



Refugee Digest 60 **25th November 2021**

Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons

The past weeks have emphasised again the extreme provocations, deep insecurity and lack of political will to support displaced persons. This ranges from the plight of refugees on the border between Belarus and Poland to the arrest of a priest helping migrants on the border of Mexico and the USA and the marked increase in migrants crossing the English Channel in a bid to find refuge in the UK. The lack of political will is also evident in the tardy fashion in which our Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has dealt, for example, with the re-opening of the Refugee Reception Offices in Cape Town, as well as its lack of proper compliance with court orders. It was also seen in the policy narratives of a number of political parties in the local elections in early November in South Africa. Internationally and locally this paints a dismal picture for those on the move at a time when the numbers of these vulnerable communities have increased mostly through no fault of their own. Of special note has been the COP 26 gathering in Glasgow, where some attention was given to communities made vulnerable, and eventually displaced, because of climate change. Governments were urged to engage in 'averting, minimising and addressing' displacement due to climate change.

South Africa

In South Africa, the drawn out saga of the failure of the DHA to re-open the Refugee Reception Offices, and its latest notification that they will re-open only in September 2022, despite court orders requiring swifter compliance from DHA, continues to harm the interests of mobile people. These links provide access to the recent statement by DHA and some background to this contested issue.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-11-15-home-affairs-to-only-reopen-cape-town-refugee-office-in-september-2022-10-years-since-its-closure/>

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-10-03-groundup-court-decision-a-victory-for-asylum-seekers/>

This article makes the point that the failure to comply with court orders and to properly fulfil mandates in the case above is but symptomatic of a greater dysfunction within DHA.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-09-17-frustration-over-home-affairs-shambles/>

We have over the years covered the situation of the refugee groups who protested in Cape Town and Pretoria seeking repatriation to a country other than the one they fled from, while also resisting reintegration into the communities where they had lived in South Africa. This article offers an update on that situation.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/we-have-a-tough-life-here-refugee-dies-waiting-for-dream-to-leave-south-africa-to-come-true-20211020>

A report on the arrest of DHA officials for trading in illegal documentation with migrants:
<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/hawks-bust-several-officials-for-allegedly-issuing-permits-to-illegal-immigrants-at-border-20211116>

This article confirms that the SADC protocols for migration management are closer to finalisation:
<https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/we-are-making-progress-on-migration-management-says-sadc-2c0f39e9-ef4d-5edd-878e-13dad5137df>

This article looks at the struggle of Zimbabweans to gain permanent residence in South Africa:
<https://www.africanews.com/2021/11/11/zimbabweans-take-south-africa-to-court-over-permanent-residence/>

COP 26 and Displaced Communities

At COP 26 there was a strong call for “protecting vulnerable communities around the world, including millions of refugees, displaced and stateless people living on the frontlines of the climate crisis.” The following articles underline the urgency of that call.

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugeebrief/the-refugee-brief-12-november-2021/>

<https://unfccc.int/wim-excom/areas-of-work/migration-displacement-and-human-mobility>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7e5oINwhlw>

These articles relate to the important UN Taskforce for Displacement and its thinking as it ultimately relates to COP 26. They form part of the basic background reading for understanding the nexus between climate change and displacement.

<https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/constituted-bodies/WIMExCom/TFD>

<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/report-task-force-displacement>

<https://tinyurl.com/svs9p2cv>

The next set of articles specifically relate to climate change as a driver of migration. Core issues such as food scarcity are also raised.

<https://tinyurl.com/fvmj937u>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/30/cop26-failure-could-mean-mass-migration-and-food-shortages-says-boris-johnson>

<https://tinyurl.com/4rutyf5s>

This report looks at the ‘climate-migration nexus’ and the scientific background for taking this nexus seriously. Issues such as land degradation, rising sea levels and a warmer earth could eventually disrupt the working life of over 200m people who, in all likelihood, would then be forced to migrate. The link to increased migration is obvious and needs urgent attention.

<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/policy/human-mobility-cop26>

Key voices in the medical field, including the WHO and the Lancet, have publicly pleaded for more serious attention to be paid to a wider nexus, namely that of ‘climate-health-migration.’

<https://www.iom.int/cop26>

<https://www.who.int/news/item/09-11-2021-cop26---direct-linkages-between-climate-change-health-and-migration-must-be-tackled-urgently-iom-who-lancet-migration>

The UN Network on Migration has made a special plea that States include migration scenarios in their plans and costing around climate-change mitigation.

<https://tinyurl.com/8jbwpavs>

Among many other points in his speech to COP 26, Pope Francis noted that, in the near future, environmental migrants and refugees would be the most numerous category of displaced persons, and their vulnerability would be extreme. He made a plea for cancelling the debts of developing nations to those nations who use most of the world’s resources. He also spoke of the ‘environmental debt’ that those countries owe developing countries whose populations experience the most devastating effects of the exploitation of natural resources and climate change.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249472/pope-francis-to-cop26-now-is-the-time-to-act-urgently-courageously-and-responsibly>

Amidst all of these conflicting signals to and around mobile communities, Pope Francis has appealed for the world to see mobile people as gifts.

<https://www.exaudi.org/migrants-are-a-gift-that-invites-societies-to-grow/>

We need to pay particular attention to the voices that offer a glimpse of hope for mobile people, and to find ways of building on those foundations so as to enhance the possibility of realising a more just and humane future for mobile communities.

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