

UN refugee agency reveals record 110 million people worldwide displaced

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United Nations, June 18 (RHC)-- The number of people displaced around the world has reached a record 110 million, with the wars in Ukraine and Sudan forcing millions from their homes, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said.

About 19 million people were forced to flee last year – the biggest annual jump on record – lifting the total to 108.4 million by the end of last year, the UNHCR said in its annual Forced Displacement report on Wednesday.

The number has since risen to at least 110 million, mostly due to Sudan's eight-week-old conflict, UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi told reporters. "It's quite an indictment on the state of our world to have to report that," he said at a Geneva press conference.

The overall figure includes people seeking safety within their own countries as well as those who have crossed borders. Refugees and asylum seekers made up about 37.5 percent of the total, according to the report. "Solutions to these movements are increasingly difficult to even imagine, to even put on the table," he said. "We are in a very polarised world, where international tensions play out all the way into humanitarian issues."

Before the Syria conflict in 2011, there were about 40 million refugees and internally displaced people, a number that had remained stable for about 20 years, according to the agency. But the number has risen each year since.

Grandi blamed "the usual package of causes" for displacing ever more people – conflict, persecution, discrimination, violence and climate change. Of the total refugees and those needing international protection, about half of them came from just three countries: Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan, the report said.

At the end of 2022, 11.6 million Ukrainians remained displaced, it said, including 5.9 million within their country and 5.7 million overseas.

Grandi raised concerns about countries introducing tougher rules on admitting refugees and conducting push-backs, without specifying the countries concerned. Countries in the eastern part of the European Union, such as Poland and Hungary, have refused to take in anyone from the mainly Muslim Middle East and North Africa, while right-wing and populist parties across the bloc have fuelled the debate with anti-immigration rhetoric.

Outside the EU, the United Kingdom is pushing through new legislation that would prevent anyone who arrives in a small boat from across the English Channel from claiming asylum, in an echo of Australia's controversial offshore migration policy.

The bill has passed the lower house but has yet to secure the backing of the upper house. "We see increasingly a reluctance on the part of states to fully adhere to the principles of the (1951 refugee) convention, even states that have signed it," Grandi told the Reuters news agency on the sidelines of the briefing.

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