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**HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION FOR  
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS:**

An International Conference  
June 24-25, 1991

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Convened by  
the Refugee Policy Group  
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## CONFERENCE REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

A meeting of 40 international experts was convened by the Refugee Policy Group (RPG) to address the human rights dimension of internal displacement and recommend measures the international community could take to enhance protection for those in refugee-like situations within their own countries. At present, there are an estimated twenty million people internally displaced, 13 million in Africa, 5 million in Asia, 1 million in the Americas and 1 million in Europe.

The meeting was co-chaired by The Honorable Flora MacDonald, a member of RPG's Board of Trustees and former Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada; and by Dennis Gallagher, RPG's Executive Director. Special addresses were given by Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Tony Hall, Chairman of the Select Committee on Hunger of the U.S. Congress.

The participants included human rights specialists, experts from humanitarian organizations, international lawyers, United Nations and regional organization officials, and government representatives. The meeting was divided into sessions which were chaired by Francis Deng, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the Sudan; Martin Ennals, former Secretary-General of Amnesty International and International Alert; Larry Minear, Visiting Fellow at Brown University and the Overseas Development Council; Nigel Rodley, Department of Law, University of Essex; Jerome J. Shestack, Chairman of The Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights and of the International League for Human Rights; and Roger Winter, Director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees.

Roberta Cohen, RPG's Senior Advisor for Human Rights, gave the overview. She noted that with civil wars, internal strife, ethnic and minority conflicts so widespread in the world today, increasing numbers of people were being forced to flee their homes and become refugees in their own countries. **Despite their growing numbers and desperate plight, no effective international system had yet been put in place to assist or protect them.** Most of the world's internally displaced were forced from their homes by civil war or internal strife. Others were displaced by ethnic persecution. Still others were forcibly resettled by their own governments on political, racial or ethnic grounds. Many were the victims of physical assaults, deliberate starvation, forced conscription, forced labor and other egregious human rights violations. But because they had not crossed a border, internally displaced persons often fell beyond the mandates of refugee and relief organizations and received little or no protection from the human rights community. While international attention had begun to focus on the relief needs of those displaced, little attention had yet been paid to their protection needs or the defense of their human rights.

**Participants were unanimous in endorsing the need to design a more effective international response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons.** They pointed out that the subject could not be more timely. The tragic situation of the Kurds and Shi'ites of Iraq had brought home to the international community the need for more effective protection measures for those displaced within the borders of their own countries. At the same time, the combination of political and military factors in the Iraqi situation were probably unique and would not be easily replicated in other parts of the world. An international system was needed that would apply universally to all situations of internal displacement and serve to assist and protect those at risk.

**There was consensus that the protection of internally displaced persons would require far greater attention and resources from international and regional organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations than had been the case to date.** Cooperation among them would also have to be strengthened. No single organization or approach could effectively address the problem alone. **Adequate protection for internally displaced persons would require a combination of expanded institutional responsibility, stronger political leadership,**

**more effective legal safeguards, new regional and international efforts to address emergencies, greater media attention, and increased financial and human resources.** Participants also cautioned against overstructuring. An effective international system would allow for flexibility, improvisation and the ability to take advantage of opportunities. The greater the involvement of the entire international community with internally displaced persons, it was pointed out, the more difficult for governments to invoke sovereignty as an excuse to impede access to persons at risk. **Everyone agreed that the time was ripe for the international community to undertake bold new initiatives.**

## GREATER INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Participants urged a rethinking of the mandates of U.N. agencies to enable them to deal more effectively and rapidly with the assistance and protection needs of internally displaced persons. More flexible mandates, modeled after UNICEF's, were proposed for the different U.N. agencies so that they could operate with fewer constraints.**

In her address to the meeting, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, explained that the UNHCR had been involved in assisting and protecting internally displaced persons for many years even though it did not have a formal mandate to do so. It generally became involved when assisting repatriated refugees in areas with a significant internally displaced population or when repatriated refugees themselves became displaced.

For the UNHCR to significantly expand its role in assisting and protecting internally displaced persons, a number of problems would first have to be addressed. Work with internally displaced persons could not be allowed to threaten the institution of asylum or be used to justify denials of asylum. Nor could involvement with internally displaced persons be allowed to interfere with the UNHCR's primary objective of protecting and assisting refugees. Resources also would have to be found. The High Commissioner said she favored a U.N. reorganization that would permit U.N. agencies to meet the needs of displaced persons more effectively.

The Executive Director of UNICEF, James Grant, described the unique role UNICEF had come to play in helping displaced persons on all sides of civil war situations. This had been the case since UNICEF's founding when it operated in both communist and non-communist areas of China. UNICEF considered it had an obligation to intervene to reach children in need. Over the years, the precedent of UNICEF's involvement in civil wars had widened to the extent that both sides often agreed to cease fighting in order to enable UNICEF to undertake immunization programs. The establishment of corridors of tranquility to

enable the passage of large quantities of relief supplies represented a further expansion of UNICEF's role. Governments, UNICEF found, were more willing to cooperate when assured that recognition was not being conferred on insurgencies and that UNICEF would undertake monitoring of supplies to prevent their diversion for military purposes. UNICEF would welcome if other U.N. agencies operated similarly. There was a need to increase international recognition for the idea that the most vulnerable groups should receive humanitarian assistance even in civil conflicts.

A representative of UNDP reported that the U.N. Secretary-General had designated UNDP resident representatives to serve as the resident coordinators of international relief for internally displaced persons. Training programs had been instituted for UNDP staff to help them deal with humanitarian emergencies. The agency, however, did not have a right of initiative and had not been assigned any protection responsibilities.

Several participants proposed that UNICEF's more flexible mandate be extended to other humanitarian agencies, in particular UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). UNICEF, they pointed out, was the only intergovernmental agency that was able to deal with insurgent groups and that initiated action without waiting for governmental request and consent. Participants also proposed the further enlargement of UNICEF's right of initiative.

**The integral relationship between assistance and protection was underscored by several participants.** If persons helped by UNHCR experienced protection difficulties, Mrs. Ogata said, UNHCR had to bring such problems to the attention of the competent authorities or else relief work would be hampered. In the same way, actions taken to impede assistance could result in protection problems. Participants urged that relief programs, in their design and implementation, pay greater attention to protection. The physical layout of camps and the way food was distributed could, for example, affect the way women were treated. If the physical security of aid recipients were not addressed, assistance itself could become "a protection problem."

Some participants pointed out that even if the U.N. developed a more effective system for addressing the needs of internally displaced persons, governments, regional groupings and non-governmental organizations would still have to play major roles. Political and other constraints often prevented multilateral bodies from acting decisively in humanitarian crises. In the Sudan, nearly a quarter of a million people died before the U.N. took action. It is critical that other institutions become involved to ensure that internally displaced persons receive the best protection in all situations.

## **ERODING SOVEREIGNTY**

**Many participants noted that the steady erosion internationally of the concept of absolute sovereignty was making it easier for international organizations, governments and NGOs to intervene on humanitarian grounds when governments refused to meet the needs of their populations and substantial numbers were at risk. The concept of sovereignty today was more understood in terms of conferring responsibilities on governments to assist and protect persons residing on their territories. If governments failed to meet their obligations, they risked undermining their legitimacy. Populations endangered or targeted as enemies increasingly were being seen as of concern to the international community. The pressure of international public opinion had made it harder for governments to ignore their responsibilities and in some cases had even forced governments to allow their citizens access to humanitarian agencies. Governments that refused to acquiesce and invoked sovereignty as an excuse increasingly found themselves on moral ground difficult to defend. Insurgent groups too were finding themselves held to international standards of behavior.**

**Participants considered it essential for the international community to continue to "chip away" and "pierce" narrow definitions of sovereignty so that sovereignty would not be as great a barrier to humanitarian intervention. The far greater willingness of governments jointly to discuss refugee questions, humanitarian issues and human rights concerns demonstrated that notions of sovereignty were changing. Both the human rights and humanitarian systems had contributed to making sovereignty less of an obstacle and more of an opportunity that could benefit internally displaced persons.**

**Because of the human rights movement, governments today were obliged to pay heed to the basic human rights to which individuals are entitled no matter where they resided. The vast range of human rights agreements, signed and ratified by U.N. member states, defined these rights and provided for international action if governments failed to**



respect them. Regionally and internationally, human rights machinery had been set up which subjected all states to scrutiny. **Human rights bodies had over time enlarged their sphere of action to include legitimate methods of intervening in the internal affairs of states, namely fact-finding missions, reports on particular countries, intercessions with offending governments and legal remedies.**

**In the humanitarian area, there had also been successful efforts - sometimes by U.N. agencies, sometimes by NGOs, and sometimes by outside governments - to pierce sovereignty and provide humanitarian assistance when governments were uncooperative.** In some instances, hard diplomatic bargaining persuaded governments and insurgent groups to accept their obligation to provide for the needs of those within their jurisdiction. In other instances, voluntary agencies and donors had been able, without governmental agreement, to undertake cross border operations to help feed beleaguered populations.

**Humanitarian efforts were especially successful when they addressed both human rights and humanitarian concerns.** For example, when humanitarian personnel monitored and accompanied relief efforts, they often helped moderate the behavior of governments and insurgent forces. On other occasions, humanitarian efforts succeeded when they did not confront sovereignty head on but dealt with it indirectly, as in cross border operations or by securing agreement for the principle that persons trapped in war zones are entitled to humanitarian assistance. **Important to the success of many efforts was the involvement of indigenous groups with strong moral underpinnings, such as the churches, and the ability to operate on all sides of a civil conflict.**

### **Humanitarian Intervention**

**Participants strongly endorsed humanitarian intervention, short of military force, to assist and protect internally displaced persons, especially when their right to life was threatened and substantial numbers were at risk.** Participants noted that over time the obligation of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance and promote

human rights was gaining ground and increasingly challenging the principle of non-interference in the domestic jurisdiction of states.

At present, humanitarian intervention existed at a multiplicity of levels. The involvement in different countries of the U.N., governments, and NGOs all constituted a form of intervention. At the same time, justification for humanitarian intervention had to be carefully drawn to ensure that governments did not feel threatened. A government's denial of food to its own population leading to mass starvation was considered an acceptable justification for international intervention. **It was proposed that study be made of the different kinds of violations and at what point they warranted intervention.**

Security Council Resolution 688, participants felt, broke new ground in authorizing international action in a human rights and humanitarian emergency. By boldly linking human rights violations to threats to international peace and security, the Council authorized U.N. humanitarian intervention. Many participants considered the resolution to have advanced considerably the obligation of the international community to address the assistance and protection needs of internally displaced persons. The resolution had made clear that civilians trapped in conflict situations should be helped no matter what the position of their government. Other participants were less sanguine about the future applicability of Resolution 688. They pointed out that it had not been unanimously adopted and that its implementation was closely linked to the politico-military situation in the Gulf. There was general hope, however, that the resolution would serve as a precedent for future Security Council authorization of humanitarian intervention.

### **The Use of Military Force**

Participants, while strongly endorsing humanitarian intervention, were not in agreement about the use of military force to secure humanitarian objectives. Some participants opposed the use of military force on any grounds. But others thought that the employment of military force in humanitarian emergencies should be used as a last resort

after all other measures had clearly failed and massive loss of life was in prospect. When undertaken, military action should accord with law and be multilateral. Unilateral military action on humanitarian grounds, participants pointed out, was still largely unacceptable under international law unless it involved rescuing one's own nationals (e.g. the Entebbe operation). Under the United Nations Charter, the Security Council could authorize the use of multilateral force in a human rights emergency if it deemed that international peace and security were threatened.

**The role the military could play in humanitarian relief was a further subject of debate.** Several participants opposed military involvement in relief assistance. Armed forces, they pointed out, were not easy to control or to educate in the administering of relief. It would be a dangerous precedent to rely upon them in humanitarian emergencies. Military forces at the local level were frequently implicated in human rights abuses and often diverted food aid for their own use or for political purposes. In countries where the armed forces wielded political power, local people did not want to cooperate with them in relief efforts. In the opinion of other participants, the military could make a significant difference in humanitarian efforts, as they did in the cases of Bangladesh and Iraq. In both situations, they paved the way for humanitarian agencies to assume their responsibilities. It was often essential to be able to tap into their resources in setting up field hospitals, flying in relief by helicopter, and rescuing people. **Participants agreed that more discussion was needed about the humanitarian capacity of the military and about whether an international military force should be created to assist in emergency relief.**

## **EXPANDED NGO PROTECTION ROLE**

**The important, indeed critical, role that non-governmental organizations play in providing assistance and protection to internally displaced persons was emphasized by many participants. The work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was cited on several occasions for its political neutrality and impartiality and ability to assist and protect displaced persons on all sides of civil conflicts. Participants considered it essential that all NGOs carefully guard their independence from government manipulation and the neutrality of their positions in civil conflicts. A code of conduct for NGOs recently had been proposed to accomplish these goals.**

**While it was acknowledged that the presence of humanitarian organizations in the field often served as a deterrent to abuse, the need for these organizations to shoulder a greater protection responsibility was emphasized by several participants. They were urged to design assistance programs with more attention to protection and to involve internally displaced persons in the planning and implementation of the programs. They also were urged to broaden their understanding of human rights concerns and its relation to relief work and to cooperate more closely with human rights groups. Even though it was understood that humanitarian organizations had to maintain a low profile in order not to jeopardize relief efforts, it was pointed out that close cooperation with human rights groups would not alter the functions of humanitarian organizations. When human rights abuses went unaddressed, the need for relief generally rose and could become self-perpetuating.**

**Participants also urged human rights organizations to play a greater role in protecting internally displaced persons. It was recommended that they broaden their concept of human rights to enable them to focus more heavily on economic and social rights. Denial of the right to food or to produce food had grave consequences for the survival of large numbers of people and should come within the purview of human rights organizations. Moreover, in civil war situations, governments and insurgent groups regularly and often intentionally**

violated these rights. **It was recommended that even organizations which concentrated exclusively on civil and political rights should expand their definition of the right to life so that the deliberate starvation of persons and the right to food could be included.**

**Human rights groups were urged to pay greater attention to humanitarian law. Human rights and humanitarian law complemented each other, and specialists of both should be urged to work more closely together. Humanitarian law, for example, could bolster human rights efforts because it was binding on rebel forces, could not be derogated from in times of emergency, and explicitly prohibited deliberate starvation. Participants recommended that NGOs hold rebel forces to the same humanitarian and human rights standards to which they held governments. Human rights groups further should advocate ratification of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols as well as of the International Covenants on Human Rights.**

**Participants emphasized that human rights organizations could play a critical role in increasing respect for the rights of internally displaced persons. They could monitor the conditions of internally displaced persons, raise cases with governments and international organizations, and bring gross violations to the attention of the media. They further could seek legal remedies for those denied their rights.**

**Several participants endorsed an actual protection role for human rights personnel in the field although more discussion of this possibility was considered needed. It was proposed that human rights personnel accompany fact-finding missions to ascertain the protection needs of displaced persons, monitor how their security needs were being met, and advise on when conditions were sufficiently safe for their return home.**

**Several participants recommended that it might be politically more feasible to have an expanded human rights role develop indirectly by means of humanitarian intervention. Security Council Resolution 688, for example, provided access for humanitarian organizations which also could be interpreted to include a human rights presence. Human rights concerns, moreover, could be introduced by humanitarian organizations or by U.N. officials in their discussions with governments about humanitarian assistance.**

**Participants recommended measures to increase cooperation between human rights and humanitarian organizations.** One participant proposed the creation of a human rights-humanitarian information data bank to promote information sharing between the two sets of organizations. Another recommended that training programs in emergency preparedness for relief and development groups be jointly conducted with human rights organizations.

**Participants strongly recommended strengthening the capacities of local NGOs to assist and protect internally displaced persons.** In cases where local groups had become involved, the protection of displaced persons was greatly enhanced. Local groups, particularly church groups, were excellent monitors and could be relied upon to alert human rights organizations and the media to serious violations. Often they established networks with associations of lawyers, journalists and doctors. In the Philippines, local pressure resulted in internally displaced persons being able to return to their homes at a time when the government and international organizations sought to discourage them from doing so. Local groups also have been effective in negotiating relief agreements with liberation fronts. They further could be instrumental in teaching people about their rights and the legal safeguards they could use. Because of the dangers many such groups confronted, conference participants urged international NGOs to lend support to their efforts and work to defend them. **International organizations also were urged to devote more energy and resources to developing ties with local groups and involving them directly in emergency efforts.** Donor governments were urged to increase the channeling of resources through them. Community controlled operations, participants observed, were often the most effective.

## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE

Because governments have the primary responsibility for protecting those within their borders, participants urged that emphasis be given to finding the most effective ways of persuading governments to promote human rights and democratic rule and take responsibility for internally displaced persons.

### Sanctions and Incentives

Participants favored the use of both sanctions and incentives to influence governments but recommended that they be applied carefully. If incentives were used too readily, they could reward repressive governments and encourage them to continue harmful policies. On the other hand, if sanctions were applied without sufficient thought to their impact, they could end up harming the very persons they were intended to help. Whereas some governments responded negatively to pressure, others cooperated and results were achieved. In societies which were divided, pressure could strengthen the hand of progressive forces.

Participants urged that before sanctions are used, diplomatic options be exhausted. Diplomacy would be strengthened if it were known that sanctions might be used to back it up. There was consensus that only the most severe abuses should result in sanctions and that the principle of proportionality should be applied - sanctions should be no greater than the objective they were intended to achieve. For optimal effectiveness, sanctions should be monitored and enforced and command widespread external and internal support. Participants favored the undertaking of sanctions and incentives on a multilateral basis so that governments would not be able to play organizations and donors off against each another.

**Some participants made suggestions for the conditioning of economic incentives.** For example, it was proposed that debt relief be offered but on the condition that humanitarian organizations have access to displaced persons. Another participant suggested that a percentage of every aid contribution be set aside for conflict resolution purposes. With regard to African states, it was pointed out that the time was ripe for donor governments to insist that they assume their responsibilities toward internally displaced persons. African governments feared marginalization now that the Cold War was over and were requesting increased foreign assistance.

With regard to the conditioning of development aid, several urged that such aid be denied, or strictly conditioned, to governments which violated the right to life on a massive scale. Such governments, it was pointed out, generally pursued policies that discouraged development. Participants also recommended that when international organizations and governments extended aid, they should encourage the adoption of development policies that address human rights and humanitarian concerns. A number of participants cautioned the international community to move slowly in withholding or conditioning development assistance because it could cause severe economic deprivation and a future crisis. The conditioning of economic aid, moreover, could encourage donor governments to promote their own political agendas. It was agreed that careful consideration should be given to how aid was extended and how it was withheld. Multilateral conditionality was preferred to bilateral.

**Several participants expressed opposition to the conditioning of emergency food aid and criticized U.N. Security Council action that resulted in the withholding of food and medicine from the civilian population in Iraq.** One cautioned that lives could be lost if food were used as a "political bargaining chip." Others pointed out that food aid diverted for military purposes or used to bolster the capacity of offending regimes should not be extended. **It was agreed that a set of criteria should be developed to govern the provision of emergency food.** Food aid should be targeted to the civilian population, should be accounted for, and NGOs should be involved in its distribution.



### **Political Leadership**

Many participants emphasized the importance political leadership could play in influencing governments to provide assistance and protection to internally displaced persons. In times past, progress often had resulted when an individual was prepared to take a chance and seize an opportunity. **It was important that governments and NGOs made it known that they expected the new U.N. Secretary-General to play a strong role in human rights and humanitarian emergencies. The appointment of an Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs could also prove an effective step if the individual chosen exercised political initiative.** In the final analysis, solutions for the internally displaced would depend upon political leadership, several participants emphasized. Non-governmental organizations could play important roles in getting governments and international organizations to exercise the needed political will.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Given the new international political climate, several participants urged that greater emphasis be placed on persuading governments and insurgent forces to resolve the conflicts that caused internal displacement. As one participant remarked, "peace is the best relief activity." Humanitarian efforts, it was pointed out, sometimes led to a de-escalation of tensions and to temporary cessation of fighting. However, humanitarian organizations did not generally go beyond the provision of relief to exploit possibilities for peace openings. Nor did their personnel have the proper training or authority to take advantage of the opportunities that arose. **Participants urged NGOs to become more involved in monitoring conflicts and in promoting their resolution.** Although humanitarian groups did not generally have development, peace or human rights in their mandates, they should begin to take a broader view of these issues and help formulate a broader response.

## REGIONAL INITIATIVES

**Many participants recommended that greater priority be given to regional efforts in solving problems of internal displacement.**

Governments were often readier to cooperate with neighboring states than to tolerate international intervention. African states in particular because of their history favored the regional approach. Much progress had been made in recent years on human rights and humanitarian questions at the regional level.

In Europe, human rights and conflict prevention machinery had been established within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which could be used to address ethnic and minority disputes and problems of internal displacement. **The CSCE process, participants noted, represented one of the best examples of institutionalized humanitarian intervention.** It had a tremendous influence on the behavior of states in the European area, especially with regard to human rights. Participants recommended that the CSCE begin to address the problem of internal displacement and take stronger actions with regard to minority problems.

Opinions varied over the extent to which the European Human Rights Commission and Court would prove effective as mechanisms for dealing with internal displacement. These bodies, it was pointed out, worked slowly, were based on individual claims, and could not initiate action. However, with the inclusion of East European countries in the Council of Europe, European human rights machinery might have to find ways to address problems of internal displacement.

**In the Americas, participants urged the use of the Inter-American Human Rights Court to address problems of internal displacement.** The Court had broad jurisdiction and an important advisory opinion role. It could rule on the obligations of insurgent forces to comply with human rights and humanitarian law and could also address cases of internal displacement. Another forum recommended was the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. **Participants recommended the creation**

of emergency procedures within the Inter-American Commission similar to its special procedures for disappearances. It was also recommended that Commission reports deal more fully with internal displacement. The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, a quasi-governmental body, was recommended as another important mechanism for focusing attention on internal displacement in the Americas.

In Africa, resolutions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had expressed concern over the plight of refugees and displaced persons and called for the elimination of the root causes of mass exoduses, but OAU actions could be stronger. **Participants recommended that the OAU's Commission of Fifteen on Refugees enlarge its scope of activity to deal more fully and effectively with the protection dimension of internal displacement. The OAU's Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights also should be enlisted to address protection needs.** The Commission could issue reports, undertake on-site visits and bring pressure to bear on governments. Conflict prevention machinery, modeled after the CSCE's, could be introduced. One of the difficulties was the tremendous turnover of governments which affected the carrying out of agreements. **Participants recommended that NGOs play a much larger role with the OAU's expert commissions, and also cooperate with the African Center on Human Rights and Democracy, established in the Gambia.**

Participants noted two significant efforts undertaken regionally, in Central America and Southern Africa, to promote regional peace and development and address the needs of displaced persons, refugees and returnees. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees, and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa (SARRED, 1988) and the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA, 1989) had enjoined the U.N. system, governments and NGOs to develop coordinated projects to help uprooted peoples. These efforts laid the groundwork for future initiatives in other areas.

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL REMEDIES

**Participants emphasized the need to clarify and strengthen existing international norms applicable to internally displaced persons and give priority to their enforcement. Since political will was a primary ingredient of implementation, governments and inter-governmental bodies should be enlisted to exert pressure against offenders. To the extent that new international standards were necessary, most participants favored their incremental development. Participants endorsed the creation of new international and regional machinery capable of rapidly addressing human rights and humanitarian emergencies.**

### **Codification of Existing Human Rights and Humanitarian Law**

**A compilation of existing human rights and humanitarian law and U.N. resolutions applicable to internally displaced persons was strongly recommended. The document could be published by NGOs, the U.N. or the academic community. It would cover the broad range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights defined by regional and international agreements. The restatement of norms applicable to internally displaced persons and emergency situations would stimulate their implementation. It also could lead to the strengthening of existing norms by introducing broader interpretations of their provisions. The right to life, for example, could be more broadly interpreted to include a minimum and adequate diet as well as a prohibition against the obstruction of emergency supplies. The right to food could cover the different ways people were denied food, such as by interfering with their ability to produce food or to earn a living. It also could encompass access and the willingness to accept humanitarian assistance. Efforts should be made to build on existing norms, in particular the presumptions in international law in favor of humanitarian access and the right to humanitarian assistance.**

### **Application of Existing Human Rights Machinery**

**Participants urged that existing human rights machinery be applied more fully and effectively to internally displaced persons. NGOs, it was suggested, should bring information about violations of the rights of internally displaced persons to the attention of U.N. human rights bodies (e.g. the Commission on Human Rights and Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) so that human rights fact-finding, reporting, and complaint procedures could be applied to these violations. Greater use of human rights machinery would put the spotlight on offending governments and possibly lead to improved treatment for those internally displaced.**

**It was also recommended that NGOs bring cases of internal displacement to the U.N. treaty monitoring bodies. The Human Rights Committee, which monitors compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, had already taken the position that protection of the right to life meant policies that ensured the right to food. The Economic, Social and Cultural Committee should be urged to address violations of the rights of internally displaced persons and to cooperate in this effort with the Human Rights Committee. At the same time, it was pointed out that these bodies had a pre-existing schedule of country reports so that they would not be in a position to address emergencies.**

**One participant recommended exploring the use of international criminal procedures against governments that persistently violated the right to food. Study should be made of the legal consequences flowing from abridgments of this right. Perpetrators could be made subject to international criminal jurisdiction, as was the case with torturers.**

**It was pointed out that even if the mandate of the UNHCR were expanded to include internally displaced persons, reliance would still need to be placed on human rights machinery. The Refugee Convention and**

Protocol did not include remedies such as reporting, fact-finding, and a right of petition by NGOs or individuals to enforce its provisions.

The weaknesses of human rights machinery were at the same time noted. Existing machinery often was cumbersome to set in motion and took a long time to produce results. Human rights bodies generally met only once a year which was inadequate to emergencies in which lives were in danger. Moreover, the political constraints of U.N. human rights bodies often resulted in inaction on serious human rights situations.

### **Greater Use of Humanitarian Law**

Participants recommended that greater attention be paid to the enforcement of humanitarian law, in particular common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which set minimum standards for protection of civilians in non-international armed conflicts and provided the ICRC with a right of initiative. A total of 165 states have ratified the Geneva Conventions and a number of liberation movements have also declared their willingness to abide by them. Participants recommended measures to build upon this broad support. The development of Article 3, for example, was proposed to expand the ICRC's right to intervene in situations of internal strife, especially when food is used as a weapon, and to provide for the creation of safety zones in civil conflicts. The Martens Clause of Protocol II (preambular paragraph 4) could also be developed to provide increased protection for displaced persons. Prohibitions on forcible relocations could be given a more narrow interpretation, so as to conform more stringently with military imperatives.

### **Development of New International Standards**

Several participants identified gaps in existing human rights and humanitarian law and proposed the development of new standards to fill these deficiencies.

**Congressman Tony Hall, Chairman of the Select Committee on Hunger of the U.S. Congress, proposed a convention on the right to food and humanitarian assistance, applicable to both governments and insurgent groups, and inclusive of sanctions if either side failed to take adequate steps to ensure realization of this right. He emphasized the educational and public relations value of developing a new instrument. It would elevate and generate greater public awareness about the issue of food and humanitarian assistance, which in turn could influence the behavior of governments. Mr. Hall planned to request the United States to take the lead in calling upon the U.N. to draft such a convention.**

**Other participants urged the development of standards in the following areas:**

- ♦ **The protection of minorities.** In this connection, it was pointed out that the CSCE's current draft convention on minorities had weak implementation machinery that needed to be strengthened. Countries such as Austria, which border nations with minority problems, have a vested interest in seeing improvements in this area.
- ♦ **The development of a right to humanitarian access.** The U.N. General Assembly had adopted a resolution on humanitarian access in 1988 and one citing relief corridors in 1990. The government of France intended to build upon these resolutions to help develop this new standard.
- ♦ **The development of a core of non-derogable rights, drawn from both human rights and humanitarian law, to apply to persons caught up in internal strife.**
- ♦ **The establishment of minimum standards for the treatment of internally displaced persons, in particular minimum conditions of food and health.**

**Most participants favored a "soft law" or incremental approach to developing new human rights standards. This approach would involve their careful development through block-building resolutions, declarations,**

and codes of conduct slowly leading to customary law and the adoption of binding treaties.

One reason this approach was favored was to avoid the possible weakening of existing law and practice. Participants pointed to several attempts to develop new standards which had failed or resulted in diluted or restrictive language. Others advocated that efforts should focus on monitoring and enforcing existing agreements rather than drafting new ones.

### **Creation of Emergency Machinery**

Participants strongly endorsed the creation of special machinery to deal with human rights and humanitarian emergencies. There was a need for machinery that could undertake rapid and effective action. The following were discussed as options:

- ♦ **The appointment within the Commission on Human Rights of a working group or rapporteur for internally displaced persons.** The Quaker U.N. Office, World Council of Churches, and International Commission of Jurists affirmed their intention to press for the establishment of emergency machinery at the 1991 session of the Commission. The rapporteur could receive and examine complaints, undertake fact-finding missions, intercede with governments, publish reports, request the U.N. Secretary-General to use his good offices, and bring egregious cases to the attention of human rights bodies. **Participants expressed the hope that the U.N. Secretariat report being prepared for the Commission on internally displaced persons would support this proposal and urge the establishment of effective machinery to address the problem of internal displacement.**

It was suggested that the machinery created seek to overcome certain weaknesses in the rapporteur system. For example, the rapporteur should be authorized to issue urgent action press releases to compensate for being able to report only once a year to U.N. bodies. The rapporteur



also should be authorized to report and speak out on questions concerning access to relief; generally, human rights rapporteurs were not authorized to deal with such questions. Other weaknesses that would have to be dealt with were the problem of gaining access and government cooperation and the need for resources. It was also noted that some countries might insist that new machinery include representatives from all the geographic areas, which could weaken its flexibility and initiative.

- ♦ **The establishment within the U.N. system of an independent monitoring body that would alert the Secretary-General and Security Council to human rights and humanitarian emergencies that the U.N. system should address.** The body would put a spotlight on these emergencies and call for U.N. action, irrespective of the opposition of governments. It would serve as a "trigger mechanism" and lend support to the early warning initiatives of ORCI (Office of Research and the Collection of Information). The members of the monitoring body would include U.N. officials, NGO representatives and governments.
- ♦ **The establishment at the regional level of emergency machinery, with CSCE human rights and conflict prevention procedures used as a possible model.**
- ♦ **Greater use of the U.N. Security Council in human rights and humanitarian emergencies.** Resolution 688 could serve as a precedent for future Security Council action on human rights situations that threaten international peace and security.
- ♦ **The appointment of a U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs** to expedite international action in humanitarian emergencies, especially in cases where governments refused to cooperate. The individual would be given substantial authority to coordinate the relief work of the different U.N. agencies, make contact with outside organizations and effectively intervene when there is a

disaster. Congressman Hall, in endorsing the proposal, acknowledged that innovations in machinery didn't always succeed but called it a gamble worth taking.

## MEDIA AS PROTECTION

**The power of the media in assuring protection for internally displaced persons was emphasized by many participants.** Whether in Ethiopia in 1984, the Sudan in 1989 or Iraq in 1991, world public opinion had caused major shifts in how governments and international organizations responded to emergencies. According to one participant, the public in these situations set a standard which created a political imperative to help internally displaced persons.

However, too many humanitarian emergencies, participants noted, went unnoticed by the media and as a result, were inadequately addressed by the international community. Serious situations in Liberia, Afghanistan, Somalia and other countries were largely ignored at the time the Kurds were receiving enormous international attention. **Participants wondered how the media might be encouraged to give more universal, balanced and sustained coverage to human rights and humanitarian emergencies.**

The importance of teaching local groups to use the media was strongly emphasized. When local organizations had ties to the press, they invariably brought publicity to bear on the abuses of displaced persons. More should be done to interest both local and international media in situations of civil war and famine.

**Participants agreed that further discussion of the phenomena of "media fatigue" was needed.** Greater attention also should be given to how best to utilize the media to the advantage of internally displaced persons. The impact of media coverage on the ability to raise funds would need further study. High visibility emergencies often attracted more resources than emergencies that did not become internationally known. Further exploration was needed of the key role played by the media in protection.

## **GREATER FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Participants strongly recommended that far greater resources be allocated at the intergovernmental, regional, and non-governmental levels for internally displaced persons.** The extent to which resources were made available would largely determine the degree of protection internally displaced persons would receive.

To address the needs of internally displaced persons, U.N. agencies would need additional resources. Regional bodies, especially in Africa and Latin America, would need increased funding to take on programs for internally displaced persons. Non-governmental groups were also finding it difficult to raise funds for emergencies that were not in the spotlight of world attention.

Competition for funds could become an unfortunate consequence of scarce resources. The High Commissioner for Refugees warned against a situation developing whereby "internally displaced persons and refugees were seen to be in competition for funding." The Executive Director of UNICEF also underscored the difficulty of having to choose, when resources were limited, between focusing on displaced children caught up in civil conflicts or on the needs of millions of other children also dying from preventable causes. The scarcity of funds would make it necessary to rely on existing international structures rather than create new ones for persons internally displaced.

**The need for more and better trained human resources was also underscored.** Human rights and humanitarian emergencies required exceptionally dedicated, committed personnel, ready to work in dangerous situations. Such personnel would need training not only in assistance but in protection. At present, many field staff did not receive adequate training in humanitarian and human rights law or in how to design assistance programs to enhance protection. **Some participants recommended a greater protection component in the emergency training programs conducted by the U.N. for its staff.** The representative of a private relief organization recommended a human rights component in the

training programs of relief and development organizations to enhance protection in humanitarian emergencies.

Participants agreed that it was essential for governments, inter-governmental bodies and NGOs to take a serious look at the resource side of the equation and challenge governments to come up with the resources to address the needs of internally displaced persons on a universal basis. As one participant noted, to a large extent international organizations, standards and machinery exist for internally displaced persons, but "universal support" for utilizing them does not.

**HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION  
FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS:  
An International Conference  
June 24-25, 1991**

**ANNOTATED AGENDA**

**The National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Board Room  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036**

**June 24, 1991**

**9:45 a.m. CONFERENCE OPENS**

**Chair: The Honorable Flora MacDonald**

**10:15 a.m. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Dennis Gallagher  
Executive Director, Refugee Policy Group**

**10:30 a.m. OVERVIEW**

**Roberta Cohen**

This session will review the causes and scope of internal displacement; the gaps in international efforts to provide relief and assistance; current initiatives to create an effective international system; the failure to relate assistance to protection.

**11:00 a.m. PROTECTION DIMENSION OF INTERNAL  
DISPLACEMENT**

**Moderator: Martin Ennals**

This session will deal with the protection needs of internally displaced persons and address the following question: Does protection mean providing physical security or does it also mean ensuring the legal and human rights of displaced persons? Is the mere provision of relief and assistance adequate as a protection mechanism? Is access to humanitarian assistance a protection problem or a logistical one? Is a human rights perspective helpful to internally displaced persons? What are the reasons for its having been overlooked?

**For Humanitarian and Relief Organizations:** How can they enhance their protection roles? What can they learn from the refugee protection system? from the international human rights system? Should they speak out on protection problems or will doing so jeopardize relief efforts? Does provision of relief without attention to protection perpetuate civil conflicts and man-made famines?

**For Human Rights Organizations:** What role should human rights organizations play in providing effective protection? Have they interpreted their mandates so narrowly as to exclude concern for persons suffering from economic deprivation? Will their actions "politicize" the humanitarian problems confronting internally displaced persons or will they help to bolster the efforts of relief organizations? Is addressing the underlying causes of displacement a protection measure? To what extent can human rights groups bring influence to bear on governments, rebel forces and donors to provide better protection for the internally displaced?

**12:30 p.m. Speaker: James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF**

**2:00 p.m. SOVEREIGNTY: OBSTACLE OR OPPORTUNITY?**

**Moderator: Roger Winter**

This session will debate whether sovereignty should be viewed as an obstacle to protection, or whether sovereignty implies a responsibility on the part of governments to provide protection.

Do governments undermine their legitimacy when they engage in flagrant violations of human rights? On what grounds can humanitarian intervention be invoked? Does Security Council Resolution 688 oblige humanitarian intervention when human rights violations threaten international peace and security? Can it serve as a precedent for future

international action? Does it also authorize military intervention on human rights grounds?

How has the international human rights system dealt with sovereignty? What lessons can be learned from international human rights actions against offending governments?

Can the creation of international mechanisms to protect the internally displaced reduce the potentially de-stabilizing effects of displacements on other states and argue in favor of accepting limitations on sovereignty?

**3:30 p.m.      EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH SOVEREIGNTY**

**Moderator: Larry Minear**

What methods have succeeded in helping internally displaced persons? How can persons be protected when they are in areas not under government control? When have cross border operations worked? When can corridors of tranquility provide protection (i.e., Operation Lifeline Sudan)? Can early warning of impending humanitarian and human rights crises lead to better protection for internally displaced persons? Has international human rights exposure prevented displacements or led to improvements in the conditions of the internally displaced?

What should the role of the military be in humanitarian emergencies? Are the problems of international relief and protection so intractable that the military has become the best means of addressing humanitarian emergencies? Should there be an international corps of UN troops with protection and assistance roles? What are the implications of establishing military control over relief efforts?

Should international human rights protection officers be trained and assigned to monitor the needs of internally displaced persons?

**6:00 p.m.      RECEPTION**

At the Japanese Ambassador's Residence for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, co-sponsored by the Japanese Embassy and Refugee Policy Group with CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Human Rights Watch, International



Human Rights Law Group, International League for Human Rights, Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, USA for UNHCR, and the United States Committee for Refugees.

**June 25, 1991**

**9:00 A.M.     STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PROTECTION FOR  
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS: AN AGENDA FOR  
ACTION**

**Chair: Dennis Gallagher**

This day will be devoted to developing strategies to promote multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental initiatives in defense of internally displaced persons (the list that follows is not exhaustive).

**NEW INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

**Moderator: Nigel Rodley**

Are current human rights and humanitarian standards adequate to protect those internally displaced, especially concerning the rights to food, a right to humanitarian assistance, prohibitions against forcible displacements, better protection for those in internal strife? Will new standards strengthen the ability of the international community to hold governments and insurgent groups accountable for their practices? Or is it advisable not to expend the time, energy and political will needed on such an endeavor? Could existing law and practice end up being weakened? Is it best to proceed incrementally with private initiatives?

Should standards also be developed for the behavior of non-governmental organizations in humanitarian crises?

**10:30 a.m.     Speaker: Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High  
Commissioner for Refugees**

**11:15 a.m.     MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS TO  
ENHANCE PROTECTION**

**Moderator: Jerome J. Shestack**

How can existing international and regional human rights machinery be better utilized to protect the internally displaced? What are the best strategies for activating international and regional organizations such as the UN, OAU, OAS, and CSCE to take a more active part in human rights and humanitarian emergencies?

What are the chances for the creation of new international machinery, such as a UN Secretary-General for Special Humanitarian Affairs, a High Commissioner for Human Rights, or a Special Rapporteur for the Internally Displaced? Has the end of the Cold War made the establishment of new machinery more likely or will Third World countries block such a move?

How effective are multilateral bodies? How much reliance should be placed on their ability to act?

**12:30 p.m. Speaker: Representative Tony Hall, Co-Chair, Select Committee on Hunger**

**2:00 p.m. SANCTIONS AND INCENTIVES: MEANS OF ENHANCING PROTECTION?**

**Moderator: Francis Deng**

Should governments and international organizations initiate sanctions against states that engage in violations of the right to food, for example through denial of free and safe passage for relief supplies or denial of access to humanitarian relief organizations? What criteria should foreign governments use when they provide assistance for internally displaced persons? Should they condition humanitarian assistance for the needy on respect for human rights? What incentives might be offered to influence foreign governments to better protect internally displaced persons?

**3:00 p.m. UNIFIED ACTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

**Moderator: Dennis Gallagher**

How can human rights and humanitarian relief organizations work together to protect the internally displaced? What steps might they take to better share information, develop joint protection roles in the field, act

in defense of local relief workers, and coordinate their interventions with governments, donors and international organizations? What are the best means to overcome the obstacles that prevent joint initiatives and closer cooperation?

**4:30 p.m. CONCLUSION**

**5:00 p.m. ADJOURNMENT**

## High Commissioner's statement to the Refugee Policy Group

24 June 1991

I want to thank the Refugee Policy Group for the invitation to speak at this important meeting on Human Rights Protection for Internally Displaced Persons. As so often in the past, the Refugee Policy Group has chosen an issue at the cutting edge of international concern and has brought together an impressive array of international, governmental and private organizational representatives to discuss it. All of us here recognize how essential it is for our various refugee, human rights and humanitarian assistance agencies to work together, and to more effectively pool our resources, in addressing the multiplying humanitarian emergencies around the world.

The issue at hand on this occasion -- international responsibility for displaced persons -- underscores the place of refugee law as a component of international human rights generally, and the relationship of both to international humanitarian law, and the law of armed conflict. Since becoming High Commissioner I have been urging not only that today's refugee issues be accorded a central place on the international agenda, but that refugee problems be seen in a wider context of human rights and peace keeping.

The Statute of UNHCR refers to refugees specifically as persons outside the country of their nationality. It further defines them as individuals whose refugee status derives from a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion. UNHCR is mandated to protect and assist them and to seek durable solutions to their problems.

In practice, persons of concern to UNHCR have not been confined to those defined in the Statute. In accordance with various regional instruments and at the request of the General Assembly and the Secretary General, UNHCR has provided protection and assistance to millions of victims of war and violence, including those who have fled their countries, as well as those who have not.

While UNHCR does not have a formal mandate to care for internally displaced persons, it has long been involved in assisting people inside their countries of origin. UNHCR has a responsibility for monitoring the security situation of repatriated refugees after return, and may continue to assist them for a limited period to attain self sufficiency. Furthermore, just as UNHCR assistance to refugee groups usually extends in some manner to the local populations among whom the refugees live, so too does assistance made available to returnees affect the surrounding communities.

Very often, repatriating refugees return to areas with a significant internally displaced refugee population. Many of the internally displaced may have fled their place of origin for the same reasons the refugees fled. Many have the same security and reintegration problems as the repatriates in their countries of origin, upon their return. And some may even be close family members separated during flights. Moreover, repatriating refugees are often unable to return to their places of origin and, in effect, may become displaced persons once back in their own countries.

The Secretary General or the General Assembly has requested UNHCR's good offices on some occasions on behalf of internally displaced (Cyprus, Vietnam and Laos). UNHCR has been asked to provide humanitarian assistance to persons in Bangladesh, Lebanon, the Horn of Africa, Nicaragua and Uganda. Such requests for participation in UN humanitarian efforts are based on UNHCR's specific expertise and experience with uprooted persons.<sup>1</sup> In some cases, where the emergency has been prolonged, UNHCR's initial emergency assistance has evolved into a search for more durable solutions to the problems of these uprooted persons.

Finally, UNHCR has contributed to broadly based UN humanitarian efforts to deal with the effects of war and civil strife in Southern Africa and Central America. SARRED and especially CIREFCA represent efforts of the international community to address the consequences of disruption and uprooted populations by means of coordinated projects involving UN agencies, donor governments and NGOs. The groundwork has already been laid, and in the near future when political conditions permit, we hope to be involved in similar efforts elsewhere.

As those gathered here also know, there have been important initiatives in the UN to examine its own capacity to address the problems of displaced persons, with a view to recommending organizational and institutional changes. In July of last year the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary General to carry out a UN system-wide review and to "recommend ways of

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<sup>1</sup>. GA resolution 2956 (XXVII 1972); also Resolution 3455 (XXX, 1975) on Indochina; GA Res 42/110 (1987).

maximizing cooperation and coordination among the various organizations of the United Nations system in order to ensure an effective response ...to the problems of refugees, displaced persons and returnees." <sup>2</sup> ECOSOC will consider the Secretary General's Report next month. In February of this year, the Commission on Human Rights also requested the Secretary General "to take into account the protection of human rights and the needs of internally displaced persons, and to submit an analytical report...taking into account the protection of internally displaced persons..".<sup>3</sup> Obviously we are following these issues extremely closely. We certainly encourage a UN reorganization that would permit our agencies to meet the needs of displaced persons and other vulnerable groups more effectively.

Most relevant to today's discussion is the complaint often heard from out colleagues in the World Food Program that, while they have a protection counterpart when providing assistance to refugees and returnees, they lack and need one for their work with the internally displaced. Within the framework of UNHCR's Executive Committee, a Working Group on Solutions and Protection has been meeting since last September to consider the search for asylum generally, and come up with recommendations which could lead to more coherent and comprehensive strategies globally.

Protection, in one form or another follows naturally from UNHCR assistance. If, for example persons being assisted by UNHCR under its good

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<sup>2</sup> Resolution 1990/78

<sup>3</sup>. E/CN.4/1991/L.34

offices experience difficulties, legal or otherwise, UNHCR must bring these problems to the attention of competent authorities or they will hamper the effective implementation of our humanitarian work. I will come back to this question of relief and protection in countries of origin in a moment.

Before doing that, let me clarify the bases of our present activities in Northern Iraq. Many people have welcomed what they characterize as a breakthrough that permits the delivery of international relief to internally displaced persons. Indeed, UNHCR is the lead agency in providing assistance in Northern Iraq to persons, the majority of whom have not left their country of origin. It must however be understood that these persons would, in the main, have been formally recognized as refugees had they been able to cross an international border. Almost half of the one million refugees who returned from the Iranian and Turkish borders remain displaced today inside Iraq because they are afraid to return to their home villages, or are prevented from doing so. What will determine further returns is the evolving security situation in Iraq. This remains the refugees' most urgent concern.

In Sri Lanka, similarly, UNHCR has had to adapt its voluntary repatriation programme to deal with the reality of providing assistance and protection to returnees who, since their repatriation, have become internally displaced, and are living with other internally displaced who never fled their country.

Those who urge that UNHCR be designated as the lead agency for assistance to internally displaced persons, stress our long experience working under difficult conditions with refugees, externally displaced, returnees and,



as I already described, other persons of concern who are in their countries of origin. They speak, in particular of the applicability of our work in voluntary repatriation to the situation of the internally displaced. Our staff is competent not only to manage technically and to operate under hardship conditions. It also has experience working with the delicate issues likely to arise. Moreover, of all UN agencies, we have had the most experience working with NGOs who would be called upon to implement assistance programs for displaced persons.

I will now turn to some caveats to our possible involvement with internally displaced persons. First and foremost, at no point must work with internally displaced threaten the institution of asylum, or interfere with our ability to protect and assist the refugees who are our fundamental responsibility. Establishing mechanisms that permit the international community to attend to the humanitarian needs of internally displaced is definitely a positive step. However, should the availability of such arrangements be used politically to justify the denial of asylum to persons in need, this would be tragic.

Second, it would be most unfortunate as well if internally displaced persons and refugees were seen to be in competition for funding. If the international community undertakes to provide institutional mandates for internally displaced persons, it must also provide funding for the operations that would be undertaken. Above all, it must be prepared to provide any institution with the capacity to respond.

The issue of national sovereignty is fundamental in international relations. Nevertheless, we cannot permit the principle of national sovereignty to shield governments from their responsibilities toward their own citizens. International response to the plight of displaced persons will be effective only if governments accept that ultimately they are accountable for the protection of these displaced persons.

Today, one of the most urgent challenges faced by the international community is answering the question: how can the human rights of the internally displaced be protected. One of the fundamental reasons we are gathered here is to further this debate and, indeed, to define the very notion of who are the internally displaced persons in need of protection as well as assistance.

In conclusion, greater respect for the rights of civilians during conflicts, and policies more conducive to providing basic civil, economic and social rights, would go a long way toward helping refugees and the displaced, as well as toward averting refugee flows.

Thank you.



Refugee Policy Group

CENTER FOR POLICY  
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