

"Tough Nuts to Crack": Dealing with Difficult Situations of Internal Displacement

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Introduction

Since the late 1980s, international organizations, governments, and nongovernmental organizations have made concerted efforts to monitor persons forcibly displaced within their own countries. While the results have widely varied, in most cases the international community has been able to reach at least some internally displaced persons (IDPs), and in some instances gain access to large numbers at risk.

There are, however, cases that remain beyond the range of international activities. In such cases, the governments generally discourage international involvement and as a result, no steps are taken, strategies developed or appeals made to reach IDPs in need. Today's conference focuses on such countries, exemplified by the situation in Turkey, Algeria, Myanmar (Burma) and India.

The governments of these countries do not request international assistance, and some do not even acknowledge that there is a problem in the country (Algeria, Myanmar, India). Or they insist they can handle it themselves, although well-documented reports point to the contrary (Turkey, India). In varying degree, all restrict or bar international involvement, and the international community for the most part has not pressed to become involved.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that efforts on behalf of IDPs are complicated by the fact that unlike refugees, IDPs remain within their own countries. Persons who cross a border benefit from international assistance and protection; IDPs do not have access to an international system of protection and assistance. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan aptly put it, "internal displacement has created an unprecedented challenge for the international community: to find ways to respond to what is essentially an internal crisis." Nonetheless, international involvement has come to be expected when governments do not have the capacity to provide for their displaced populations, or when they deliberately neglect or persecute them. The Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis M. Deng, justifies this on the ground that sovereignty entails responsibility: a state can claim the prerogatives of sovereignty only so long as it carries out its internationally recognized responsibilities to provide protection and assistance to its citizens. Failure to do so should legitimize the involvement of the international community.

Most governments do request, or agree to, assistance for their internally displaced populations and largely cooperate in its provision; Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, El Salvador, Colombia and Peru offer examples. In other cases, where government authority breaks down, international organizations, NGOs and regional bodies have found it necessary to become involved, as in Somalia, Liberia, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone. Or there are cases where the UN Security Council has deemed the situation a threat to international peace and security and has authorized the use of force to facilitate the delivery of relief and in some instances protection. Examples include Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Even where international involvement is accepted, serious problems can arise. Governments that invite international assistance are often suspicious of international efforts that extend to all sides

in the conflict. They often fear that the humanitarian assistance they agree to will strengthen their opponents and undermine their authority. Or they do not want to admit that insurgent groups control parts of their territory or that the central government is unable to provide for all of its citizens. Some may want to conceal the extent to which their own policies or actions have contributed to conflict and mass displacement.

These factors are operative in the cases being considered today. These cases also involve conflicts that divide along racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines, where the state is largely monopolized by and identified with one group to the exclusion or marginalization of others. The cleavages generated between the affected population (whether Kurds in Turkey, ethnic minorities in Myanmar, or minorities in India) and the government often result in the displaced finding themselves in a vacuum of responsibility within the state. In Algeria, the vacuum of responsibility is caused by the state's failure to protect its citizens from violence.

The following brief summaries of the countries concerned are primarily based on information provided by the US Committee for Refugees (USCR), which undertook on-site visits to Turkey, Myanmar and India, as well as from country profiles in the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement.

The Case of Turkey

There are in Turkey up to 2 million persons uprooted as a result of a long-standing conflict between the Turkish state and its Kurdish minority. The conflict dates back to the founding of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s when Kemal Ataturk recognized only Turkish ethnicity and Turkish language as attributes of citizenry, and the teaching, publishing and even speaking of Kurdish were barred. The ongoing struggle of the Kurdish minority to gain some measure of autonomy, civil and political rights, language, education, and other cultural rights has been regularly thwarted by a government insisting on assimilation, with the result that armed uprisings have taken place in every decade since the founding of the Turkish republic, the most recent having begun in 1984 under the impetus of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). With few exceptions, the government response to Kurdish insurgencies has been military repression.

To be sure, PKK terrorism and attacks on civilians have contributed to the large scale displacement of Kurds, but it is the government's counter-insurgency campaigns aimed at depopulating villages thought to provide support for the PKK that has been the preponderant cause of displacement. More than 3000 villages and hamlets have been emptied since 1992, and the displacements have been accompanied by burning of homes and fields and other serious human rights abuses.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Kurds have crowded into cities of southeastern and central Turkey, or into shantytowns outside major cities like Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. Large numbers are reported to have little or no access to proper sanitation, health care, or educational facilities for the young, and no stable employment prospects. Most are reported to receive no compensation. Government assistance programs announced in 1994 and 1995 reportedly have not been implemented. Bill Frelick of USCR writes that it is difficult even to broach the subject of internal displacement: "a wall of denial isolates the displaced from their own society and from the world at large."

Turkish journalists, local NGOs and even government officials are regularly denied access to conflict areas. Indeed, the only local humanitarian NGO operating in the southeast has been shut down, although some local development organizations have been engaged in reconstruction of houses in Kurdish areas. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has tried but thus far proved unable to operate in Turkey since the government denies that a noninternational conflict is occurring on its territory and refuses ICRC access to conflict areas. Permission has

been denied to international NGOs which have asked to be allowed to develop projects in the southeast. The programs of UN humanitarian and development organizations in the country are small and by and large do not involve IDPs. No interagency discussions have taken place at UN headquarters of the IDP situation in Turkey.

After repeatedly denying entry to the rapporteurs of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Turkish Government recently reversed itself and allowed visits from the Rapporteur on Torture and the Working Group on Disappearances. Both had more access than they expected, including to Diyarbakir in the southeast. It is not yet known whether the government plans to extend an invitation to the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs.

Some have attributed Turkey's changed position to its military victories over the PKK and its desire to join the European Union (EU). The EU has particularly strong leverage with Turkey, but other regional organizations exercise influence as well, such as the Council of Europe, and the OSCE (see below). The United States, Turkey's largest arms supplier and NATO ally, could also exert influence. In 1998, the State Department, responding to Congressional and human rights objections, said it would no longer allow US firms to sell attack helicopters to Turkey, which have been used in evacuation campaigns against Kurds. It also turned down a request for financing from a US corporation that would have helped Turkey buy armored vehicles for police operations. While these steps do not alter the US' extensive military involvement with Turkey (the US has sold more than \$15 billion worth of arms since 1980 and has the largest training program for Turkish military), it is likely to provoke more debate about US policy toward Turkey.

The report on Turkey prepared by Bill Frelick proposes a series of recommendations to the government, the PKK, the UN, the OSCE, the EU and the United States to promote better assistance and protection for IDPs and breach the wall constructed by the government against international help.

The Case of Algeria

Since the cancellation by the military government of the 1992 election, which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was expected to win, and the arrest of FIS members and supporters, armed conflict, massacres, and violence have become endemic in Algeria as armed Islamic opposition groups have proliferated. An estimated 60 to 80,000 people have lost their lives.

The scale of internal displacement is unknown because entry is generally denied to human rights and refugee organizations, especially since 1997, and to most journalists. Moreover, those who manage to make site visits are limited by lack of access and security risks and have not tended to collect information about IDPs. Some place the total number in the thousands, others in the tens of thousands, still others in the hundreds of thousands. Whatever its scope, it is known that Algerians have been fleeing from villages to larger towns to avoid violence and massacres by armed "Islamic" groups as well as fighting between government security forces and "Islamic" insurgents and amongst the insurgent groups themselves.

The violence has sharply escalated over the past two years. Although it is often described as indiscriminate, villages south of Algiers have borne the brunt of many attacks (described as the "triangle of death," this area is one of the most militarized in the country); and individuals have clearly been targeted, among these political activists, Algerians with close links to the government, members of the security forces, women considered "progressive," journalists, and young men of draft age—all of whom are seen either as instruments of the state or whose lifestyles are in conflict with Islamic values. The fact that the Algerian army and security forces have frequently failed to intervene to prevent or stop attacks on civilians has caused many to believe that some members of the security forces are working in cooperation with the armed

groups.

The government has refused to address questions about its failure to protect its population. It consistently denies a human rights problem in the country and has discouraged international fact-finding missions on the grounds that they would constitute interference in internal affairs. In 1998, an EU delegation visited Algeria in an effort to establish a dialogue; so too did a UN delegation of "eminent personalities," appointed by the Secretary-General and led by former Portuguese Prime Minister Mario Soares. Both proved unable to persuade the government to accept international fact-finding missions, and neither was allowed to meet with the FIS. Several Western governments and NGOs at the 1998 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights urged the Algerian government to accept a joint fact-finding mission of rapporteurs and representatives (i.e., on extrajudicial executions, torture, and other relevant subjects), but the Algerian government made it known that it would deny entry to such a mission.

Government obstruction combined with security concerns have prevented the ICRC from working extensively in Algeria since 1992. International NGOs are not known to be present in the country, and the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Algiers do not deal with internal displacement.

Meanwhile, France and Germany have been denying asylum to thousands of Algerians seeking refuge in Europe. They claim that the Refugee Convention applies to persecution by governments, not by non-state actors. Although this interpretation is challenged by refugee organizations, the forcible return of Algerian asylum seekers puts lives at risk and adds to the number of IDPs in the country.

The report prepared by Steve Edminster of USCR underscores the need to collect information about and deal with internal displacement in Algeria, given its increasing magnitude, and suggests possible courses of action for NGOs, international organizations, journalists, and the governments of France, Germany and the United States.

The Case of Myanmar (Burma)

It is not known how many IDPs are in Myanmar. Estimates place the total at between 500,000 and 1 million, mostly from ethnic and religious minorities. Ethnic minorities constitute one-third of the population of the country, and many have been demanding greater autonomy from the central government for decades, generally meeting a military response.

Forcible displacement is used by the military government, which seized power in 1988, to accomplish three main aims: to break up potential areas of opposition to the regime; to disperse ethnic minorities and destroy the links between their insurgent movements and local sympathizers; and to make way for large-scale development projects. In the latter case, IDPs, often ethnic minorities, have been recruited as forced labor in inhumane conditions working on gas pipelines, railways, and hotel construction. Those who try to flee but do not make it to the Thai or other borders have hidden in mountains and jungles where they are reported to be in dire need of assistance and protection. Those who have managed to reach the Thai-Burma border often live precariously. Those forcibly relocated by the military within ethnic minority areas have few services and receive no compensation for their labor or their confiscated property. The "relocations" themselves are reported to be arbitrary, brutal and to include rape, pillage, the burning of fields and confiscations.

Myanmar has gained the reputation of a "pariah" country because of its human rights record and its rejection of international cooperation. In recent years, however, the government has sought to gain acceptance regionally and internationally by opening up to foreign investment and tourism.

But it continues to bar international humanitarian assistance to its displaced populations.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has not been able to establish a program in the country since the authorities have refused to grant it access to areas of conflict and to prisons. The international humanitarian and development agencies that do operate in Myanmar have only small programs, none are in conflict-affected areas, and none specifically target IDPs. Although "the Burmese regime constitutes the primary barrier to addressing displacement," observes Jana Mason of USCR, "the UN system, with its inherent limitations, has yet to establish an effective response." In 1996, a UN inter-agency task force on IDPs planned to hold a meeting on Myanmar in Geneva, but following negative reactions from other parts of the UN, called off the meeting. Since that time, the plight of IDPs in Myanmar has not been raised or discussed in the UN interagency forum. In 1996, an international organization was asked by the government to help relocate forcibly displaced persons, but the organization declined (presumably because of ethical dilemmas and lack of funds).

NGOs, both local and international, while suffering from lack of access and military restrictions, have managed to provide limited assistance to IDPs secretly or quietly, sometimes through cross-border programs from Thailand. The United States provides funds for humanitarian activities along the Burma-Thai border and has earmarked aid for persons displaced within the country as a result of civil conflict.

There have been ongoing contacts between the government and the Office of the UN Secretary-General; most recently a representative of the Secretary-General from the political department has held talks with Myanmar officials and has been seeking to establish technical assistance programs in the country. But UN human rights initiatives have thus far been thwarted. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights, has been denied entry for the past four years. When the Special Rapporteur was allowed entry in earlier years, access to conflict areas was denied. The annual resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and General Assembly, based on the Rapporteur's reports, have called upon the government to cease forcible displacement, but these appeals have been ignored.

A debate has developed about whether sanctions instituted by the US and EU are the most effective means of modifying government practices, or whether better results could be produced by engagement with the government. The US has imposed economic sanctions; EU sanctions are mainly political although the EU has withdrawn trade preferences because of the government's use of forced labor. Asian governments have made attempts to engage the regime economically, and in 1997, Myanmar was admitted to membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This decision was partly a result of Myanmar's growing involvement with China, which is Myanmar's chief arms supplier.

Western programs to promote democratization in Myanmar through support for opposition groups (Aung San Suu Kyi) and other activities are generally long-range in objective and do not address the immediate humanitarian and protection needs of IDPs. They also do not sufficiently address the problem of ethnic minorities.

A number of multinational companies have terminated their operations in the country on political and human rights grounds. Twenty-one cities, states and counties in the US have passed legislation making it difficult for American companies working in Myanmar to gain contracts with local government institutions.

The report on Myanmar (Burma) prepared by Jana Mason proposes steps that UN agencies, Thailand, ASEAN, and the United States could take to more effectively reach IDPs, who remain

"virtually shielded from the eyes of the world."

The Case of India

Internal displacement is not a massive problem in India but the government's inadequate response has exacerbated the suffering of those internally displaced. Indeed, there is little information about the conditions of most IDPs in India or what the Indian government is doing to address the problem. The Indian government for the most part bars international visits to areas of conflict (in Jammu-Kashmir and the northeastern states), and it does not invite or allow international assistance. This reflects its strong opposition to international involvement in its internal affairs as exemplified by its long-standing policy toward refugees: the Indian government provides its own resources to assist refugees but refuses UNHCR access to most refugees in the country.

Most IDPs emanate from Jammu-Kashmir, India's only state in which Muslims comprise the majority. The award of the state to India at its founding in 1947 was disputed by Pakistan which has continued to claim this area and has given both moral and material support to Muslim insurgent movements seeking independence or union with Pakistan. India, for its part, promised the state a substantial degree of autonomy but over the years has brought it under its direct rule, especially by instituting "President's Rule" in 1991. The communal violence that has ensued has often been orchestrated for political purposes. There is today in Kashmir an estimated 250,000 IDPs, mostly Hindus, whereas another 100,000 IDPs from the state fled to New Delhi and other areas.

While the Indian government does set up camps, build some houses and provide limited cash and other assistance for the IDPs from Kashmir, it does not officially recognize them as IDPs (reportedly out of concern that this might attract international involvement); the assistance is also minimal, and the government does not help the displaced find long-term solutions to their plight. But even this restricted help is far more than what is done for IDPs in India's isolated northeast states, where there are tens of thousands or possibly hundreds of thousands of IDPs from different ethnic, linguistic and tribal groupings (among these Santhals, Kukis, Paites, Bengalis, Reangs, and Chakmas). Displacement in the northeast is caused largely by interethnic feuds and fighting over diminishing land and resources and longstanding insurgencies against the central government. Minorities have regularly sought to assert their identities and protect themselves both against the centralizing pressures of the government and the influx of outsiders, in particular Bengali Muslims and Hindus, many displaced from present day Bangladesh, as well as others attracted by the area's mineral and agricultural wealth.

The government's response to internal displacement in the northeast has largely been to leave the responsibility to state and local authorities, who in many cases are neglectful. Food aid has been reported to be erratic while shelter, medicine and education have hardly been provided. Nor have efforts been made to resettle and provide land to those who can not return to their home areas. The low priority accorded the plight of IDPs and the limited resources provided by the central government for them have largely resulted in substandard conditions for these populations.

This absence of policies and procedures for dealing with IDPs and the government's failure to invite outside assistance is of especial concern, given growing Hindu nationalism in India and the potential for the country to produce many more IDPs. As Hiram Ruiz of USCR observes: "Given the poor conditions for displaced Indians, New Delhi's lack of policies toward the displaced, and its meager, irresolute response to them to date, it is entirely appropriate and necessary...for the international community to be much more proactive." To date, neither UN agencies nor international NGOs have exerted much effort to gain information about IDPs in the northeast or in Kashmir, or to press the Indian government to address the issue more effectively. Nor have there

been any international or regional initiatives to try to bolster whatever efforts the Indian government does make to ameliorate the conditions of IDPs.

Hiram Ruiz' report on India makes its main recommendations to the government, but also calls upon NGOs to play more of a role, and urges the international community to encourage the government to assume its responsibility more fully toward its displaced populations, especially those in the northeast.

Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations

In considering how to develop meaningful strategies to deal with these situations, it is important to explore the political and institutional capacities available at the international and regional levels.

The UN System

Over the past decade, there has been an important progression of policies and mechanisms within the UN system to respond to situations of internal displacement. In 1990, the General Assembly assigned UN Resident Coordinators the function of coordinating assistance in the field to IDPs. In 1991, the Assembly created the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to promote a more rapid and coherent response to emergency situations, of which IDPs are a significant part. In 1992, the Secretary-General, at the request of the Commission on Human Rights, appointed a Representative on Internally Displaced Persons to focus on the human rights dimension of the problem and identify ways and means of improving protection and assistance for IDPs. Also in 1992, the United Nations created the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), chaired by the ERC and composed of the heads of the major humanitarian and development agencies, to strengthen coordination in emergency situations. In 1994, the IASC designated the ERC "reference point" for requests for assistance and protection for IDPs, a role reaffirmed by the Secretary-General in his 1997 reform program.

In addition, a broad range of humanitarian, human rights, and development organizations have come forward to provide protection, assistance, and reintegration and development support to IDPs. Those within the UN system include the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Prominent players outside the UN system include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and a large number of NGOs.

Despite the constraints of mandates and resources, the international system has proved remarkably flexible in becoming involved with large numbers of IDPs. UNHCR, for example, whose mandate encompasses only refugees, has become increasingly involved with IDP populations at the request of the Secretary-General or General Assembly or when IDPs and refugees are so intertwined that it would be practically impossible to assist one group and not the other. UNICEF, although primarily a development organization, has become increasingly involved in emergency situations where it has offered protection and assistance to internally displaced children and their families. And the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has become increasingly involved in field operations which seek to protect returning IDPs.

Yet, the international community has failed to address serious situations of internal displacement in a number of countries that do not request assistance and may even oppose it. Of course, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), it should be recalled, is charged with responding to "requests" for assistance and protection in actual or developing situations of internal

displacement. And the UN's modus operandi is to deal with governments that cooperate with it.

But UN agencies do have discretionary authority and increasingly it has come to be expected that the international community will become involved when large numbers of IDPs are at risk or in severe need—even where the government is opposed to such assistance. Indeed, the ERC under his mandate can initiate requests. The current holder of this office, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was appointed in 1998, has expressed a commitment to seeing that IDPs worldwide receive greater protection and assistance from the international community.

At headquarters level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), chaired by the ERC, can also take up cases of internal displacement even when there are no formal requests. Its Working Group, which in 1997 became the UN's main inter-agency forum for internal displacement, is not limited in its scope of cases. To be sure, it usually focuses upon consensual situations and on "complex emergencies," which are defined as "large-scale humanitarian crises in complicated political and military environments, often in the context of internal conflicts." But this definition could fit some of the country situations under consideration today; and there is nothing to stop the Working Group from examining other situations and exploring whether and how the international community might be of assistance and whether advocacy should be used. Indeed, its terms of reference call upon it to recommend to the ERC ways to address "obstacles" in the provision of assistance and protection to IDPs.

In the field, Resident Coordinators who represent the UN system together with country teams can monitor internal displacement in the countries under consideration and make recommendations to the IASC about how to address these problems. To date, however, Resident Representatives/Coordinators have been reticent to deal with problems confronting IDPs when the governments concerned do not acknowledge the problem or request assistance. They also have no formal reporting requirements on IDPs to the ERC or to the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs.

The Representative of the Secretary-General, appointed in 1992, is the only position within the UN system with a mandate from the Commission on Human Rights and the Secretary-General to focus exclusively on the problem of internal displacement and to address both protection and assistance. The Representative's mandate encompasses both human rights and humanitarian concerns and includes all countries with problems of internal displacement. The Representative is authorized to monitor displacement worldwide, undertake fact-finding missions, establish dialogues with governments, coordinate with humanitarian and human rights bodies, make proposals for increased legal and institutional protection, and publish reports for action by the Commission, the General Assembly, international organizations and NGOs.

Since his appointment, the Representative has visited 13 countries (the former Yugoslavia, the Russian Federation, Somalia, the Sudan, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Burundi, Rwanda, Peru, Tajikistan, Mozambique, and Azerbaijan), published reports on these situations, and made recommendations for improving the conditions of the displaced. In collaboration with international legal experts, he has developed a normative framework for the internally displaced in the form of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which he presented to the Commission on Human Rights in April 1998. He has also studied existing institutional arrangements and made recommendations on ways in which inter-agency collaboration might be improved to more effectively address the needs of the internally displaced. In large part, the position of the Representative has evolved into one of catalyst within the international system, focusing attention on the internally displaced and stimulating improvements.

But perforce the Representative's role is limited. The position is a voluntary one, expected to be carried out on a part-time basis. The mandate has no operational authority and limited staff support. This has encouraged international organization officials and NGOs to propose that the

mandate become a full-time position. Currently, the resources placed at the Representative's disposal do not enable him to regularly monitor situations, visit more than two countries a year, or pay follow-up visits to ensure that the points agreed upon are carried out. And like other representatives and rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, the Representative has no established way of dealing with governments that seek to avoid scrutiny.

One way to lend support to the Representative's efforts to gain access to restricted countries and follow up with governments on their treatment of displaced populations would be for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to become actively involved. The High Commissioner has a broad mandate, which involves diplomatic dialogue with governments, the establishment of field operations in emergency situations, and the undertaking of technical assistance programs that can benefit IDPs. Mary Robinson, who became High Commissioner in 1997, has expressed a commitment to seeing that the recommendations made by rapporteurs and representatives of the Commission on Human Rights are carried out.

The Office of the Secretary-General could weigh in as well. In cases where UN representatives and rapporteurs are denied entry, a procedure could be developed to enable the UN to deal more consistently and effectively with governments that shun its representatives. Although efforts are made on an ad hoc basis, there is no overall commitment or strategy to encourage governments to grant access.

The Secretary-General's office could also lend support to efforts to deal with insurgent forces. Although the tendency of the UN to deal only with governments has changed dramatically over the past decade, greater flexibility is still needed on the part of UN officials and international agencies to negotiate with insurgent forces so as to be able to reach beleaguered populations and promote better treatment for them. In the cases under consideration today, non-state actors feature prominently, but international agencies have not dealt with them at all.

Regional Organizations

Regional organizations should be expected to assume responsibilities in conflict prevention and in dealing with emergency situations.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which includes Turkey as well as all of the countries in Eastern and Western Europe, the central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, the US and Canada, has taken some limited steps with regard to human rights and displacement problems in Turkey. OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly managed to gain entry in 1995, and its report made reference to the evacuation and destruction of Kurdish villages and mass displacement. But the report did not call for follow-up activities. Several members, in particular Nordic states, tried unsuccessfully a number of years ago to institute a dialogue and good-offices mission, but given the lapse of time and a new government in Turkey, it might prove appropriate again to introduce this or other initiatives. The OSCE Chair-in-Office and its Permanent Council could also take up the issue. And the High Commissioner on National Minorities could be asked to become involved on behalf of the Kurdish minority. In addition, the OSCE might consider appointing a special rapporteur on IDPs, a step taken in the Americas by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States.

Of the other European regional organizations, the European Union (EU), which has denied entry to Turkey, has considerable leverage, as earlier noted. So too does the Council of Europe, of which Turkey is a member. Its Parliamentary Assembly has been outspoken about the forcible displacement of Kurds in Turkey, and the European Commission on Human Rights has acted on hundreds of complaints from Turkish Kurds directed against the Turkish government.

In the case of Algeria, the League of Arab States (LAS) has supported the Algerian government's

position of denying entry to the international community and generally has not become involved in the internal human rights situations of member states. But voices have been raised in the Arab world urging the LAS to undertake activities on behalf of IDPs. In particular, it has been proposed that the LAS call upon Arab governments to collect information on internal displacement and establish national institutions to deal with the problem. Both the 1992 "Cairo Declaration on the Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Arab World" and the 1995 "Regional Seminar on Internal Displacement of Populations in Arab Countries, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law" have urged the LAS to play a more active role.

To date, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has not become involved in situations of internal displacement. Its Commission on Refugees has limited its activities primarily to refugee situations but it nevertheless has begun to look into conditions of IDPs, and at a meeting to be held in 1999 it plans to discuss the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

In the case of Myanmar, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is a new member, does not generally take up issues relating to the internal conditions within its member states. Nonetheless, ASEAN members have been making their human rights concerns known privately to the Myanmar government. Nothing within ASEAN's mandate precludes it from undertaking initiatives to prevent or resolve internal conflicts or to discuss forcible displacement.

Another Asian subregional organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), counts India among its members, although it too emphasizes noninterference in internal affairs, and the Kashmir dispute has not been addressed by the organization.

Role of NGOs

NGOs have emerged as major actors in helping IDPs; often they are the only ones on the ground working with displaced populations. Their efforts, however, are heavily restricted in the countries concerned, and sometimes must remain secret, as in Myanmar. Out of fear of expulsion, or for other reasons, they do not always communicate information about IDPs to human rights and other groups outside who might be able to take meaningful steps.

In India, international NGOs have been found not to have become as involved in IDP situations as they might, whereas in other countries, like Turkey, they have actively tried but been rebuffed. Greater international support for NGO access and roles in these countries is needed, as well as for cross border operations which may be the only way to reach IDPs, especially in Myanmar. Greater support for local NGOs is also essential. These groups often gain access quicker than other players but are heavily constrained by resources and security problems.

Role of Donor Governments and Institutions

Donor governments can play a significant role in pressing for programs for IDPs in countries whose governments neglect these populations. In particular, they can request that existing humanitarian and development aid to those countries extend to IDPs. For example, development programs, carried out by UNDP and the World Bank, could be designed to ensure inclusion of IDPs. Similarly, an outreach to IDPs could be made a part of public health and medical programs.

Donor governments can also act to promote greater compliance by governments and insurgent groups with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Principles emphasize that when governments or other authorities are unable or unwilling to provide humanitarian assistance to their populations, they can not arbitrarily deny the aid offered by international organizations. The Principles also provide for "rapid and unimpeded access to the internally displaced" by persons engaged in humanitarian assistance. In their negotiations with governments, donors can seek to

include reference to these provisions in aid agreements.

Often, donor governments refrain from using their leverage so as not to antagonize the government concerned or jeopardize other foreign policy interests. This has particularly been the case in attitudes toward Turkey and Algeria. Or they may lend support to counterinsurgency operations creating situations of internal displacement, as in Turkey. In such cases, efforts to restrict their military support for such operations need to be strengthened. At the same time, donor governments that attach conditions to their assistance, or institute economic or political sanctions, as in the case of Myanmar, may find that the sanctions do not produce the results intended. There may be need to explore more flexible policies that balance carrots and sticks.

Most significantly, donor governments can play a strong role in pressing for political solutions to the conflicts that produce mass displacement. In the four countries considered, little international attention has been devoted to promoting settlement of the disputes, whether between the Turkish government and its Kurdish minority, the Algerian government and the FIS, the Myanmar government and its ethnic minorities, and the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

Donor institutions like the World Bank also have an influential role to play in countries experiencing conflict. The Bank's new framework for post-conflict reconstruction recognizes that the Bank, as an institution devoted to development, must become involved with societies still in conflict in an effort to help lay the foundations for their transitions out of conflict. Bank programs in the countries under consideration could certainly try to extend their reach to the areas in which displaced populations can be found. This not only could help effectively reintegrate displaced populations but contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Development projects that benefit entire communities have proved to be an effective entry point to the displaced and could be explored in the countries under consideration today.

Mobilizing Public Attention

Finally, publicizing "forgotten" cases is an important way of bringing them to international attention. Human rights and humanitarian organizations, through their reports, testimony and press articles, can mobilize public attention and spur governments and international organizations to action. The Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement and the U.S. Committee for Refugees will be publishing reports on Turkey, Algeria, Myanmar (Burma) and India in order to focus greater attention on these situations and generate discussion on how best to address them.

In conclusion, this paper basically builds on the structures and procedures that are already in place internationally and examines how they could be more effectively applied in the four cases in question. The challenge for the meeting, however, will be to move beyond what exists and creatively come up with new measures the international system might try in an effort to more effectively deal with these difficult cases.

This conference was co-sponsored by the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement and the U.S. Committee for Refugees, Washington, D.C.