.6 million Venezuelans who have fled the country, many of whom have international protection needs but have not sought asylum (see page 24 for more information on the Venezuela situation). This number is a sharp increase compared with 116,000 claims in 2017, 34,200 in 2016 and 10,200 in 2015.

By far the most Venezuelan claims were submitted in Peru, with 190,500 new applications compared with 33,100 in 2017 – a more than five-fold increase. This was followed by 61,600 claims submitted in Brazil, where 17,900 were reported in 2017. There were 27,500 claims in the United States of America,

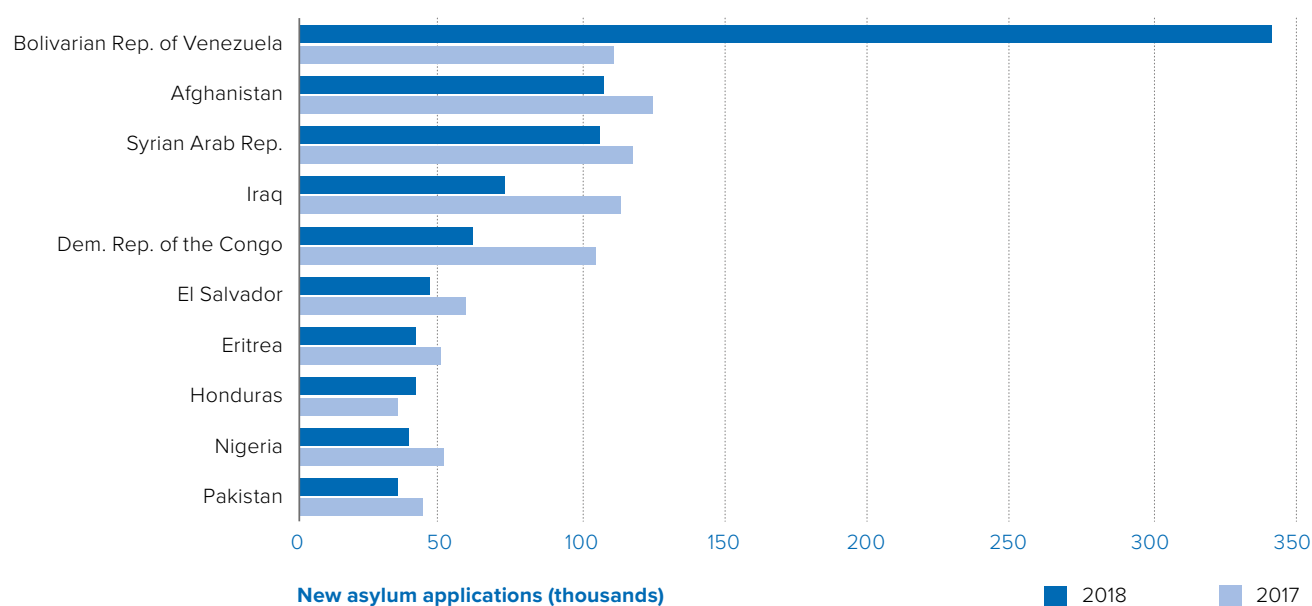
although the number of people is very likely to be higher since nearly all Venezuelan claims were affirmative applications reported as cases and can pertain to more than one person. Other countries that received significant claims were Spain (20,000), Ecuador (11,400), Trinidad and Tobago (7,100), Mexico (6,300), Panama (4,600), Costa Rica (2,900), Colombia (2,600), Chile (1,700) and Canada (1,300).

Afghanistan was the next most common country of origin for individual new asylum applications in 2018, with 107,500 claims lodged in 80 countries. As has been the case since 2016, Turkey received the most claims in 2018 with 53,000 registered. This was followed by Greece which received 11,800 claims – a significant increase on the 7,500 in 2017. A similar increase was seen in France, from 6,600 in 2017 to 10,300 in 2018. In contrast, there has been a sharp decline in Germany from 127,000 new claims in 2016 to 16,400 in 2017 and 9,900 in 2018. New Afghan claims for asylum were received in India (4,500), Austria (2,100), the United Kingdom (2,100), Pakistan (1,800), Switzerland (1,100), Bulgaria (1,100) and Belgium (1,000).

Asylum claims from Syrians were the third most common, in contrast to previous years. There were 106,200 new claims in 2018, a quarter of the peak number of 409,900 lodged in 2015 and a small decline on the 117,100 submitted in 2017. The number of new individual claims is in addition to new arrivals in countries where Syrians receive prima facie or group recognition such as Jordan and Lebanon; or in Turkey, where they were granted protection under the Government's Temporary Protection regime. Excluding these countries, individual asylum claims

⁷⁵ As of 31 December 2018, an additional 11,200 individuals have been awaiting registration with UNHCR after an initial visit to UNHCR.

Figure 18 | Major source countries of new asylum-seekers | 2017-2018



from Syrians were lodged in 98 countries, mostly in Europe. Germany received the most claims with 44,200, followed by Greece (13,100). In addition, the United Arab Emirates (7,200), France (5,000), Austria (3,300), the Netherlands (3,000), Spain (2,900), Belgium (2,800), Sweden (2,500), Saudi Arabia (2,200) and Albania (2,100) all received large numbers of claims for asylum from Syrians.

The fourth most common country of origin for asylum applications was Iraq with 72,600 new claims in 2018, compared with 113,500 the previous year. Turkey received the most new claims from Iraqis with 20,000 in 2018. This was followed by Germany, which received 16,300 in 2018, a decrease compared with the 21,900 received in 2017 and dramatically fewer than the 96,100 received in 2016. Iraqis also applied for asylum in Greece (9,600), Syria (4,500), the United Kingdom (3,600), Jordan (2,700) and France (2,300), as well as 68 other countries.

Similar to the past couple of years, the fifth most common country of origin remained DRC with 61,100 new applications in 2018, in addition to the 123,400 new refugee registrations on a group or prima facie basis. Burundi was the recipient of the largest number of claims with 13,700, followed by Zambia (9,600), Uganda (8,900), Kenya (6,600), Malawi (4,100), France (4,000) and Zimbabwe (2,300).

Salvadorans submitted 46,800 new claims globally in 2018, the sixth highest. Most of these were

submitted in the United States of America (33,400), although significant numbers were also registered in Mexico (6,200) and Spain (2,300).

There were 42,000 new asylum claims from Eritreans in 2018, a small decline from the 49,900 in 2017. Israel received the most claims with 6,300, followed by Germany (5,600), Libya (4,700), Uganda (3,400), Switzerland (2,500) and the United Kingdom (2,200).

Hondurans made up the eighth largest group to apply for asylum in 2018 with 41,500 new claims. More than half of these claims were submitted in the United States of America (24,400), in addition to 13,600 registered in Mexico and 2,500 in Spain.

Nigerians were the ninth most common nationality for new asylum-seekers with 39,200 new claims in 2018 compared with 52,000 in 2017. Of these, 10,200 claims were registered in Germany, followed by 9,600 in Canada, 5,100 in Italy, 3,500 in the United States of America and 3,100 in France.

Nationals of Pakistan submitted 35,800 new asylum claims in 2018. Italy received the largest number of these claims with 7,300, followed by Greece (7,200), the United Kingdom (2,600) and Germany (2,200).

Other nationalities that submitted significant numbers of new asylum claims in 2018 included the Islamic Republic of Iran (35,800), Guatemala (34,800), Sudan (32,400), Nicaragua (31,400),

Table 5 | **Substantive decisions take** | 2014-2018*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
States	941,800	1,086,400	1,408,500	1,395,000	1,064,100
UNHCR	99,600	91,600	83,400	87,400	67,500
Jointly**	4,400	6,400	6,000	4,300	2,600
Total	1,045,800	1,184,400	1,498,000	1,486,600	1,134,200
% UNHCR only	10	8	6	6	6

* Provisional figures.

** Refers to refugee status determination conducted jointly by UNHCR and governments.

Turkey (30,000), Somalia (27,800), China (27,500) and Colombia (25,500).

All figures in this section should be considered indicative, because the country of origin for some asylum-seekers is unknown, underestimated or undisclosed by some States. Data may include instances of double counting, as some people are likely to have applied for asylum in more than one country. Additionally, only partial data have been received from Belgium, Luxembourg and South Africa, and data from Turkey pertain only until 10 September 2018.

Decisions

Provisional figures indicate that States and UNHCR rendered 1,134,200 decisions on individual asylum applications – new, on appeal, or repeat – during 2018 [Table 5], a decrease from the high seen in 2016.⁷⁶ These figures do not include cases closed for administrative reasons with no decision issued to applicants,⁷⁷ of which 514,900 were reported in 2018.

Of the total substantive decisions taken, UNHCR staff globally adjudicated 67,500 or 6 per cent, a decrease from the 87,400 reported in 2017 but with the proportion of all decisions remaining the same. The decrease is mainly linked to the handover of refugee status determination to national authorities, a decrease in refugee status determination for resettlement purposes and backlog clearance projects. Data relating to individual decisions are incomplete, however, as a few States have not yet released all of their official statistics. Thus, there are likely to be additional substantive decisions that have been taken by States in 2018, figures on which will be updated later.

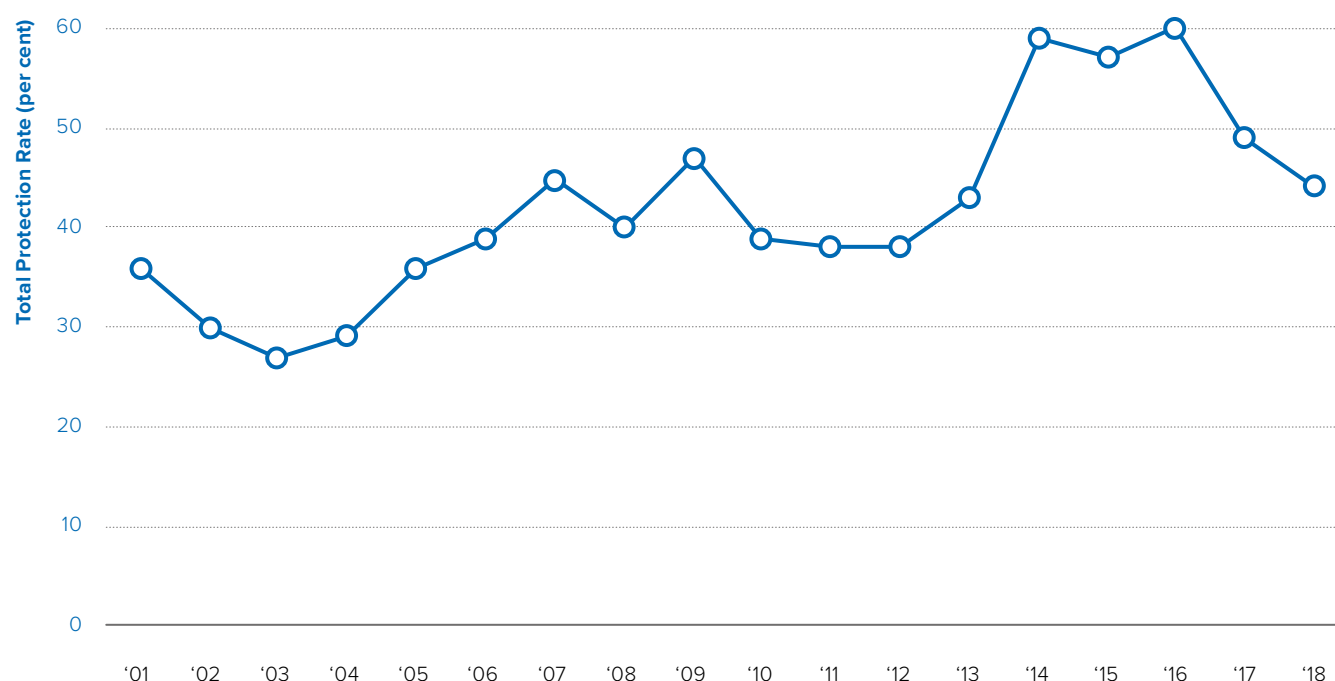
Available data indicate that 500,100 asylum-seekers were granted protection in 2018, with 351,100 recognized as refugees and 149,000 granted a complementary form of protection. This was the lowest figure since 2013. About 634,100 claims were rejected on substantive grounds, a number that includes negative decisions at the first instance and on appeal. Asylum-seekers rejected at both first and appeal instances may be reported twice, depending on the methods used by governments for reporting decisions on individual asylum applications.

At the global level (UNHCR and State asylum procedures combined), the Total Protection Rate (TPR) was 44 per cent – i.e. the percentage of substantive decisions that resulted in any form of international protection [Figure 19].⁷⁸ This rate is lower than the previous year when it stood at 49 per cent and substantially lower than the 60 per cent reported in 2016 (although at this time global rates are indicative). Looking at the global figures for the countries of origin with over 10,000 substantive decisions, nationals of Burkina Faso had the highest TPR with 86 per cent, followed by nationals of DRC (83 per cent), Eritrea (81 per cent), Syria (81 per cent) and Somalia (73 per cent). Venezuelans received protection in under half of decisions (40 per cent) as did Iraqis (46 per cent), while Afghans received

⁷⁶ Refers to decisions taken at all levels in the asylum procedure.

⁷⁷ Also referred to as “non-substantive” decisions”, which may result from the death of the applicant, no-show for interview, withdrawal of the application, abandonment of the claim or the determination that another country is responsible for the claim (“Dublin II” procedure), among other factors.

⁷⁸ UNHCR uses two rates to compute the proportion of refugee claims accepted. The Refugee Recognition Rate is the proportion of asylum-seekers accorded refugee status out of the total number of substantive decisions (Convention status, complementary protection and rejected cases). The Total Protection Rate is the proportion of asylum-seekers accorded refugee status or a complementary form of protection by the total number of substantive decisions (formerly referred to as Total Recognition Rate or TRR). Non-substantive decisions are, to the extent possible, excluded from both calculations. For the purposes of global comparability, UNHCR uses only these two rates and does not report rates calculated by national authorities.

Figure 19 | **Global Total Protection Rates** | 2001-2018

protection in just over half (54 per cent). The TPR varies greatly among countries of asylum. For example, Switzerland had a TPR of 75 per cent, compared with Australia and Sweden where only about a quarter of asylum decisions granted protection (27 per cent and 23 per cent respectively). Germany made the most substantive decisions (245,700) and had a TPR of 43 per cent.

Pending claims

There were 3,503,300 asylum-seekers with pending claims at the end of 2018, an 13 per cent increase on the 3,090,900 awaiting decisions at the end of the previous year and a continuation of an increasing trend over recent years.

The largest asylum-seeker population at the end of 2018 continued to be in the United States of America, where the population increased from 642,700 at the start of the year to 719,000 at the end.

In Germany, the asylum-seeker population continued to decline, as decisions were made on the large number of applications lodged in the previous years, and stood at 369,300 at the end of 2018. This was a 14 per cent decline on the 429,300 asylum-seekers

at the end of 2017. The majority of these were cases pending court proceedings.

Turkey hosted the third largest asylum-seeker population with 311,700 pending claims as of 10 September 2018. This figure does not include Syrians who are protected under the country's Temporary Protection Regulation and do not undergo individual refugee status determination.

Peru has seen a more than six-fold increase of its asylum-seeker population from 37,800 at the end of 2017 to 230,900 at the end of 2018. This is mainly due to the large number of asylum claims from Venezuelans received during the year.

Other countries with more than 50,000 asylum claims pending at the end of 2018 included South Africa (184,200),⁷⁹ Brazil (152,700), Italy (105,600), France (89,100), Canada (78,800), Spain (78,700), Greece (76,100), Egypt (68,200) and Australia (60,600).

Venezuelans had the largest number of pending asylum claims in 2018 with 464,200 cases. This compares with 45,100 in 2016 and 148,000 in 2017. Asylum-seekers from Afghanistan constituted

⁷⁹ Mid-2018.



GERMANY. Elahe, a 44-year-old tailor and asylum-seeker from the Islamic Republic of Iran, works at Mimycri in Berlin. This non-profit organization upcycles materials from refugee boats and turns them into fashion accessories. Their aim is simple: to raise awareness of the plight of refugees at sea and provide opportunities for those who would otherwise struggle to find employment.

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the second largest nationality of origin with 310,100 pending claims at the end of 2018 compared with 334,000 at the end of 2017. Iraqi asylum-seekers were the third most common nationality and continued to decrease slightly from 272,600 at end-2017 to 256,700 at end-2018. Asylum-seekers from Syria have continued to decline, reaching 139,600 at the end of 2018, compared with 146,700 in 2017.

Other countries of origin with significant numbers of asylum-seekers awaiting decisions were DRC

(133,400), Ethiopia (133,300), El Salvador (119,300), China (94,400), Mexico (89,800), the Islamic Republic of Iran (87,400), Guatemala (86,900), Nigeria (84,700), Eritrea (78,600), Honduras (76,500) and Pakistan (75,400). Despite improved statistical reporting on pending asylum applications, the actual number of undecided asylum cases is unknown, as some countries do not report this information. ■

UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN

While all children must be protected, some of the youngest asylum-seekers and refugees face even greater risks. This is particularly the case for “unaccompanied and separated children” – minors who have fled alone or have become separated from parents and are not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so. It is essential that data are collected to identify these children, protect and assist them.

In efforts to improve reporting on this vulnerable population, UNHCR began reporting on unaccompanied and separated refugee children, in addition to asylum applicants in last year’s reporting and has decided to continue to do so in its efforts to improve and expand data. Unfortunately, data on displaced unaccompanied and separated children are limited, both in terms of availability and the quality of data reported. Many countries with significant asylum claims do not report on unaccompanied and separated children among asylum applicants. Similarly, many countries with large registered refugee populations do not report on unaccompanied and separated children in the population.

Asylum applications

In 2018, provisional data indicated that 27,600 unaccompanied or separated children sought asylum on an individual basis in at least 60 countries that report on this figure. While it is known that this is an underestimate, the trend indicates a decline in the number of unaccompanied or separated children applying for asylum, which reflects the overall trends in declining asylum claims since 2015. Most of these claims were from children aged 15 to 17 (18,500) but a substantial minority were from younger children aged under 15 (6,000).

As in previous years, Germany received the most asylum claims from unaccompanied and separated children with 4,100 – substantially lower than the 35,900 in 2016 and 9,100 in 2017. Although the number of asylum-seekers has declined overall, the decrease in applications by unaccompanied and separated children was nonetheless disproportionately high.

As in previous years, children from Afghanistan submitted the most such claims in Germany (700) but this was just 5 per cent of the 15,000 claims submitted by unaccompanied and separated Afghan children in 2016. The next most common nationalities were

Somalia (600), Guinea (500), Eritrea (500), Syria (400) and Iraq (300).

Other countries that received significant numbers of asylum applications from unaccompanied and separated children included the United Kingdom (2,900), Greece (2,600), Sweden (1,700), Egypt (1,700), Turkey (1,700), Libya (1,500), Tanzania (1,400), the Netherlands (1,200) and Morocco (1,200).

As in previous years, the most common country of origin for unaccompanied and separated child asylum applicant was Afghanistan with 4,800 claims – just over half the 8,800 submitted in 2017 and substantially below the 26,700 in 2016. Eritrea continued to be the second most common country of origin with 3,500 claims.

Registered refugees

In 2017, UNHCR began to report on the number of unaccompanied and separated children in the refugee population from UNHCR refugee registers and in 2018 requested governments to do the same. In response, 53 countries reported a total of 111,000 unaccompanied and separated child refugees in 2018.

The largest number of unaccompanied and separated child refugees was reported in Uganda with 41,200, with the majority aged under 15 (29,900) and 2,800 aged under 5. Most of these children originated from South Sudan (37,000) and DRC (3,500). Unaccompanied and separated children represented nearly 5 per cent of the entire South Sudanese refugee population present in Uganda.

Kenya reported 13,200 unaccompanied and separated children in 2018. Other countries with significant such populations included Sudan (11,300), DRC (9,400), Canada (8,400), Chad (4,200), Lebanon (3,200), Burundi (2,200), Morocco (2,200), Guinea (2,000), Rwanda (1,800), Egypt (1,800), Zambia (1,500), Ireland (1,100) and Iraq (1,000).

As in 2017, South Sudan was the most common country of origin for unaccompanied and separated child refugees, with 58,600 representing 53 per cent of the global population. Other countries of origin reported for unaccompanied and separated children included DRC (9,900), Rwanda (7,600), Syria (7,600), CAR (5,600), Burundi (2,300), Somalia (2,200), Côte d’Ivoire (2,100), Nigeria (2,000), Afghanistan (1,500) and Sudan (1,100). ■

BANGLADESH. A young Rohingya child is full of smiles as she stands outside a shelter for refugees in Kutupalong camp, Bangladesh.
© UNHCR/ROGER ARNOLD

