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## Invisible Within Borders: The Crisis of Internal Displacement in Conflict Zones

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*Internally displaced populations due to war or conflict in the region remain one of the most vulnerable victims, which is often overlooked in the angst of the crisis. The survivors are tragically left stranded with a complete disruption of their normal lives, deprivation of basic rights, and desperation for safety. Although various International organisations and frameworks advocate for the betterment of their situation through aid, relief work, and advocacy, the systematic neglect often fails to address the grassroots issues. This article critically examines the impact of geopolitical conflict and the frameworks governing the internally displaced persons (IDPs) with a check on ground realities based on the countries of Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Palestine. It also seeks to examine the policy-driven approach by the Indian Government and judicial intervention in cases of displacement. The article also discusses the public perception through an online survey called “Ground Realities: A Public Survey on Policy, Protection, and Life in Conflict Zones” to determine the awareness, opinions, and ideas of the general public. In Conclusion, this article emphasises the urgent need for a robust legal framework to address the needs and requirements of internally displaced populations during crises.*

**Keywords:** *internally displaced persons, rights-based approach, displacement, humanitarian law, policy.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, geopolitical conflicts have impacted the countries with the escalation in the arms race, which has enabled the nations to possess dangerous ammunition and stringent military control over the regions. This has ultimately impacted the lives of the civilians in the events of internal and external aggression, the hostilities at the border regions during the outbreak of war, as well as internal conflict within the state, causing the displacement of thousands of families from their roots, wiping away their community, livelihood, and identities. According to the reports by the European Commission, Directorate-general for ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) as of May 2024, over 120 million people globally are forcefully uprooted from their homes and displaced due to the onset of wars and armed conflicts in their respective regions, out of which 43.4 million are refugees in need of international protection while the internally displaced populations accounts to about 68.3 million people.<sup>1</sup>

According to the International Organisation for Migration, the definition of forced migration is given as a movement that involves force, compulsion, and coercion, although the driving forces can be diverse.<sup>2</sup> This definition suits the paradigm of displaced war population as the factors behind their movement are driven out of compulsion and desperation for safety. While the Global scrutiny is often focused on the refugee crisis that crosses borders into another state, the situation of the internally displaced population is often overlooked. The Guiding principles on Internal displacement (United Nations, 1988) defined Internally displaced Persons (IDP) as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State

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<sup>1</sup> 'Forced displacement Refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)' (*European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations*)  
<[https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement_en)> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>2</sup> 'Glossary on Migration' (*International Organisation for Migration*, 2019)  
<[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_34\\_glossary.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf)> accessed 01 June 2025

Border”.<sup>3</sup> The UNHCR registered about 72.1 million internally displaced persons by 2024, where three in five forcefully displaced persons are IDPs.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the geographically sensitive or disrupted territories along the national borders, the first impact of armed conflict often prevails on the citizens residing in the border regions, where their rights are compromised due to the militarisation and administrative neglect. These can be seen in the cases of regions such as Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur, where the citizens lack basic rights and access to welfare schemes due to the tensions in the border region.

The displaced population and border citizens are often exposed to unique vulnerabilities that undermine and violate their basic human rights. It results in the loss of recovery mechanisms and the capacity to defend themselves. The displacement comes with the disruption of socio-economic stability, education, livelihood, safety, health, and familial connections. This leads to resource constraints, a lack of amenities, and sustenance. Women and Children are vulnerable to crimes such as trafficking, rape, etc. When there is long-term displacement, the immediate needs evolve to long-term sustenance needs such as employment, accommodations, and access to legal services. Thus, legal policies and frameworks need to be developed to cater to the needs of the displaced people and conflict-affected citizens. This article studies the legal framework available in both International and Indian governance while highlighting the gaps in the instrumental execution of this legal machinery. Understanding forced displacement helps formulate well-informed policies, aid humanitarian response and developmental efforts to mitigate the horrendous effects of conflicts and violence.

## METHODOLOGY

To give a thorough analysis, this article on the Legal and Human Rights of War- Internally Displaced Populations and Border Citizens in Crisis used a mixed-method approach, combining both primary data and secondary data. An online poll called “Ground Realities: A Public Survey on Policy, Protection, and Life in Conflict Zones” was conducted to gauge public awareness and possible inadequacies in the existing legal framework. The poll results provided personal

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<sup>3</sup> ‘OCHA Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement’ (*iDMC*, 01 August 1998) <<https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/ocha-guiding-principles-on-internal-displacement/>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>4</sup> ‘Forced Displacement (Refugees, Internally Displaced and Host Communities)’ (*World Bank Group*, 28 April 2025) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/forced-displacement#1>> accessed 01 June 2025

knowledge on how the public views the displacement and border crisis, and the perceived effectiveness of the current regulations. Secondary data in the form of ground realities in real conflict regions from all over the world came from reliable sources such as reports from official governmental sites, studies conducted by legitimate organisations, articles, and statistics provided by international organisations such as the United Nations to formulate and contextualise these conclusions. By highlighting the interconnection between the primary data collection and secondary data analysis, the pressing concerns for internally displaced citizens and border conflict-affected populations, and the existing legal mechanisms are facilitated by the research in this article.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

**International Framework and Approach:** Refugees cross borders to escape the flight of their crisis and henceforth come directly under the purview of international laws such as the United Nations Convention of Refugees, 1951 and 1967 protocols. These protocols reinstated the rights of the refugees and the obligations imposed on the states that ratified one or both of these international instruments.<sup>5</sup> Often on account of serious violations of human rights and the failure of the state to protect its citizens due to political reasons, discrimination or exploitation, people migrate to other states to find sanctuary; henceforth, by definition, refugees are not protected by their government. Consequently, the international community steps in to ensure their safety and the protection of their basic rights.

However, unlike the refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) do not cross international borders and therefore do not fall under the direct purview of international law. In situations of armed conflict and war, their vulnerability is further exacerbated by the failure of the constitutional machinery and the executive protection system. The plight of the IDPs, therefore, presents a unique legal challenge. The international Humanitarian laws and instruments, such as the Guiding Principles on internal displacement, were established to address the issues faced by IDPs and border citizens, and although they represent fragmented, non-binding elements, it is an evolving legal framework aimed at safeguarding the rights of displaced populations.

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<sup>5</sup> Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951

**The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:** The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were developed by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1990 when there was a need to secure international standards for the protection of internally displaced persons arising due to the escalation of displacement of people in their own countries due to armed conflicts, ethnic riots, and political failure.<sup>6</sup> Although the guiding principles are not binding on the countries, they have remained an instrument of considerable authority since their adoption in 1998. There are 30 principles that are formulated around the pre-during-post phases of displacements. Principle 14 of the Guiding Principles gave the freedom of movement of IDPs and the choice of residence. Principle 18 ensures there is an adequate standard of living for all internally displaced persons, where competent authorities shall provide easy access to food, shelter, clothing, and medical services. Principle 20 advocates for the recognition of every person as a person before the law and therefore to issue them the legal documents required for the enjoyment and exercise of their legal rights, such as the identification document, birth certificates, etc. The guiding principles also formulate the responsibilities of the authorities concerned to facilitate for return, reestablishment of the habitual residence of the internally displaced persons, and to assist in the recovery process of possession or compensation.<sup>7</sup>

**The International Humanitarian Law:** The international Humanitarian law applies to both international and domestic situations of armed conflicts. It governed the law of war. The main concern of the creation of the International Humanitarian Law is to facilitate the protection of civilians, displaced persons, destruction of property, and mandates humane treatment of all participants of war, including prisoners, hostages, border citizens, civilians, etc.<sup>8</sup> The key treaties include the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols (1977). The 4th Geneva Convention of 1949 addresses the protection of civilian persons in time of war. They enlist the provisions that provide protections to the non-participatory members of war, like the aid workers, medics, civilians, the wounded, the sick, prisoners of war, etc.

Article 3 of the Convention lays down the bare minimum provisions required to be followed by contracting parties to the treaty on account of conflicts that are not international. It prohibits inhuman treatment, taking of hostages, execution without pronounced judgements of inactive

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<sup>6</sup> OCHA Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (n 3)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> 'The Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries' (*International Committee of the Red Cross*, 10 July 2022) <<https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries>> accessed 01 June 2025

participants, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms.<sup>9</sup> It also empowers impartial humanitarian aid, such as the Red Cross Committee, to offer services to parties in conflict. Article 4 defines protected persons under this convention which are the nationals from state that is bound by the convention, so in such cases if the person is found in hands of the belligerent party or the occupying party of which they are not nationals,<sup>10</sup> they will be recognised as under the protection of the convention, however this is not the case in instance of nationals of a state that is not bound by the Geneva convention, there is no assurance of protection of such nationals that are not bound to the convention.

The established general rule considering deportation and thereby displacement of protected people, as given under Article 49, is to exercise evacuation powers only when it concerns the security and urgent military needs. There are enlisted conditions to follow during the procedure of evacuation, which include providing proper accommodation, guaranteed safety, and keeping the families together. Detention of protected persons in areas exposed to war is prohibited unless deemed strictly necessary. The duty to ensure proper food, medical supplies, healthcare, and public safety of the occupying power to the population is strictly revered in the Geneva Convention.<sup>11</sup>

**The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):** The ICCPR lists the primary civil and political rights of all individuals, which include the internally displaced persons as well as the border civilians. ICCPR advocates for fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of movement, the freedom of expression, fair trial, etc, which are core essential fundamentals of any legal system. For example, in the instance of Article 12 of the ICCPR, it is stated that Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence, otherwise on account of reasonable restrictions that is to warrant national security or public order and should be consistent with rights recognised by this covenant.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1949

<sup>10</sup> Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1950, art 4

<sup>11</sup> Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War 1950

<sup>12</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1976, art 12

## **THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONCERNING IDPS AND BORDER CITIZENS**

India is a signatory to multiple international instruments and therefore has kept focus on achieving the goal of securing basic human rights for all. The Constitution of India reflects these ideals in its assortment of fundamental and constitutional rights. The Indian legal system protects against discrimination against the internally displaced people as well as any ordinary citizen. Concerning the internally displaced persons, there is no single dedicated law in this subject; however, there exists a broad framework of constitutional guarantees, disaster laws, and relief policies to address the people in need due to conflict, disaster, and development.

The Constitution guarantees include the protection of fundamental rights of individuals, citizens, and internally displaced persons. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution bars discrimination against the IDPs. Article 19(1)(d) states the freedom of any citizen to move freely throughout the territory of India and their right to settle and live in any part of the territory of India. This also elucidates that displaced persons cannot be forcibly kept in camps once the conditions for return are facilitated, and in case of any restrictions on the part of the Government, there must be proper justification. Article 21 gives the right to life and personal liberty. This right has a wide ambit, and it includes the right to live with dignity and, in various cases, the Supreme Court has read shelter, health, and standard of living into this article. Therefore, all internally displaced populations have the right to be granted proper asylum or camps with their basic needs met. There must be a Governmental subsidy to cater to their needs and ensure that their basic rights are met.

Aside from the constitutional provisions, the reliefs are extended through administrative policies or state interventions, often shaped by the region and the conflict it harbours. This can be analysed in the case of the Jammu and Kashmir exodus of over 60,000 Kashmiri Pandit families due to insurgency in the Kashmir Valley. There have been several rehabilitation packages in the form of major schemes like the 2008 Prime Minister's Kashmiri Pandit Relief and Rehabilitation Package, which allocated a budget of Rs 1,618 crore, which included housing, employment, and security funds with monthly financial assistance of Rs 13,000 designated per family.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits' (PIB, 16 July 2019)

<<https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1578947>> accessed 01 June 2025

There is a lack of rights-based guarantees to the internally displaced persons in India aside from the Constitution, ventures, and hence it can only rely on the policy-driven schemes and assistance from the side of the government. The assistance, however, also depends on certain factors such as region, disputes, and political leaning, and therefore shows the lack of uniform legislation. It is entirely dependent on the efficiency of the government for its long-term rehabilitation plan, as there is no enforceable legal status for IDPs

The judiciary has stepped in various cases to address the lack of accountability on the part of the government in situations prevailing in displaced communities. Such instances can be seen in the case of *National Human Rights Commission v State of Arunachal Pradesh* (1996).<sup>14</sup> The NHRC filed a petition under Article 32, where it sought to enforce fundamental rights of approximately 65,000 Chakma tribals who faced persecution and forced expulsion by local groups in Arunachal Pradesh. The bench presiding over this case calls out the systematic failure in the State of Arunachal to take accountability and protect the Chakma tribals' fundamental right under Article 21, which advocates for the Right to life and liberty. The Supreme Court issued a writ of mandamus to safeguard the Chakma community from forcible eviction.

### **CASE STUDIES WITH PREVAILING DISPLACED POPULATIONS (GROUND REALITIES)**

Although the international framework has listed down the rules and regulations to be followed by its signatories, the lack of binding force often falters in the implementation process, as the internally displaced population and border citizens come under the purview of their domestic laws. There is a disconnect between the rights given on paper and the rights in practice. This section plans to understand the ground realities of these vulnerable populations through contemporary cases.

**Displacement of the Afghan population:** Afghanistan has been prone to political instability due to decades of war, poverty, natural disasters, as well as terrorism, which has inevitably led to the takeover by the Taliban regime in 2021. It has witnessed a critical displacement crisis over the years. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that there were 3.2

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<sup>14</sup> *National Human Rights Commission v State of Arunachal Pradesh* (1996) 1 SCC 742



million internally displaced persons remaining inside the country by the end of 2023.<sup>15</sup> While most of the impacted populations fled to neighbouring countries like Iran and Pakistan as refugees, the internally displaced population counters severe humanitarian crises like a shortage of food, malnutrition, and severe destruction of rights. The UNHCR has conducted several operations in Afghanistan to facilitate humanitarian help by providing emergency medical aid and easing the process of voluntary refugee returns and long-term reintegration for over 5.3 million returnees since 2002.

However, despite these efforts, the Afghan displacement issues have not been resolved even after decades, which highlights the limitations of the international framework. As of May 2024, about 6.5 million children in Afghanistan face a food crisis not only due to the war situation but also natural disasters like flood and droughts that follows, which amplify the situation.<sup>16</sup> The pressure to accommodate refugees in the neighbouring countries without adequate international support strains the local resources of the host countries, which can ultimately lead to rejection of refugees by the citizens and a rise in xenophobia, leading to discrimination, assault, and increased hate crimes. Women and Children form the most vulnerable section of the displaced population, where survival is curtailed by absurd rights restrictions due to the Taliban regime. This case of Afghanistan reinforces the argument that the rights of displaced people and border citizens cannot be just established on paper, but rather require a grounded understanding of the reality of the situation as well as the factors that shape it.

**The Ukrainian War Displacement:** Nearly 6.9 million Ukrainians have been registered as refugees, with 3.7 million being internally displaced in Ukraine, with almost a quarter of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. The war has also resulted in massive destruction of more than 2.5 million homes across Ukraine. The statistics of damage are shown to be worth around 175 billion dollars. To address the issue of accommodation of the internally displaced persons, in June 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, in collaboration with the Council of Europe have established the framework for the Action plan for Ukraine “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction, 2023-2026”, which will provide housing rental

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained’ (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 29 July 2024) <<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>16</sup> ‘Nearly 3 Out of 10 Children in Afghanistan Face Crisis or Emergency Level of Hunger in 2024’ *New Indian Express* (29 May 2024) <<https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2024/May/29/nearly-3-out-of-10-children-in-afghanistan-face-crisis-or-emergency-level-of-hunger-in-2024>> accessed 01 June 2025

subsidies as state support for IDPs. And since February 2025, the subsidy has been put into action with the assignment and appointment of the first family.<sup>17</sup> In January 2025, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Government of Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding that was established to accommodate the economic inclusion of internally displaced people, refugees, and returnees. This partnership will reintegrate displaced people into the labour market with easier access to information on employment opportunities and livelihood programmes. A special employment page on the UNHCR platform “Ukraine is Home” will facilitate the timely discharge of information about employment and returns with Government grant programmes for Ukrainians who wish to return home.<sup>18</sup> There have been numerous supports that come from the International Rescue Committee, delivering essential commodities, protection services, and legal assistance to vulnerable people in Ukraine. However, due to the escalation of the war and the non-resolution of the conflict situation, there have been gaps in the implementation of these policies. Some of the challenges that the displaced people face are the exhaustion of international aid. For Instance, Norway has stopped granting automatic asylum to Ukrainians by 2024.<sup>19</sup> Shortage of budgets to accommodate the sudden influx of refugees in host countries also poses a challenge to both the displaced citizens as well as the nations hosting them.

**Israel-Palestine Displacement:** The Occupied Palestinian territory, otherwise known as OPT, comprises the West Bank and Gaza, and is one of the worst-hit regions in the history of recent wars and destruction, the Palestinian population bearing the brunt of war due to the subjugation of draconian military law by the powerful Israel. There has been an outright violation of human rights in this region. The Israeli authorities in power have imposed various unnecessary restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinian population, as well as confiscation of property, and denial of residency rights to Palestinians who were abroad during

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<sup>17</sup> 'With the support of the Council of Europe, a new tool to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been introduced – a housing rental subsidy' (*Council of Europe Office in Ukraine*, 16 July 2024) <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/with-the-support-of-the-council-of-europe-a-new-tool-to-assist-internally-displaced-persons-idps-has-been-introduced-a-housing-rental-subsidy>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>18</sup> 'UNHCR and Ukraine's Ministry of Economy Strengthen Cooperation to Enhance Economic Inclusion and Support for Displaced People and Returnees' (*UNHCR*, 17 January 2025) <<https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/news/press-releases/unhcr-and-ukraine-s-ministry-economy-strengthen-cooperation-enhance-economic#:~:text=The%20cooperation%20will%20combine%20the,related%20to%20employment%20and%20livelihoods.>>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

the 1967 occupation.<sup>20</sup> The horrific deprivation of fundamental rights to the Palestinian population worsened after the outbreak of the war due to the recent Hamas-led attack on Israel in 2023 and the retaliation by the Israeli Government, with its wrath mainly targeting innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Around 83% of the population of Gaza, which results in approximately 1.9 million people having been displaced internally due to the military operations, resulting in devastating demolitions, bombings, and continued attacks.<sup>21</sup> According to a report provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), ever since the start of operation “Iron Wall” by Israeli forces on 21st January 2025, nearly 77,000 people have been forcefully displaced in the West Bank.<sup>22</sup> The displaced Palestinian population faces several problems, like overcrowding in the relief shelters, lack of food, access to clean water, and basic amenities such as medical care. The blockade by Israeli forces has also limited humanitarian aid. Human Rights organisations have repeatedly called out the unnecessary evacuation and confinement of displaced people in compact zones and the outright breach of the right to life. The fourth Geneva Convention (1949), with several other provisions of International Humanitarian Law, has been violated by the policies of Israel when it violated the ceasefire in March 2025, which was agreed on certain terms and conditions between Israel and Hamas in January 2025, resulting in the escalated violence and significant humanitarian crisis in Gaza. However, a long-lasting resolution is yet to be officially declared, and the international mediators are continuing diplomatic efforts to achieve a potential resolution.

There have been certain policies that were initiated as a response to the humanitarian crisis, such as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which aims to coordinate aid distribution contributed by international non-profit organisations.<sup>23</sup> However, this foundation is criticised for its lack of neutrality. The model of distribution shows a facade of humanitarian aid while it

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<sup>20</sup> ‘A threshold crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution’ (*Human Rights Watch*, 27 April 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>21</sup> Amman, ‘Large Scale Forced Displacement in the West Bank Impacts 40,000 People’ (*United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, 10 February 2025) <<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/large-scale-forced-displacement-west-bank-impacts-40000-people>> accessed 01 June 2025

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>23</sup> Hassan El-Tayyab, ‘Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) and the Weaponization of Aid’ (*Friends Committee On National Legislation*, 05 June 2025) <<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2025-06/gaza-humanitarian-foundation-ghf-and-weaponization-aid>> accessed 01 June 2025

continuously forces the displacement of Palestinians. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation was established with the backing of the United States and Israel. The United Nations and major international humanitarian organisations have rejected the approach of GHF as it advocates for a systematic abuse of aid by militarising it and supporting forced displacement.

On the other hand, UN organisations like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) are uniquely established for a long-standing commitment to one group of refugees. The agency extended its services in matters of education, healthcare, social services, and relief works, emergency assistance, etc, even in times of armed conflicts.<sup>24</sup> However, the blockage and restriction on delivering aid have posed a significant hindrance to the efforts made by these international organisations.

The ground realities of the situation, stated in cases of Afghan displacement, the Ukraine-Russian war, and the Israel-Palestine situation, highlight the increasing number of internally displaced populations as well as the refugee crisis with a focus on the gravity of the situation by the presentation of the statistical numbers. The displacement has increased the need for greater aid and humanitarian assistance more urgently. Although there are international policies and domestic frameworks to address the issue, it can be seen in these cases that it is not sufficient, especially when it comes to conflict zones, and therefore, there arises a need to devise robust protocols or standards globally and strict enforcement to ensure there is adherence to the same.

**Primary Data Analysis:** To gauge the public perception and awareness on the topic of internally displaced persons of conflict and war situations, an online survey called “Ground Realities: A Public Survey on Policy, Protection, and Life in Conflict Zones” was conducted to assess the awareness on policies, situations, and expectations of the public. This survey was circulated among college students, the working class, and people living in conflict-affected regions, as well as people with no connection to conflict-affected regions.

The findings of this survey reveal that approximately 61% of the participants have no connection to any conflict-affected region, while the remaining 39% have once lived in, have relatives, or are currently living in a conflict-affected region (Table 1.1). Only 10.7% of the respondents have

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Who We Are’ (*United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees*)  
<<https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>> accessed 01 June 2025

acknowledged that the current policies are addressing the requirements of people in conflict zones very well, while the vast majority are of the view that their inadequacies exist (Table 1.2). The assessment also reveals that participants experienced restricted movements, curfews, loss of property, and livelihood in conflict zones mostly (Table 1.3). An overwhelming 70% of the participants advocated for better policies for the internally displaced persons and border citizens. The survey underscores the need for better rehabilitation, stringent regulation of legal rights, and increased access to education and healthcare to be of the utmost importance. The observation also depicts that a disappointing 19% of the participants have proper faith in the government to support the vulnerable communities, while 81% remain unsure or have very little faith (Table 1.4). Such a lack of confidence in the government shows the harrowing reality of the situation and the need for better execution of policies to ensure the safety and constitutional safeguards of the internally displaced persons and border citizens.

Table 1.1

3. Your connection to a border/conflict region:  
120 responses

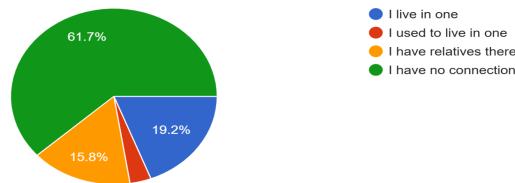


Table 1.2

6. In your view, how well are the current policies meeting the needs of people in conflict-affected areas?  
121 responses

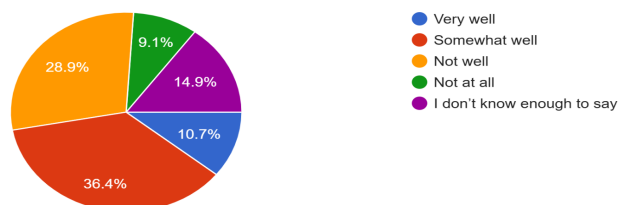


Table 1.3

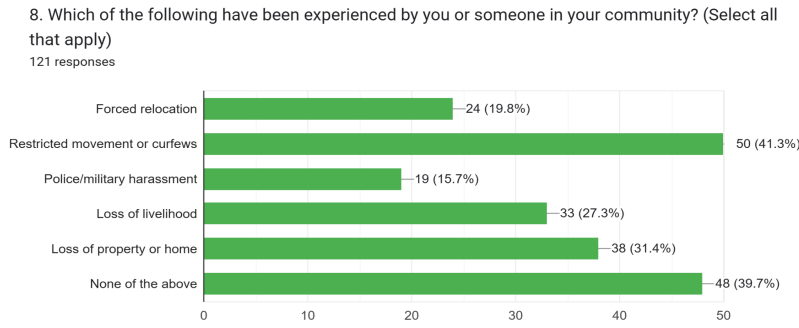
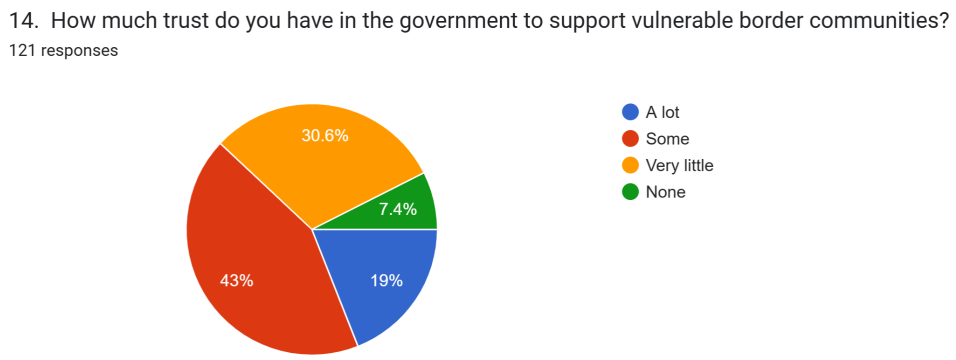


Table 1.4



RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above-mentioned ground realities as well as the primary data collection, it can be understood that one of the main reasons for the plight and concern of the internally displaced persons is the ineffective administration of government policies and the lack of an institutional way forward plan in the vision. It also presented the inadequacies in the implementation of the current international framework to address the growing number of displaced populations. Hence, to facilitate the necessary structural reforms, there arises a need to develop a robust model in the addressal units. These are some of the suggestions to facilitate the welfare of the IDPs.

**Systematic Inclusion of the IDPs in Development Planning:** There should be planning of the vision before the mission is initiated to accommodate the needs of the IDPs, and henceforth, a proactive approach should be adopted to systematically include the concerns and

plights of the displaced population in the national as well as local developmental plans. Rather than waiting for a crisis to unfold and then make policies, the government should step up with an anticipated risk control program, whether it be due to conflict, war, climate change, or developmental projects. These measures should be embedded in urban planning and welfare schemes by maintaining up-to-date records and mapping vulnerable populations with relevant ministries. These pre-emptive planning ensures a timely response and a broader vision of sustainable development.

**Representation of Displaced persons in the Decision-Making process:** Most of the time, interventions are developed from an external perspective, which often overlooks the lived experiences, cultural context, and specific needs. The plight of the IDPs is generalised and addressed from a common viewpoint, which undermines the realities of the said displacement due to the context being taken out, leading to epistemologically disadvantaged policies. Displaced individuals should be included in the design and evaluation of policies, programs, or laws that impact their lives directly. There should be proper representation of IDPs in the community forums, dialogues, and urban resettlement committees to ensure participation and inclusivity in finding solutions that are grounded in real-world challenges and aspirations. This method is emphasised in the international standards, such as the UN Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement (1998).<sup>25</sup> Such inclusions not only give them dignity and agency but also improve the effectiveness of the aid.

**A whole Governmental approach and strengthening of Financial Collaborations:** There should be institutionalisation of a whole governmental approach where the ministries of various sectors come under a unified framework to encourage scalable solutions. The priorities must not only be that of immediate emergency assistance, but also a program for long-term vision goals through capacity building, skill development, and livelihood training programs tailored to the needs of IDPs. There must be collaborations with private financial aid givers and the Government through public and private sector partnerships to ensure that the financial aid is coming through new funding avenues. An example can be given of Uganda's Settlement Transformation Agenda, which incorporates livelihood training and financial access for refugees and IDPs in national development planning.

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<sup>25</sup> OCHA Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (n 3)

**Formalising the role of Resident Coordinators:** Resident Coordinators (RCs) are country-level representative leaders of the UN Development System to coordinate with the countries they are based in with the United Nations to fulfil their agenda. They play a pivotal role in coordinating responses to internal displacement. There is a pressing need to formalise the role of RCs in integrating responsibilities related to IDP solutions by structural review, evaluation of performance, and their solutions in terms of reference. This formalisation would ensure that their efforts are not merely symbolic but guided by strategic planning, measurable outcomes, and a solution-oriented mandate. As recommended by the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, the Secretary-General must communicate the expectations of RCs in developing and implementing solutions through their leadership and must also be held accountable through an independent assessment of their performance.<sup>26</sup>

**Integration of the Guiding Principles (1998) into National Legal Frameworks:** The codification of guiding principles in the legal framework is a fundamental step to address the solutions for the crisis faced by the internally displaced population. Most of the responses to internal displacement remain policy-driven rather than rights-based, which accounts for the lack of enforceability and continuity, especially in contexts where political will fluctuates or where funding is misused. A rights-based approach brings the legal obligation to protect the IDPs instead of depending on the discretion of policies. Incorporation of guiding principles into domestic laws offers legal certainty, transparency, and accountability for all actors involved in the displacement response. There should be technical assistance from international organisations to help draft the legal frameworks and harmonise the existing instruments with the standards set by the Guiding Principles of 1998. An example can be seen in the instance of drafting the Kampala Convention in Africa, which remains the only legally binding regional treaty on internal displacement.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The current situation of the internally displaced population due to war and conflict, both on the International and domestic levels, shows the underlying injustice and is one of the most pressing

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<sup>26</sup> United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement* (2021)

<sup>27</sup> African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa 2012



issues in the modern era. The comparative analysis of the ground realities of countries like Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Israel-Palestine provides a state of affairs where rights remain on paper despite the presence of several international bodies advocating for their rights. The displaced population remains dependent on the goodwill of the unaffected population and at the mercy of policies rather than their discretion over fundamental human rights. As can be seen in the case of India as well, the approach of the state is solely dependent on the policies created after the displacement and judicial activism, which continues to remain fragmented and reactive rather than being proactive. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework and codified law creates significant gaps in administering the rightfully deserved claims of the internally displaced persons.

Hence, the key requirement is a codified legal regime and strict enforcement of the legal protections to ensure the protection of the vulnerable, invisible victims of war. This is necessary to uphold the constitutional and moral obligations of the states.