



DISPLACEMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD: A FOCUS ON AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

CONVENER:

Hady Amr

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

Elizabeth Ferris

Khalid Koser

Susanne Schmeidl

2009 U.S.-ISLAMIC
WORLD FORUM

Human Development Task Force



at BROOKINGS



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A SABAN CENTER AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION REPORT

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THE DOHA DISCUSSION PAPERS provide testament to the opportunity for renewed dialogue between the United States and the Muslim world. Written specifically for the U.S.-Islamic World Forum's three task forces, they have been edited and compiled into separate volumes on Governance, Human Development and Social Change, and Security. The Doha Discussion Papers bring together the major papers and responses that frames each of the task force discussions. They include as well a summary of the off-record discussions at each of the task force sessions held at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

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NOTE FROM THE CONVENERS

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When it comes to relations between the United States and the Muslim-majority countries, too often diatribes and stereotypes substitute for genuine dialogue and mutual understanding. The annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum, held in Doha, Qatar, brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States for three days of carefully structured discussions. The Forum seeks to get beyond the empty rhetoric and mutual accusations and address the critical issues actually confronting the United States and the Muslim world by providing a unique platform for frank dialogue, learning, and the development of positive partnerships between key leaders and opinion shapers from both sides. It includes plenary sessions, smaller task force discussions focused on key thematic issues like governance, human development, and security, and initiative workshops that bring practitioners from similar fields together to identify concrete actions they might jointly undertake.

The theme of this year's Forum was "Common Challenges," as 2009 presents, for both the United States and the Muslim world, an opportunity to work together to address and resolve the major issues of our time. Opened by H.E. Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, deputy prime minister and minister of energy and industry of Qatar, the Forum featured keynote addresses by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Malaysian parliamentarian and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, and commander of the U.S. Central Command Gen. David Petraeus. Plenary sessions focusing on various aspects of the future of U.S.-Muslim world relations included such luminaries as Aitzaz Ahsan, president of the Pakistani Supreme Court Bar Association; Nashwa al-Ruwaini, CEO of Pyramedia Ltd. and host of "The Million's Poet"; U.S. congressmen Brian Baird (D, WA-3) and Keith Ellison (DFL, MN-5); Thomas Fingar, former chairman of the National Intelligence Council; Hala Lattouf, minister of social development of Jordan; Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, author of *Descent into Chaos*; David Rubenstein, co-founder of the Carlyle Group; Ismail Serageldin, director of the Library of Alexandria; and Bouthaina Shaaban, minister and political and media advisor to the President of Syria.

These Doha Discussion Papers seek to capture the rich discussions that take place between U.S. and Muslim world leaders in the Forum's task force sessions. Edited and compiled into separate volumes on Governance, Human Development, and Security, the Doha Discussion Papers bring together the major think pieces and responses that were prepared for and framed each of the task force discussions. Included as well is a summary of the off-record discussions that occurred in each of the task force sessions. We hope you will find them as stimulating as the participants in Doha did.

On behalf of the entire Saban Center at Brookings, we would like to express our deep appreciation to HRH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, for making it possible to convene this assemblage of leaders from across the Muslim world and the United States. We are also appreciative of the support and participation of HE Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar. We would also like to thank HE Mohammed Abdullah Mutib Al-Rumaihi, the Foreign Minister's Assistant for Follow Up Affairs; Abdulla Rahman Fakhroo, Executive Director of the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences; Malik Esufji, Director of Protocol, and the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff for their roles in ensuring the successful planning and operation of the meeting. Finally, we would like to thank Hady Amr, Peter W. Singer and Shibley Telhami for convening the Task Forces, as well as Aysha Chowdhry for her hard work in compiling and editing these volumes.

Sincerely,



Ambassador Martin Indyk
Director
Saban Center at Brookings



Dr. Stephen R. Grand
Fellow and Director
Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

FOREWORD

SINCE THE FIRST SABAN CENTER AT BROOKINGS conference in Qatar in 2002 in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, I have witnessed the issue of Human Development in the Muslim world be central to discussions on the U.S. relationship with this vast region.

Subsequently, with the annual convening of the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, we incorporated the issue of education and youth from the outset, and then in 2008 organized an ongoing task force on human development in the Muslim world. That year, the task force organized itself around a framework examining overall human development. In 2009, the task force focused on a central issue in the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world in the area of human development—that of the creation of the immensely vast populations of refugees and internally displaced people as a result of the U.S.-led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Bush administration, while also providing a contextual overview of the acute refugee problem across the Muslim world.

In a way, the refugee crises in these countries is a lens through which the task force could examine the shattering of these societies, and the role the U.S. had played. For our discussions, we brought together leading American and international scholars on the refugee crises and security such as Elizabeth Ferris and Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institution and Khaled Koser of the Geneva Center for Security Policy, together with thought leaders from Afghanistan and Iraq such as Jasim Azawi, the presenter on Al-Jazeera’s “Inside Iraq” and Sima

Samar, the Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission as well as those from countries which host these refugees, such as Ahmad Rashid, Pakistani journalist and author and H.E. Bouthaina Shaaban, Minister and Political Media Advisor to the President of Syria.

A central take-away from the discussions was that the refugee crises in these and other Muslim-majority countries can and should be viewed primarily as a political crisis with political causes and consequences and not primarily as a humanitarian crisis—although clearly the consequences are not simply political but also gravely humanitarian.

President Obama has in some ways already re-booted the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world through his rhetoric in general and the announcement that he intends to close the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay Cuba and end the use of torture. But at the end of the day, the more than one billion citizens of Muslim-majority countries will judge America based on actions across a wide-range of issues, significant among them, the resolution of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in a manner that leaves behind healthy, prosperous societies, which in turn will require resolving the political and humanitarian crisis faced by the millions of refugees from those countries, as well as the other refugee crises across the Muslim world.

—Hady Amr
Director, Brookings Doha Center
Fellow, Saban Center for Middle
East Policy

Introduction

HADY AMR • ELIZABETH FERRIS

DISPLACEMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Throughout the Muslim world, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes and communities for many reasons: civil wars, interstate conflicts, U.S.-led military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, tsunamis, earthquakes, and a multitude of other disasters. Many have crossed national borders and live in nearby countries as refugees. Many more remain within the borders of their country as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Some are displaced only temporarily and are able to return to their communities when conflicts are resolved or flood waters have receded, but most live many years as refugees or IDPs. For some, displacement has lasted for generations. The statistics are detailed in the appendix to this paper.

This massive dislocation of people affects both national development plans and individual human development. It impacts national security and personal security. It affects relationships between neighboring countries, UN Security Council discussions, and peace processes. In short, understanding—and resolving—displacement is central to development, peace, and security.

A WIDESPREAD PHENOMENON

Sudan stands out as the country with the highest number of displaced people—over half a million

refugees and a staggering six million IDPs. Sudanese have fled multiple civil wars and the devastating effects of climate change including floods, droughts, and famine. In the western region of Darfur alone, two million people are internally displaced by the conflict and most are highly dependent on external humanitarian assistance for survival.

One of the world's largest and most protracted displacements is that of the Palestinians. Beginning in 1948, the flight of Palestinians from their towns and villages—either by force or out of fear—led to the establishment of refugee camps throughout the region. It also spurred the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, an agency which, to this day, provides relief and development assistance to over 4.6 million displaced Palestinians in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.¹ The issue of Palestinian refugees has been central to peace negotiations for decades—an issue which remains unresolved.

Most recently, the displacement of Iraqis—both internally and across Iraq's borders—has dramatically impacted the Muslim world. While Iraqis were subjected to mass attacks and displacements under the regime of Saddam Hussein, the ethno-sectarian violence and general insecurity which flourished under the U.S. occupation has led to unprecedented numbers of Iraqi families fleeing their homes

¹ See UNRWA's official homepage: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/english.html>.

and sometimes the country. Today, roughly two million Iraqis are refugees and another 2.8 million are IDPs.

South Asia has also been particularly affected by large-scale displacement. In terms of refugees under UNHCR's mandate (i.e. other than Palestinians), Afghanistan was the leading country of origin at the end of 2007 with 3.1 million refugees hosted mainly by Pakistan and Iran.²

An additional 200,000 Afghans are displaced inside the country; many have been displaced multiple times and are unable to return to their communities due to the lack of security. It should be noted that the combined number of Iraqi and Afghan refugees in 2007 account for nearly half of UNHCR's global refugee population.

In addition, there are a considerable number of IDPs throughout the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) states as well. Aside from Sudan and Iraq, which host a combined 8.8 million IDPs, countries like Turkey, Uganda, and Somalia each have close to 1 million IDPs, while Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, and Côte d'Ivoire are home to over half a million. Many communities throughout the Muslim world are hosting large refugee populations as well. The top three refugee-hosting countries *in the world* at the end of 2007 were all OIC members: Pakistan, Syria, and Iran.³ All told, there are nine to ten million refugees in the Muslim world, and at least 14 million internally displaced. This means that one in 140 people living in the Muslim world is a refugee and one in 100 is internally displaced. If this was the case in the United States, there would be two million refugees and three million American internally displaced persons.

DISPLACEMENT, SECURITY AND HOSPITALITY

The forced movement of these millions of people is critical to issues of security and development in the regions in question and the Muslim world as a whole. Firstly, refugees, IDPs, and host communities face enormous challenges in terms of meeting humanitarian and development assistance needs. In many situations, displaced persons cannot access education, health care, or the job market, with major implications for the individuals and families concerned, but also for broader development initiatives.

For refugees, one's livelihood is intimately tied to legal status. While 37 of 60 countries in the Muslim world, particularly in Africa, are parties to the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 protocol, there are significant gaps elsewhere in the Muslim world. States which are not parties to the convention include Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei-Darussalam, Comoros, Eritrea, Guyana, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the UAE, and Uzbekistan. It should be noted, however, that many of these countries, such as Pakistan, Jordan, and Syria, have quite large refugee populations, particularly from Palestine and Iraq, and have been very generous in allowing refugees to stay, albeit without the status of refugees.

In addition to signing the 1951 Convention, several states, including Iraq, Turkey, and Uganda, have incorporated the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into national laws or policies. Of course, despite recognition of these frameworks, there are often discrepancies in terms of how refugee and IDP rights are upheld on the ground.

² UNHCR, *2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons* (June 2008), p. 8. (This is based on the total number of externally displaced Afghans, some of whom are not formally identified or registered as refugees.)

³ UNHCR, *2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons* (June 2008), p. 8.

While the Convention, Protocol, and Guiding Principles provide a framework of protection for displaced people, Islam—as interpreted by various scholars—could also offer a potential framework and innovative solutions for displaced persons. For example, the right to asylum is thought by many to be recognized in Islam. The faith promotes humanitarian principles and views the granting of asylum as a duty of political leaders within the Muslim community.⁴

Within the Muslim world, there is a “wealth gap” in responding to refugees. In many cases, it is the low- and middle-income countries—like Jordan and Syria—that have accepted the most refugees and provided them with the greatest legal rights, while the number of refugees admitted to some of the OIC’s wealthiest states does not even register on global surveys, and their legal status tends to be dubious at best.

Since 2001, refugees and IDPs in the Muslim world have been seen by the U.S. and others through the

lens of the Global War on Terror. Moreover, two of the Muslim world’s largest current humanitarian crises are to a large extent the result of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY

Today, in the face of rising food prices and the global financial crisis, the situation of refugees and IDPs is becoming more desperate. Increased short-term humanitarian assistance is needed. But even more urgent is the need to focus on finding durable solutions for those displaced by violence and disasters. The protracted displacement of Palestinians, Sudanese, and Afghans cries out for international response and a development of new and innovative solutions.

The remainder of this report will be composed of two chapters. The first on refugees from Iraq. The second on refugees from Afghanistan.

⁴ Elizabeth G. Ferris, *Beyond Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Human Rights in the Post-Cold War Era*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993, p. xxxiv-xxxv. For more on Islamic perspectives on displacement and asylum, see *Refugee Survey Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 2 (2008) “Islam and Asylum”.



Displacement, Human Development, and Security in Afghanistan

KHALID KOSER • SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

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SUSANNE SCHMEIDL holds a Ph.D. in sociology from The Ohio State University and is the senior advisor and one of the founding members to The Liaison Office (TLO) in Afghanistan as well as visiting fellow with the Asia-Pacific College on Diplomacy at the Australian National University. Prior to this she was a Senior Research Fellow at the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith University, Australia and worked with Swisspeace for nine years in the areas of early warning, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Between 2002 and 2005 she managed the Swisspeace office in Afghanistan where she also coordinated the Afghan Civil Society Forum. She has published extensively on Afghanistan, gender, civil society, refugee migration, conflict early warning, peacebuilding and human security.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly five million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002 and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) often cites Afghanistan as a positive example of refugee repatriation.⁵ In reality, however, the return of Afghan refugees may prove to be one of the most ill-conceived policies in the Muslim world in recent times.

While in the right circumstances the return of refugees can contribute to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, those circumstances cannot really be said to have existed in Afghanistan when repatriation commenced in 2002; much less at the moment.⁶ An estimated 40 percent of rural Afghans are malnourished; about 70 percent of the population lives on less than USD 2 per day; over two-thirds of Afghans over the age of 15 cannot read and write; and one in five children dies before they reach their fifth birthday. The economy was already described as ‘little short of catastrophic’⁷ even before it was hit by the recent hike in food and fuel prices.⁸ Rubin argues that ‘the subsistence economy has been largely destroyed, and Afghanistan relies on imports of food and exports of agro-based commodities—opium and heroin.’⁹

At the same time there has been an increase in insurgent activity and violent incidents over the past two to three years; and the humanitarian space is shrinking. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), a total of 2,118 civilian casualties were reported during 2008 (55 percent attributed the insurgency and 39 percent to pro-government forces, including internationals), a figure that is 40 percent higher than for 2007.¹⁰ “Despite steps to reduce civilian casualties, international military forces (IMF) caused 552 civilian deaths through airstrikes in 2008, which is up by 72 percent on 2007.”¹¹ The majority of civilian casualties (41 percent) occurred in the south of Afghanistan, followed by the southeast (20 percent), east (13 percent), central (13 percent) and western (9 percent) Afghanistan.¹²

Far from ‘going home’ to rebuild and make peace, many returning refugees are struggling to survive or have returned to Pakistan and Iran in the search of security and labour. A majority (80 percent) of the Kabul population (including many returning refugees and IDPs) live in squatter settlements that cover about 69 percent of the total residential area of the city.¹³ Many returning refugees are unemployed,¹⁴ and are going hungry.¹⁵ In effect they are adding to the growing number of internally

⁵ UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium*, Oxford: OUP, 2006.

⁶ D. Turton, P. and Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2002).

⁷ W. Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan*, London: Hurst, 2007, 79.

⁸ ‘Afghans hit hard by rising world food prices’, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/SHES-7DYMPV>.

⁹ B. R. Rubin, ‘The Transformation of the Afghan State,’ pp. 13-23 in J. A. Thier (ed.), *The Future of Afghanistan*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009, 17.

¹⁰ UNAMA, *Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2008*; United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit, January 2009; [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/JBRN-7PCD3P-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/JBRN-7PCD3P-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf).

¹¹ *Caught in the Conflict: Civilians and the international security strategy in Afghanistan*; A briefing paper by eleven NGOs operating in Afghanistan for the NATO Heads of State and Government Summit, 3-4 April 2009; http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/OXFAM_Civilians_InternationalSecurityStrategy_Afghanistan.pdf.

¹² UNAMA, 2009.

¹³ World Bank, ‘Why and how should Kabul upgrade its informal settlements?’ *Urban Policy Notes Series* 2005, No. 2 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1150905429722/PolicyNote2.pdf>. A majority of all refugees (40 percent) return to urban destinations, with 29 percent of Pakistani refugees returning to Kabul alone (UNHCR ‘Statistical Overview of Afghan Refugee Population in Pakistan, Iran and Other Countries, Returned Afghan Refugees from Pakistan, Iran and Non-Neighbouring Countries, IDP Population Movements, Reintegration Activities and Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) Program’ (2 January-31 October 2007), Operational Information, Monthly Summary Report – October 2007, (Kabul: Operational Information Unit).

¹⁴ UN News Service, ‘Returning refugees to Afghanistan struggle to earn a living wage’, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/printnews.asp?id=29457>.

¹⁵ IRIN News, ‘Afghanistan: Little to eat for IDPs in makeshift Kabul camp’, <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=82195>.

displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan, displaced for a range of reasons from conflict to environmental degradation.¹⁶ Those refugees still in Iran and Pakistan who have not yet returned usually have good reasons not to and are unlikely to without being coerced.

The net effect of these displacement trends is to severely undermine the potential for human development (or human security) for the displaced as well as those who depend on them, and to stall rather than promote economic development in Afghanistan. There are also potentially wider national and regional security implications, including the growth of cross-border smuggling and trafficking, growing support for the insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and increasingly tense relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours Iran and Pakistan. New solutions are required, and the U.S. has an important role to play in identifying and implementing them.

This paper has three main sections. In the first we describe recent trends in displacement in Afghanistan, including the recent politics of refugee repatriation to Afghanistan. Second, we consider the implications of displacement trends for human development and security in Afghanistan and the wider region. Finally, we consider alternative solutions for the Afghan refugee crisis, and a role for the U.S. administration in establishing and maintaining security in the region.

DYNAMICS OF DISPLACEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

There have been waves of refugee flows and returns from and back to Afghanistan since the Communist coup in April 1978, broadly paralleling

the phases of conflict in that country.¹⁷ At their peak in the mid- to late-1990s there were over six million Afghan refugees, mainly in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. According to the UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 there are currently still three million Afghan refugees in exile, about 2.1 million in Pakistan and 915,000 in Iran.¹⁸ There are much smaller numbers of Afghan refugees (and some asylum seekers) in Europe (mainly in Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Denmark); Australia and New Zealand; North America; Russia; Central Asia; and India.

Two main waves of repatriation can be identified in the last 10 years or so, with *ad hoc* and intermittent trickle movements occurring throughout. Almost three million refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1992-93 following the capture of Kabul by the *Mujahideen*. Nearly five million Afghans have returned in a second major wave after 2002, following the fall of the *Taliban* government.

Although the major repatriation flows are clearly linked to political events in Afghanistan, there has also been growing pressure from host countries on Afghan refugees to repatriate since the end of the 1990s. Schmeidl and Maley provide four main explanations for growing pressure on Afghan refugees to repatriate from Pakistan: the sheer size of the population and the duration of displacement; the decline of international assistance for Afghan refugees (although it picked up again in 2001; even though largely earmarked for repatriation); resource competition between the refugees and the host population; and insecurity.¹⁹ The final explanation is worth unpacking. On the one hand the Afghan refugee camps have always hosted mixed populations, genuine refugees and refugee warriors and their families (first the *Mujahideen* and later

¹⁶ IDMC, 'Afghanistan: Increasing hardship and limited support for growing displaced population'; 28 October 2008.

¹⁷ L.P. Goodson, 'Periodicity and intensity in the Afghan war', *Central Asian Survey*, 17:3, 1998, 471-88.

¹⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/474ac8e00.pdf>.

¹⁹ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley, 2008, 141-42.

Taliban fighters) who have operated out of refugee camps. Many Afghan tribes also engage in cross-border trade and smuggling (including of arms and drugs, and more recently humans) for a livelihood. This continued during times of exile. On the other hand the refugees have become a convenient scapegoat for Pakistan's internal strife, failure to curb fundamentalism, and growing social ills.²⁰ The latter also applies to Afghan refugees in Iran, who are perceived as posing "a significant burden on Iran's economy".²¹

The role of the United States, its relationship with Pakistan²² and its lack of a relationship or rivalry with Iran²³ are also crucial here. During the Cold War, the U.S. (and other western states) were happy to provide refugee assistance to Afghan refugees via Pakistan, even if this muddled humanitarian with political assistance. In contrast little assistance was provided to Iran as the 1979 revolution broke the close US-Iran relationship.²⁴ Post 9/11, however, the United States sought out Pakistan as its main ally in the war against terrorism in the region, and thus supported the government's stance on rapid repatriation to Afghanistan, "sharing concerns over the security challenges that a displaced and potentially dissatisfied group can represent."²⁵ In contrast, U.S.-Iran relations have deteriorated, which is also impacting on Afghan-Iranian relations as Iran sees U.S. engagement in Afghanistan as a threat.

Interestingly the outcome of these different international trajectories has been almost identical for how Afghan refugees are dealt with in Iran and Pakistan. Both countries, albeit for different reasons, now have a free hand in pressing for repatriation—in Pakistan with the support of the United States and international community, and in Iran because of a lack of international pressure to do otherwise.

Since 2004 Pakistan has developed a new stringent policy aiming to close refugee camps and leave the refugees with little alternative but to return to Afghanistan.²⁶ An estimated 277,000 Afghans were repatriated from Pakistan in 2008,²⁷ and the Pakistani government has set a target of repatriating all the remaining refugees by the end of 2009 when their current permits expire. Even more explicitly than Pakistan, Iran has been pursuing a policy of forced return. Since April 2007 the Iranian government has moved actively to expel Afghans who lack formal papers permitting them to reside in Iran. In addition employment and the freedom of movement have been restricted for Afghans, taxes have been levied on them, and they have been subject to intermittent roundups. It has been estimated that 360,000 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2007, including during the worst winter the region has experienced in years.²⁸ This has continued throughout 2008 and 2009, with Afghanistan claiming that 9,000 refugees were expelled in January 2009,²⁹ and 30,000 just a month before.³⁰ "Every day about 20

²⁰ H.A. Ruiz, 'Afghan refugees in Pakistan at risk', *Refugee Reports*, 22:7, 2001, 1-8.

²¹ *Afghanistan's Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China*. Conference Report, The American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and the Hollings Center for International Dialogue, Istanbul, Turkey, July 2008 (report released March 2009), p.7; http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/AIAS_AfghanistansOthersNeighbors_Iran_CentralAsia_China.pdf.

²² W. Maley, 'Afghanistan and its Region' pp. 81-93 in J. A. Thier (ed.), *The Future of Afghanistan*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009.

²³ *Afghanistan's Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China*, 2009.

²⁴ Ch. Benard and Z. Khalilzad, (1984), *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press).

²⁵ E. Parker, (2008), "The refugee problem: Looking toward Afghanistan's long-term stability", *South Asia Monitor*, 10 December 2008; <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MUMA-7M87P9?OpenDocument>.

²⁶ 'Pakistan sending Afghan refugees back home despite warnings' <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20080422.htm>.

²⁷ UN News Service, 'Returning refugees to Afghanistan struggle to earn a living wage', <http://www.un.org/apps/mews/printnews.asp?id=29457>.

²⁸ IRIN, 'Afghanistan mass deportation from Iran may cause crisis, official warns', <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76790>, 17 February 2008.

²⁹ 'Iran Said To Resume Deportation Of Afghan Refugees', Radio Free Europe, 15 January 2009 http://www.rferl.org/content/Iran_Said_To_Resume_Deportation_Of_Afghan_Refugees/1370585.html.

³⁰ <http://news.trend.az/index.shtml?show=news&newsid=1361018&lang=EN>.

children are deported to Herat,' Abdul Qader Rahimi, head of the government human rights commission's office in Herat Province, told IRIN.³¹

Internal displacement in Afghanistan is unusually complex. It covers different categories of people, displaced for different reasons, and over different periods of time. According to UNHCR in 2008 there were about 235,000 registered IDPs in Afghanistan,³² largely reflecting a protracted caseload of those displaced by drought and insecurity prior to 2004 that resides in camps; but by no means including all or even the majority of the growing numbers of IDPs living in irregular settlements in Kabul, other urban areas and elsewhere in Afghanistan.³³

This figure certainly underestimates the true scale of internal displacement,³⁴ and gives no hint of the volatility of internal displacement in Afghanistan. UNHCR identifies four other major 'categories' of IDP in Afghanistan:³⁵ First, there are people recently and currently being displaced by conflict, especially in the south and east. These 'new conflict-affected IDPs' include both 'battle-affected' and the victims of inter- or intra-tribal conflict. Second, there are returnees and deportees from neighbouring countries who are not willing or able to go to their areas of origin. Third there are those displaced as a result of food insecurity, particularly during the harsh winter of 2007-08. Fourth, there are the internally displaced in urban areas, both conflict and development-induced.³⁶ To these might be added another category, created by an economic revival resulting in rising land prices, increased rents and 'land-

grabbing' in urban areas, especially Kabul,³⁷ which have displaced poor urban dwellers in a form of development-induced displacement.³⁸ At the same time, and adding to the complexity, there have also been significant IDP returns, mainly of old caseloads however. Since 2002 UNHCR estimates that over half a million IDPs have returned to their homes in Afghanistan, although the rate has dropped off significantly recently with durable solutions difficult to find for remaining caseloads.

In addition to a general susceptibility to displacement in Afghanistan due to lingering inter and intra-community tensions combined with poverty, a weak rule of law and inadequate security forces preoccupied with fighting the Taliban, there are three main pressure points leading to internal displacement, some of which are indicated in the UNHCR categories. First, many refugees have been unable to return to their areas of origin in Afghanistan—because of insecurity, a lack of livelihoods, and poor economic and social infrastructure. As the pressure on refugees in Iran and Pakistan continues, it is anticipated that a majority of future returnees will also become internally displaced. A report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found that a majority of returnees (67.1 percent) were unable to return to their places of origin due to lack of land; or left after finding that their land had been taken.³⁹ A 2007 UNHCR survey of returning Afghan refugees found that only 41 percent even had a house in Afghanistan. According to McEwen and Nolan "Returnee claims constitute a large proportion of all disputes over private rural land ownership".⁴⁰

³¹ "Afghanistan: Plight of child deportees from Iran", 22 March 2009 (IRIN); <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83577>.

³² UNHCR, National Profile of IDPs in Afghanistan, 27 August 2008.

³³ IDMC, 2008, 4.

³⁴ K. Koser, 'Internal displacement in Afghanistan', http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2007/1108_afghanistan_koser.aspx.

³⁵ UNHCR, National Profile of IDPs in Afghanistan, 27 August 2008.

³⁶ IDMC, 2008.

³⁷ J. Beall Beall and S. Schütte, *Urban Livelihoods in Afghanistan*; Synthesis Paper, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, August 2006.

³⁸ K. Koser, 'Internal displacement in Afghanistan', http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2007/1108_afghanistan_koser.aspx.

³⁹ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) *Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan II*, 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=471f4a5b0>.

⁴⁰ A. McEwen and S. Nolan, *Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy: Options for Land Registration*, Working Paper Series, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, February 2007.

Second, armed conflict is still escalating in certain parts of Afghanistan, increasing civilian casualties, shrinking humanitarian space, and causing periodic (sometimes short term only) displacement.⁴¹ During a working visit to Afghanistan in August 2007, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons expressed particular concern that the methods both of the Taliban and of anti-insurgency operations are disproportionately impacting on civilians.⁴²

Third, the country is prone to natural disasters—floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides. Drought-induced displacement in the north of the country, particularly in Saripul, Faryab and Jawzjan provinces, is an annual phenomenon. There are regular warnings of a pending humanitarian emergency in food-insecure areas in “the areas of Balkh, Samanga, Sri-Pul and Jawzjan in the north, Badghis, Nimroz and Ghor in the west, Logar in the east, Wardak in the center, and Khost in the southeast”.⁴³ Furthermore, a lack of livelihoods, as well as un- and under-employment are also causing migration in search of employment.

DISPLACEMENT, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

As early as 2003 Amnesty International expressed concern ‘that large numbers of returns to a situation in which these returns cannot be sustained will be detrimental both to the safety and human rights of

returnees as well as to the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan’⁴⁴—and UNHCR was criticized for ‘facilitating’ large-scale returns in these circumstances. Since then conditions in Afghanistan have deteriorated, yet pressure continues to mount in Iran and Pakistan on the remaining refugees to return.

Even though an Afghan presidential decree guarantees refugees a “safe and dignified return”, across a range of indicators, conditions for IDPs and returning refugees are deteriorating in Afghanistan, an experience shared by the general population.⁴⁵ Due to a lack of access to land and shelter, a majority settle in *ad hoc* makeshift camps or squatter settlements. This is especially concerning during winter seasons.⁴⁶ Even though a presidential decree established a Special Land Disputes Court in 2002 in order “to specifically deal with private persons who are returnees or internally displaced and who seek to retrieve private properties of which they have been unwillingly deprived during the period since 1978”;⁴⁷ it has been largely unsuccessful.⁴⁸

In Kabul in particular there is a lack of infrastructure to support the population that has been swelled by returning refugees and IDPs—much of the city lacks proper sanitation facilities, electricity, schools or health centers.⁴⁹ Unemployment and underemployment is rife.⁵⁰ There are reports of food shortages and hunger in IDP camps.⁵¹ Lack of security is both a concern and a reality for returning refugees.⁵² Rights issues such as unresolved

⁴¹ IDMC 2008, UNAMA 2009.

⁴² http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/RSG-Press-Releases/20070820_afghanistan.aspx, see also UNAMA, 2009.

⁴³ IDMC, 2008, 7.

⁴⁴ Amnesty International, *Afghanistan - Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Fate of the Afghan Returnees*, Index No ASA 11/014/2003, 23 June 2003.

⁴⁵ New York Times, ‘Afghan Refugees Return Home but Find Only a Life of Desperation’; 2 December 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/world/asia/03refugees.html?_r=1&ref=asia.

⁴⁶ BBC News, ‘Little comfort in Afghan cold’, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/shout_asia/7812138.stm.

⁴⁷ World Bank, *Will formal documents of title and the courts resolve all land disputes?* Kabul Urban Policy Notes Series No.5, 2005 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1150905429722/PolicyNote5.pdf>.

⁴⁸ L. A. Wily, *Looking for Peace on the Pastures: Rural Land Relations in Afghanistan*, Synthesis Paper, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, December 2004.

⁴⁹ ‘Kabul facing unregulated urbanisation’, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/396b256af37e91b75ad0b1674b104268.htm>.

⁵⁰ UN News Service, ‘Returning refugees to Afghanistan struggle to earn a living wage’, <http://www.un.org/apps/mews/printnews.asp?nid=29457>.

⁵¹ IRIN News, ‘Afghanistan: Little ear for IDPs in makeshift Kabul camp’, <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=82195>.

⁵² CHR Michelsen Institute, *Return in Dignity, Return to What? Review of the Voluntary Return Programme to Afghanistan*, CMI Report, 2008 :6.

community conflicts or fear of persecution of minorities are also a concern. Furthermore, young returnees often feel discriminated against as they often lack extensive networks or speak their mother tongue with an accent leading to a question of their 'Afghan-ness' by those who remained.⁵³

Many of these returning refugees and IDPs will not be able to go to their areas of origin in Afghanistan in the near future for a series of reasons. Perhaps the most important is security: "Large parts of the south, south-west, south-east, east, and central regions of Afghanistan are now classified by UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) as 'extreme risk, hostile environments.'"⁵⁴ Some estimate that the *Taliban* has a permanent presence in over 70 percent of the country.⁵⁵ The rule of law is also weak, especially in rural areas. In a 2007 survey by the Asia Foundation, 74 percent of respondents identified corruption as a major problem in Afghanistan;⁵⁶ and in a recent report by the International Crisis Group the police were described as a source of fear, rather than community protection.⁵⁷ Land mines are another critical obstacle: Afghanistan is one of the most heavily contaminated countries in the world—with 15 percent of the population living in affected areas. "According to the Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (MACCA), on average over 60 people are killed or injured every month in mine-related

incidents and half of the victims are children."⁵⁸ There are currently 5,560 known hazards and still 690 million square metres of land that need to be cleared, impacting over 2,090 communities. Disputes over land ownership and tenure are major sources of conflict in Afghanistan,⁵⁹ as the livelihood of a majority of Afghanistan's rural population (about 70 percent) depends on agriculture.⁶⁰ Many returning IDPs have found their land occupied, lack proper documentation to prove their ownership and in turn occupy the land of others.⁶¹ There is a general lack of access to justice; inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms;⁶² and on the whole an absence of compensation. Government land allocation schemes have begun to address this problem but they are often hindered by corruption. There have been recent criticisms that some of the sites identified for the resettlement of IDPs by the government's land allocation strategy are located on barren land and far from local towns where there may be work.

A lack of basic infrastructure is yet another obstacle to return, or may lead to re-emigration for those who have returned.⁶³ According to a 2007 report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission on economic and social rights in Afghanistan, about 20 percent of returnees lacked access to health care, and another 40 percent felt they received inadequate services.⁶⁴ Overall, health

⁵³ M. Saito, (2008), *From Disappointment to Hope: Transforming Experiences of Young Afghans Returning "Home" from Pakistan and Iran*, Briefing Paper Series, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

⁵⁴ UNAMA, 2009, 11.

⁵⁵ ICOS, *Struggle for Kabul: The Taliban Advance*. London: International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), December 2008 http://www.icosgroup.net/documents/Struggle_for_Kabul_ICOS.pdf (accessed 22 December 2008).

⁵⁶ The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2007: A Survey of the Afghan People*, Kabul: The Asia Foundation, 2008.

⁵⁷ ICG, 'Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy', *Asia Briefing* 85, 18 December 2008.

⁵⁸ UNAMA, *Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2008*; United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit, January 2009; [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/JBRN-7PCD3P-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2009.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/JBRN-7PCD3P-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf); pp.iii, 10.

⁵⁹ L.A. Wily 2004; McEwen and Nolan 2007.

⁶⁰ L. A. Wily, *Land Rights in Crisis: Restoring Tenure Insecurity in Afghanistan*, Issues Paper Series; Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, March 2003.

⁶¹ Those who may have found shelter live in what is locally called *Zor abad*, literally meaning 'a place taken by force'—where people enclosed public lands and established residence without seeking official permission" (Beall and Schütte 2006, 21).

⁶² Tribal Liaison Office, *Land Based Conflict In Afghanistan: The Case Of Paktia*; Working Paper, Kabul: TLO 2008.

⁶³ 'Afghanistan: Returnees may become refugees again – ministry; Kabul, 19 June 2008 (IRIN), <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78822>.

⁶⁴ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 2007.

workers lack access to over 40 percent of the country. About one third noted that their children (mostly girls) did not attend primary school, either because of a lack of school buildings, or child-labour (especially for boys).⁶⁵ Insecurity leads to increasing school closures (particularly of schools for girls) in Afghanistan, especially in insurgent-dominated areas in the south, southwest, southeast and east of the country. Even though some have recently re-opened, over 570 primary and secondary schools are still closed.⁶⁶ “In 2008, 293 school-related security incidents and 92 deaths were reported, compared to 232 school-based security incidents in the same period for 2007 and 213 incidents in all of 2006.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, as noted earlier, in many parts of Afghanistan there is simply no opportunity to establish—or regain—a livelihood and adequate source of income. Finally, there are vulnerable groups that require special attention; for example women, and especially the two million or so widows in Afghanistan; and unaccompanied minors who are vulnerable to recruitment for child-labour and trafficking.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, ‘voluntary’ repatriation has largely come to a halt and those who remain in Iran and Pakistan are likely to return only if forced.⁶⁹ In addition to having a different demographic profile from those who have already repatriated (e.g., age, length in exile), the negative experiences of those who have returned influence the decision of those

who remain to stay put.⁷⁰ Furthermore, ‘if returnees re-migrate after having failed to reintegrate successfully, they are likely to be even more critical of possibly returning in the future’.⁷¹

If threats not to renew refugee permits take place in Pakistan (renewal is up at the end of 2009), these refugees will effectively ‘transform’ into illegal or irregular migrants, or simply ‘cease to be Afghans’ as many already hold Pakistani ID cards. Iran has already established a policy whereby Afghan refugees have to renew their residence permits every six months.⁷² Refugees are likely to experience increasing harassment from government authorities and increasing resentment from local populations in both countries. Their loss of legal status will result in a loss of access to legal and social services. Women and children are likely to become vulnerable to exploitation in the work place and possibly human trafficking.

Beyond the dire human development/security implications for returning refugees and IDPs in Afghanistan themselves, it is possible to discern a series of wider implications for development and security both nationally and within the region, especially as the Afghan refugee situation has been subject to politicisation in the past.⁷³ As early as the 1980s, refugees were ‘pawns in the larger geopolitical struggle’ for regional and international domination,⁷⁴ a trend that is starting to repeat itself.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ ‘Afghanistan: Dozens of schools reopen in volatile south’, Kabul, 26 March 2009 (IRIN) <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83662>.

⁶⁷ UNAMA 2009, 9.

⁶⁸ M.A. Rahjo, ‘Afghanistan: UNHCR Considerations for Specific Groups Relevant to the Determination of Refugee Status’, in Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) (ed.), *Country Report Afghanistan*, 11th European Country of Origin Information Seminar (Vienna, 21–22 June 2007), pp. 23–54; B. J. Stapleton, ‘A means to what end? Why PRTs are peripheral to the bigger political challenges in Afghanistan’, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10:1, 1–49, <http://www.jmss.org/2007/2007fall/articles/stapleton.pdf>.

⁶⁹ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley 2008, 168.

⁷⁰ Saito, 2008.

⁷¹ Saito, 2008, 3.

⁷² ‘Afghanistan: Limited scope to absorb more refugees’, Jalalabad, 15 March 2009 (IRIN), <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83474>.

⁷³ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley, 2008.

⁷⁴ G. Loescher, *Beyond Charity: International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 89; see also R. Schöch, ‘UNHCR and the Afghan Refugees in the Early 1980s: Between Humanitarian Action and Cold War Politics’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27: (2008) 1.

First, the return of such large numbers of refugees has almost certainly exacerbated existing problems in Afghanistan, by placing huge pressure on the country's absorption capacity.⁷⁵ Examples range from pressure on limited services, to competition for jobs, to stoking communal and ethnic tensions. As Turton and Marsden have observed, repatriation has been neither in the best interests of the majority of its intended beneficiaries nor of the long term reconstruction of Afghanistan.⁷⁶

Second, the remaining refugees under pressure to return from Iran and Pakistan may seek alternatives, including for example migrating internally within those countries to urban areas, or joining the large force of (largely illegal) labour migrants. Such an outcome would add to pressure on resources and competition for jobs in urban areas, and further exacerbate negative public sentiments towards the refugees in host countries, if not regarding Afghanistan as a whole.

While it is very important not to impute refugees with tainted intentions without substantiation,⁷⁷ it may also be worth considering, thirdly, possible interactions between returning refugees and IDPs in Afghanistan and other security issues and threats, especially as these populations are poor, unemployed, and feel disenfranchised and marginalized. The source of problems lie less with the displaced populations themselves than with inadequate assistance and protection. They may be associated with urban unrest (e.g. in Kabul in 2006 and in Jalalabad in 2005); the narcotics industry; or cross-border trafficking of people, arms and drugs. In other

contexts it has been suggested that IDPs may be sympathetic towards or actively support insurgency groups, especially if they do not consider their government to be assisting them adequately,⁷⁸ or at the least provide an easy recruitment ground for the insurgency.⁷⁹

Finally, the situation of returning refugees and IDPs in Afghanistan has put a further strain on already tense political relations between the Afghan government and its neighbours. Afghanistan is likely to resist repatriation to avoid further exacerbation of the sorts of problems outlined here; while Iran and Pakistan show no let up in their determination to continue to send Afghans home.⁸⁰ As in the past, Afghan refugees have once again become a convenient scapegoat in their host countries for social ills, an assertion Afghanistan rejects. Especially Pakistan, under increasing international pressure for its failure to rein in growing fundamentalism, is blaming Afghan refugees camps for harbouring extremists that not only feed the insurgency in Afghanistan, but are increasingly destabilising the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) of the country.⁸¹ "Taliban insurgents are alleged by Pakistani officials to have infiltrated four border camps, using them as bases to attack U.S. forces in Afghanistan."⁸²

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. De-politicize displacement

One of the hallmarks of Afghan displacement, and one of the reasons that it has persisted, is that considerations other than

⁷⁵ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley 2008, 'Afghanistan', Pp. 262-266 in *UNHCR Global Appeal 2009 Update* <<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/4922d4250.pdf>>.

⁷⁶ D. Turton and Marsden, 2002, 35, 56.

⁷⁷ G. Uehling, 'Unwanted migration', *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper 109, Geneva : UNHCR, 2004.

⁷⁸ E. Ferris, 'The Looming Crisis: Displacement and Security in Iraq', Brookings Institution Foreign Policy Paper Series, No.5; see also E. Parker 2008 and S. Schmeidl and W. Maley 2008, 139 noting this problem for Pashtun refugees forcefully departed from Iran. http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/08_iraq_ferris.aspx.

⁷⁹ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley, 2008.

⁸⁰ Schmeidl and Maley 2008.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Parker, 2008.

protection have been at the heart of international responses, and the human security of refugees has competed with national and regional security agendas. In the early years of Afghan displacement, the refugees became victim to Cold War politics.⁸³ In 2002, repatriation became a means to legitimise the peace process and fledgling Karzai administration.⁸⁴ Now, the interests of host countries (wanting to rid themselves of a long-term burden) has overruled the best interests of the refugees and of the country of origin. The U.S. overall approach in the region, and also towards the refugee problem there, has historically been determined by U.S. strategic interests, including homeland security, rather than any humanitarian agenda.⁸⁵ The post 9/11 U.S. engagement in Afghanistan shows no more enlightenment.⁸⁶ The U.S.-led intervention had less to do with solving the humanitarian crisis in the country, or the longstanding protracted refugee situation, than with protecting U.S. soil from further terrorist attacks. While UNHCR was under pressure from host country, regional, and also international politics, it is nevertheless surprising that it chose Afghanistan as a success story for the durable solution of repatriation, especially as at this point it is unclear if there is anything durable about the mass returns prompted by the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001.

Finding durable solutions for Afghanistan's refugees and IDPs is essential for national and regional security. But sustainable solutions cannot be achieved in a politicized context. The normative framework that underpins the international refugee regime needs to be re-asserted and

emphasized. Specifically: it is a human right to leave one's own country; access must be granted to the territory of other states; asylum is a non-political act; *refoulement* (forced repatriation) is prohibited; refugees have economic and social rights; and there is an international obligation to search for genuine durable solutions. These principles should determine the responses of host governments to Afghan refugees, and of the international community—including the U.S.—in relations pertaining to refugees with these host governments. Equally UNHCR should fulfil its mandate to assist and protect refugees, and find durable solutions for them. The international community, especially the US, should support UNHCR to fulfil its humanitarian agenda rather than pushing a continued repatriation agenda. Funding needs to be made available for other solutions than return. For its part the government of Afghanistan has an obligation to protect and assist internally displaced persons, as advised by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Ideally a comprehensive national law or policy on IDP is required. However as the Afghan government has difficulties to even protect its own population; the international community may need to provide targeted assistance in the area of returnee and IDP protection.

2. Targeted humanitarian assistance

Humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees and Afghanistan has reduced in recent years and been supplanted by returnee assistance. For at least three reasons, targeted humanitarian assistance is still required in the region. First, mass repatriation should not distract from the continuing needs of those refugees who remain.

⁸³ S. Schmeidl and W. Maley, 2008, 160.

⁸⁴ D. Turton and P. Marsden, 2002; See also R. Black and S. Gent 'Defining, Measuring and Influencing Sustainable Return: The Case of the Balkans', Working Paper T7, Brighton: Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2004.

⁸⁵ F. Grare, Rethinking Western Strategies Toward Pakistan: An Action Agenda for the United States and Europe, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007.

⁸⁶ A. Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, New York: Viking, 2008.

As has been explained, they are often people who have specific reasons not to return, including their particular vulnerability. Furthermore, as emphasized before, those who remain face increasing infringements upon their rights in the context of growing pressure on refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

Second, assistance is clearly required for growing numbers of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan. The preceding section has outlined some of the human security issues that characterize internal displacement in Afghanistan—poverty, unemployment, lack of shelter, vulnerability to exploitation, and so forth. The government of Afghanistan currently does not have the capacity to protect or assist its own citizens who are internally displaced, nor to address the wide range of root causes underlying internal displacement. As demonstrated above, (internal) displacement is not simply a human security issue, at the scale at which it is taking place in Afghanistan it also has significant implications for economic, social, national and regional security.

Third, a lack of support from the international community should not be permitted to be an excuse for the government of Pakistan, in particular, to continue to pressure refugees to return. The fate of Afghanistan and its displacement crisis might be a possible avenue for the U.S. to find some common (cooperative) ground with Iran. “Iran’s opposition to the return of the Taliban, its concern about the drug economy affecting its citizens, and its plans to expand ties with Afghanistan and Central Asia make it a potential ally in bringing stability to Afghanistan, because none of those goals can be achieved without it.”⁸⁷ This could have positive effects on Iran’s treatment of Afghan refugees.

3. The need for ‘alternative durable solutions

Finding solutions for protracted refugee situations is never easy, especially when dealing with a population as large as the Afghan refugees, many of whom have been displaced for well over two decades or were born in exile with little knowledge of their so called ‘home’ country. A useful starting point, however, might be to acknowledge the complexity of the situation (and subsequently the solutions required) rather than looking for ‘quick fixes’. While the sheer size of the Afghan refugee population may have made large-scale resettlement or local integration unfeasible, greater efforts could (and possibly should) have been made to look beyond repatriation as the only durable solution. UNHCR recently brokered a tentative agreement with Pakistan to extend the stay of Afghan refugees for four more years: “Communities in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province would get upgrades to their roads, schools, farms, and medical clinics” in exchange for hosting refugees until the end of 2012.⁸⁸ The total package would be worth US\$140 million. This does not however necessarily resolve the protracted situation of Afghan refugees, as displacement is simply put on hold and the achievement of a more durable solution is deferred. Perhaps local integration for some refugees who are more adapted to Pakistan than Afghanistan should be considered, even if in small numbers only. UNHCR just recently signed an agreement with Tajikistan on integrating 1,000 refugees who have lived there for up to twenty years.⁸⁹

For those refugees from whom repatriation or local integration is not currently possible, there are other options open to some, including through taking advantage of extended family networks across the world.⁹⁰ The U.S. and

⁸⁷ Afghanistan’s Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China, 2009, 5.

⁸⁸ L. MacInnis, “Pakistan to get \$140 mln for sheltering refugees,” Reuters, 13 March 2009, <http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-38498120090313>.

⁸⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/news/pendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=47f3a4334>.

⁹⁰ A. Monsutti ‘Afghan migratory strategies and the three solutions to the refugee problem’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27: (2008)1.

other countries, however, could also re-evaluate and step up formal resettlement of the most vulnerable of the remaining refugees, or those least likely to ever return. Afghan refugees already have extensive family networks in the U.S. and elsewhere and in most cases are well adjusted. Perhaps part of the solution to the Afghan refugee problem lies less with the rigid durable solution framework traditionally advocated by UNHCR and more with supporting the migratory survival strategies that Afghans have adopted, an option UNHCR recently put forth itself.⁹¹ Here mobility in essence would be the solution, not staying put either in host countries (local integration), finding a new permanent residence abroad (resettlement) or returning permanently home (repatriation). The economic interdependence and interconnectedness between Afghanistan and its neighbours would support such a solution, if political and security consideration would allow for it. Then local integration, for example, need not mean awarding citizenship, but could include temporary labour agreements allowing a transitional and transnational lifestyle. Assistance to host states (both economically, and in terms of diplomatic incentives), as UNHCR has recently started in Pakistan, should be a major consideration in working out such arrangements, rather than simply buying more time.

Such a global approach to the Afghan refugee problem would also mirror the solutions put forth to resolve the security dilemmas in the region (especially in regard to Pakistan). Maley argues that 'it should be recognized that without a regionally based approach, no single state's problems are likely to be resolved. Interconnectedness is the name of the new Great Game.'⁹²

Recognising this reality, however, may still take some time, during which it is likely that the protracted nature of the Afghan refugee situation will continue unresolved, even if individual Afghans manage to find their own personal durable (or temporary) solution.

4. Strengthening the Afghan state and peace-building process

Rather than using the return of refugees to as a false indicator that Afghan reconstruction and peacebuilding are on track, energy should be diverted to bringing refugee rights center-stage. According to Loescher *et al.* the nexus between refugee return (and returnee profiles) and state-building needs to be considered further.⁹³ This is especially crucial as those who remain have not only suffered from a diminution of economic capacity and social networks, but essentially lack the experience of surviving in a state-free environment; being very much used to controlled camp environments or 'strong' states. In such circumstances the focus needs to be on creating an enabling return environment instead of managed repatriation programmes that are at odds with reality in the wider political environment. This means recognising the distinctive features of those who remain and taking steps to find ways of meeting these specific refugees needs in both the socio-economic and political spheres, while hopefully at the same time improving the lives of those who have already returned. If the trend of forcing refugees back continues without adequately addressing protection and reintegration, new returnees can become a destabilising force by being recruited into the every-growing ranks of insurgency, as a network to protect them.⁹⁴

⁹¹ UNHCR, *Protracted Refugee Situations*, 20 November 2008. UNHCR/DPC/2008/Doc. 02. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/492fb92d2.html>, pp. 20-21.

⁹² W. Maley, 'Afghanistan and its region' pp. 81-93 in J. A. Thier (ed.), *The Future of Afghanistan*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009, 90.

⁹³ G. Loescher, J. Milner, E. Newman and G. Troeller, (2007), *Protracted Refugee Situations and Peacebuilding*, Policy Brief, Number 1(2007) (United Nations University).

⁹⁴ Parker, 2008.

As noted earlier, the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan particularly has never primarily had the purpose of rebuilding the Afghan state, but rather to reduce a terrorist threat. According to Ghani and Lockhart, 'the international community was resistant to the concept of state building' in Afghanistan, rather focussing on 'old approaches ... wrapped in the language of state building'.⁹⁵ Thus, it might be wise to balance military assistance to Afghanistan with a coherent state-building strategy that tries to fix some of the earlier mistakes made, such as a failure to focus on sub-national governance.⁹⁶

5. Active monitoring of population movements

As early as 2003 Amnesty International was critical of the lack of access for UNHCR and other international agencies in many parts of Afghanistan, making protection, and especially the monitoring of returnees, difficult.⁹⁷ Effective monitoring would have shown much earlier that rapid and vast repatriation was not working as well as anticipated and that return was likely to be anything but sustainable. Having this knowledge now emphasizes the urgent need to monitor future return even more carefully, including checking-up on the well-being of those who returned several years ago. Only through monitoring can assistance and protection to returnees—especially those internally displaced—be improved.

Another reason for monitoring is the need to disaggregate new population flows from Afghanistan in order to distinguish those people with the right to protection and assistance in international law. It is likely that a proportion of those currently crossing the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan and possibly Iran as illegal labour migrants are in need of protection from violence or

persecution and would qualify as refugees. The simple fact that international actors do not like the scenario of re-emigration or fresh refugee flows should not be used to deny refugees the protection they deserve.

Monitoring is equally important for border security. Uncontrolled population movements undermine the exercise of state sovereignty and will further destabilize an already insecure and dangerous border zone. In particular allegations of extremists mixing with refugees makes monitoring essential. Being able to differentiate forced migrants from refugee warriors, even if this is difficult, allows for refugees to be protected rather than scape-goated.

A final aspect of monitoring population movements is that the international community should bring to bear diplomatic pressure on the governments of Pakistan and Iran to cease forced returns of Afghan refugees. The burden of proof, however, might be difficult in the end, as much of the so called voluntary return has already been forced, with UNHCR and the international community standing by. It is possible that monitoring could serve as a deterrent at least for Pakistan, which tends to deny such action. Iran, however, is already fairly open about its right to deport illegal immigrants. Even monitoring may not force either country to give rights to refugees who deserve it.

As UNHCR and other international actors lack access to most displaced populations, creative monitoring strategies need to be explored, possibly by empowering returnees, IDPs or local Afghan communities to assist in the process. This could also lead to displaced population becoming

⁹⁵ A. Ghani and C. Lockhart (2008), *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 12.

⁹⁶ A. Wilder and S. Lister (2007), 'State-building at the Subnational Level in Afghanistan: A Missed Opportunity', in Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber with Robert P. Finn (ed.), *Building State and Security in Afghanistan* (Princeton: Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, Princeton University) pp.85-102.

⁹⁷ Amnesty International, 2003, 28.

part of the process of finding durable solutions, rather than having everything decided for them.

CONCLUSION

Migration and displacement in and from Afghanistan are bewilderingly complex: One of the world's largest and most enduring protracted refugee situations coincides with the largest repatriation in recent history. Returnees to Afghanistan cross paths with increasing numbers of cross-border migrants, traders and new refugees moving in the opposite direction. Many returning refugees have effectively become internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, forming one of an increasing number of different IDP categories in that country. Some refugees who have chosen not to return to Afghanistan have remained as 'irregular migrants' and in some cases paid smugglers to move further away. Refugee camps that once hosted Afghan refugees in Pakistan are now being occupied by Pakistanis displaced internally by fleeing violence in the Bajaur agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in North West Frontier Province. There are even reports of Pakistanis now crossing the border to Afghanistan in search of temporary sanctuary from violence.

Maintaining pressure on repatriation at present is not advisable, even if refugee camps are suspected of being breeding grounds for extremists. The same argument can be made for forced returnees who may simply join the insurgency out of spite or lack of options. Rather than dodging responsibilities and continuing to hold refugees hostage to political games, the international community, with the U.S. at its lead, should begin to see the Afghan refugee problem as an opportunity to deal with regional peace and stability in a non-military way. By stepping up its humanitarian agenda not only can it assist Pakistan, but possibly also reach out to its arch-enemy Iran. At present the Afghan state may be hard-pressed to make drastic changes that can allow for the return of all remaining refugees. Thus, instead of literally forcing the issue, alternative solutions such as discussed here should be explored and funded. After all, the alternatives are grim, and another cycle of unwanted (forced) population movements is very likely to occur, creating an entire new generation of refugees who may finally have had enough and rule out future return altogether. This is likely to be an unintended consequence the international community is not able to afford.



Iraqi Displacement: The Need for Solutions

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Iraq's displacement crisis is massive; according to the best estimates, the number approaches two million Iraqi refugees and 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁹⁸ This means that at between fifteen and twenty percent of Iraq's population are now living outside their communities of origin. People do not abandon their homes and communities lightly. Rather these Iraqis left their homes because of fear—fear of targeted attacks by sectarian groups and fear of kidnappings, banditry and other generalized violence. Over the past five years, as the number of violent incidents increased, so too did the number of people who left their homes to seek safety elsewhere.

The pace of displacement has slowed since mid-2007 at least in part as a result of increasing security. However, few IDPs and refugees have been able to return, their resources are running out and international assistance has been inadequate. In both Iraq and neighboring host countries, displaced families blend into urban landscapes, making them less visible than refugees living in overcrowded camps. Many homes and properties of the displaced have been taken over by others; sometimes internally displaced persons have moved into the homes of people who were themselves forced to move elsewhere. In some cases, militias have taken control of property, renting them out at favorable rates to their supporters. In some cases, people have simply moved into abandoned property as a way of obtaining better housing or have occupied vacant public buildings.⁹⁹ The longer displacement lasts, the more complicated it is to resolve.

It is important to underline that displacement is not just an accidental by-product of the conflict, but is both an objective and a strategy in the armed struggle—a way of consolidating territorial and political control. Displacement by sectarian cleansing is changing—perhaps permanently—Iraq's sectarian geography. In other cases, neighborhoods which were once populated by people of diverse sectarian, ethnic or religious identities have become homogeneous communities.

The consequences of displacement for Iraq's future are numerous. The flight of professionals complicates Iraqi efforts to rebuild its infrastructure and restore social services. There are political consequences as well. Iraq's ambassador to the United States has called this refugee flow to neighboring countries a flight of “moderation.”¹⁰⁰ Iraqi families—many educated and from the middle class—have fled the sectarian conflict, refusing to join in or become exterminated by groups touting extremist views. These moderate families, he hopes, will return to the country, but interviews with refugees in neighboring countries suggest that few are expecting or planning to return soon.¹⁰¹ The fact that Iraqis from the country's small minority groups—Palestinians, Christians, Sabaeans, Yazidis and others—have fled the country in disproportionate numbers also has implications for Iraq's future as a diverse and pluralistic society.¹⁰²

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

No government in the region—or indeed in the world—now wants to host Iraqi refugees. Jordan

⁹⁸ These estimates are based on governmental reports from the region as well as assessments by UNHCR, the International Organization of Migration and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society. However, the difficulties in monitoring and assessment inside Iraq, the lack of statistical surveys in host countries, and the gap between the number of registered refugees and estimates mean that these estimates should be treated with caution.

⁹⁹ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82239>.

¹⁰⁰ Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie, Ambassador of Iraq to the United States of America at the Woodrow Wilson Center, April 9, 2008. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=400820.

¹⁰¹ See for example: Refugees International, “Iraqi Refugees: Plan for Ongoing Support in an Unstable Region,” October 2008, <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/iraqi-refugees-plan-ongoing-support-unstable-region>.

¹⁰² Elizabeth Ferris, “Minorities, Displacement and Iraq's Future,” December 2008. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MCOT-7LCJ62-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/MCOT-7LCJ62-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf).

and Syria, which together host the largest number of Iraqis, initially provided generous hospitality to Iraqis fleeing the violence. But welcomes wear thin and both governments have hardened their policies toward Iraqis seeking safety within their borders. Neither country is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention on Refugees and thus neither government officially recognizes the Iraqis as refugees. In both countries, there are concerns about the social impact and economic costs of the presence of the refugees. Both governments are also worried about the security implications of hosting so many Iraqis. Reports of increasing destitution among the refugees are linked to fears that desperate men may join insurgent groups, just as desperate women and girls are increasingly turning to prostitution.¹⁰³

Other governments in the region host smaller though still significant numbers of Iraqis, as demonstrated in the table below.

Host country	Estimated number of Iraqis	Number of Iraqis registered with UNHCR
Syria	1.4-1.5 million	221,506
Jordan	750,000	54,411
Egypt	80,000	10,163
Lebanon	50,000	10,764
Gulf States	200,000	

Sources: Jordan, Egypt, Gulf States, see: http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/reports/oxfam_iraq.pdf; Lebanon: see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21762135/>, www.refindt.org/press-room/press-release/release-iraqi-refugees-find-legal-footing-lebanon. Figures for Iraqis registered with UNHCR from: *UNHCR Statistical Report on registered Iraqis in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey & Egypt*, 25 September 2008 <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=491959312>

Also, Iraqis have sought safety further afield. In fact, Iraqis make up the largest group of asylum-seekers

in Europe, and the world. They accounted for one in ten asylum applications among industrialized nations in 2008, and the number of such claims declined by ten percent in 2008 compared to 2007.¹⁰⁴

IRAQI ASYLUM-SEEKERS – TOP TEN DESTINATION COUNTRIES IN 2008			
Country	No. of Claims in 2007	No. of Claims in 2008	Total
Turkey	3,500	6,900	10,400
Germany	4,200	6,700	10,900
Sweden	18,600	6,100	24,700
Netherlands	2,000	5,000	7,000
Norway	1,200	3,100	4,300
UK	2,000	2,000	4,000
Greece	5,500	1,800	7,300
Switzerland	1,000	1,400	2,400
Finland	300	1,300	1,600
Belgium	800	1,000	1,900

Source: UNHCR, *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries - Statistical Overview of Asylum Applications Lodged in Europe and selected Non-European Countries*, 2008, UNHCR 24 March 2009, p.32-35. Numbers in above chart are rounded to the nearest hundred.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISPLACED

Host governments and international organizations have set up assistance programs for refugees in the region. Iraqi children attend local schools—although actual enrolment rates are quite low. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has set up major assistance programs in both Jordan and Syria, but funds are limited. Both international and local non-governmental

¹⁰³ The problem of prostitution and female trafficking has become so prominent that the Syrian government passed legislation to address the situation. See IRIN, "Syria: new draft law targets sex traffickers," 17 March 2008.

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries - Statistical Overview of Asylum Applications Lodged in Europe and Selected Non-European Countries*, 2008, UNHCR 24 March 2009, p. 10.

organizations are providing assistance to refugees throughout the Middle East. But while many of the refugees brought resources with them, reports from the region indicate that many Iraqis are going through their savings and many children are working in the informal sector.¹⁰⁵ Increasing impoverishment of Iraqi refugees is leading to pressures to return to Iraq as well as increasing demands for limited resettlement opportunities in other countries, particularly the United States.

The UN's 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Iraq and Affected countries is for \$547.3 million, of which \$192.3 million is for Iraq (with a particular focus on supporting returnees) and \$355 million for Iraqi refugees in 11 other countries.¹⁰⁶ The United States government increased its support for Iraqi refugees and IDPs from \$171 million in FY2007 to \$398 million in FY 2008 largely as the result of supplemental funds appropriated by Congress.¹⁰⁷ Iraqi governmental support for refugees living outside the country and for internally displaced persons has been much lower.

Under international law, national authorities are responsible for assisting and protecting people displaced within their country. The Public Distribution System (PDS) provides basic food rations for Iraqis, but IDPs have had particular difficulties accessing this program. Transfers of ration cards have been delayed or they have been determined to be ineligible to register in their area of displacement. In late 2008, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that over half of IDPs surveyed did not have regular access to rations through PDS.¹⁰⁸ Housing is another major concern for the displaced. Most IDPs are renting accommodations while many live with friends and family. There are

very few tented camps, although some IDPs have set up housekeeping in public buildings and face evictions. The lack of employment opportunities is another major need identified by IDPs. Given overall high unemployment rates in the country, it is not surprising that people living away from their communities face particular difficulties in finding jobs. In sum, while IOM reports that fewer people are becoming internally displaced, the humanitarian situation of those already displaced is worsening.¹⁰⁹

International humanitarian organizations which traditionally assist internally displaced persons, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, international non-governmental organizations, and UNHCR find access and security to be major impediments. Many international organizations work through local Iraqi NGOs to provide assistance. By and large, these local NGOs have performed valiantly in delivering relief items to vulnerable Iraqis, but they have undertaken major risks in doing so.

SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT?

Although both refugees and internally displaced persons have left their communities for similar reasons, there are important differences between them when it comes to durable solutions. Traditionally there are three solutions for refugees: return to their country of origin, local integration in their country of refuge, or resettlement to a third country. Return is the preferred solution and certainly governments in the region and international organizations have insisted that the vast majority of Iraqis will have to return. However, as will be discussed below, return is not an easy option.

¹⁰⁵ "Iraqi Refugee Women and Youth in Jordan: Reproductive Health Findings – A Snapshot from the Field," Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, September 2007; International Organization of Migration Assessment of Psycho-Social needs of Iraqis Displaced in Jordan and Lebanon, February 2008.

¹⁰⁶ <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1726>.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth G. Ferris, *The Looming Crisis: Displacement and Security in Iraq*, Brookings Foreign Policy Paper, number 5, August 2008, p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ IOM, "Post February 2006 Displacement in Iraq," 1 November 2008.

¹⁰⁹ IOM, "Post February 2006 Displacement in Iraq," 1 November 2008.

Local integration is an infrequently discussed alternative. Given the region's experience in hosting Palestinian refugees for over 60 years, there are fears that allowing the Iraqis to stay permanently would have major political and social consequences for the region. The fact that Iraqis have been permitted to enter neighboring countries is largely due to the expectation that their sojourn would be a temporary one.

Although many Iraqis were resettled in the U.S. during the Saddam Hussein regime, few were resettled in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion. In FY2006, only 202 Iraqi refugees were resettled in the US. In FY 2007, 1,608 were resettled and in FY2008, the number climbed to 13,823. Some 17,000 are expected to be resettled in the U.S. in FY2009. Due to particular concerns about the fate of Iraqi interpreters facing persecution as a result of their association with U.S. forces, in January 2008 provisions were made for Special Immigrant Visas to be issued annually for five years to 5,000 Iraqis who had worked with the U.S. government, military or contractors (although in FY 2008, the U.S. had issued just 870 of these special visas.)¹¹⁰ In calendar year 2009, UNHCR projects that 85,000 Iraqis will be in need of resettlement.¹¹¹ While many have called for the U.S. to ramp up its resettlement of Iraqis, there are particular difficulties in doing so. For example, although UNHCR has kept pace with referring cases for resettlement, lengthy security checks, initial difficulties in accessing Iraqis in Syria, and—until recently—the need for Iraqis to travel to neighboring countries to be processed all delayed resettlement of Iraqis. In addition, there are other fears that the availability of resettlement will be a magnet for Iraqis and concerns about the long-term effects of resettlement on Iraq

itself, particularly if—as seems likely—minorities are resettled.

For internally displaced Iraqis, solutions include return to communities of origin, integration in the area in which they are displaced or settlement in another part of the country. As Iraqi citizens, IDPs are entitled to freedom of movement within the country and yet, as the number of IDPs increased, governorates have taken steps to restrict the entry of IDPs into their territories. In many cases, governorates have imposed restrictions related to sectarian identity, previous links with the region or employment.¹¹² The issue of returns of both IDPs and refugees is closely linked with property.

RETURNS

Pressure for Iraqi refugees and IDPs to return is increasing. On the one hand, worsening economic conditions for those in exile and displaced within the country serves as a 'push' factor to return. At the same time, the improving security situation, the status of forces agreement providing for the withdrawal of U.S. forces and steps taken to normalize political life in Iraq are all leading to pressures to return. For example, on 11 November 2008, at a conference in Jordan, the Jordanian Foreign Minister Salah Bashir said "We all, Iraq and neighboring countries as well as the international community, have a top priority to create suitable circumstances for the return of Iraqi refugees to their country." The conference concluded that the solution to the Iraqi refugees issue lies in their return home. "Any other solution remains temporary and partial. Host countries and international organizations should encourage Iraqi refugees to go home voluntarily."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Human Rights First, *Blueprint – How to Confront the Iraqi Refugee Crisis*, December 2008, pp. 3, 11.

¹¹¹ UNHCR, *Refugee Resettlement: Performance Outcomes 2007 and Global Projections 2009*, 30 June 2008.

¹¹² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Challenges of forced displacement within Iraq," 29 December 2008, p. 11.

¹¹³ AFP in Arab Times, "Iraqi refugees in Jordan yearn to go home," <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/client/pagesdetails.asp?nid=25214&ccid=18#>

The best estimates are that, according to IOM's survey of returnees, between 200,000 and 300,000 have returned, 90% from internal displacement as of February 2009.¹¹⁴ Reports indicate that many Iraqis are waiting to see what security and living conditions are like before deciding to return. In fact, according to news reports, many Iraqis have visited their country and then travelled back to Jordan safe and sound.¹¹⁵

According to a survey of IDPs conducted in 2006 and 2007, a majority of those displaced indicated that they planned to stay where they are and only 17% indicated that they planned to return to their community of origin.¹¹⁶ However, in IOM's February 2009 assessment of IDPs, around 62% of the families surveyed said they planned to return to their location of origin while about 21% wanted to be integrated into their current location of displacement and nearly 17% desired resettlement in a third location.¹¹⁷

As for displaced refugees, Refugees International reports that every Iraqi refugee they interviewed expressed hope for resettlement—not for return to Iraq.¹¹⁸ Iraqi refugees themselves express fear at the possibility of return. As one Iraqi refugee living in Syria said, “I know they say it is safer in Baghdad now, but we will stay here. We lost everything there and have nothing to go back to.... Things can

change very quickly and I am not prepared to go through that again.”¹¹⁹

For those who do return, experiences are mixed. Returnees mostly go back to those neighborhoods/districts/governorates under control of members of the sect to which they belong while only very few families have returned to areas where they would be in a minority.¹²⁰ IOM reports that 86% of returnees are going back to their own homes but that roughly half of those who do so report that their homes are in bad condition.¹²¹

Returning refugees and IDPs have also faced security problems. Although the evidence is clear that the number of violent incidents has sharply decreased in the past year, there are still serious security problems in Iraq.¹²² The UNAMI Human Rights Office reported a significant decrease in “violent, high-visibility and high-casualty attacks by militias or criminal groups,” but noted that targeting of civilians, particularly professionals, continues and grave human rights violations remain unaddressed.¹²³ In spite of governmental efforts to increase patrols in areas to which Iraqis are returning, there have been “several episodes of violence targeting Baghdad returnees during the past month, including murders of entire returnee families. Some families were forced back into displacement out of fear.”¹²⁴ Women in particular face difficult prospects of

¹¹⁴ IOM, “IOM Emergency Needs Assessments February 22, 2009: Three Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq.” The number of returnee families presented in this IOM report is not the total number of returnees in Iraq, but the summary number of returnee families for locations (villages and neighborhoods) for which the returnee monitoring teams managed to collect data through particular sources as of the reporting date. These figures do not include displacement in Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah.

¹¹⁵ “Iraqi refugees in Jordan yearn to go home,” Arab Times, 24 November 2008. <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/client/pagesdetails.asp?nid=25214&ccid=18#>.

¹¹⁶ UNHCR, IOM, UNOPS, MoDM, KRG, “Socio-economic conditions of internally displaced persons and their intentions,” 2008.

¹¹⁷ 130,000 families of the 209,000 families surveyed. See IOM, “IOM Emergency Needs Assessments February 22, 2009: Three Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq,” p.1.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/iraqi-refugees-plan-ongoing-support-unstable-region>.

¹¹⁹ Phil Sands, “Displaced Iraqis at Point of No Return,” *The National*, 2 December 2008, <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20081201/FOREIGN/371724991/1011/ART>

¹²⁰ IDP Working Group, ‘Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq – Update,’ June 2008.

¹²¹ From MODM/IOM survey, p. 32.

¹²² See, for example <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1726>;

¹²³ UNAMI human rights report, 1 January to 30 June 2008, www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI?Human?Rights?Report?January?June_2008_EN.pdf.

¹²⁴ IOM, “Emergency Needs Assessments,” 1 November 2008 Monthly Report. See also Corinne Reilly, “Iraqis are being attacked and killed for returning to their homes,” McClatchy Washington Report, 13 October 2008 <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/100/story/53871.html>.

return. Younger women may resist the stricter Islamic restrictions; women heads of household face difficulties in finding jobs.¹²⁵

However, the Iraqi government is offering incentives to return, including free travel for Iraqi refugees back to Iraq and a cash grant to assist both refugees and IDPs to reintegrate.¹²⁶ According to IOM surveys, 56% of returnees have registered and applied for a grant; of those who had registered, 39% reported having receiving the grant.¹²⁷ The Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration has opened a Returnee Assistance Center (RAC) in Baghdad to assist returnees with assistance and plans to open more centers throughout the country. Similarly, UNHCR is gearing up to provide more support to returnees, both outside and inside Iraq.¹²⁸

The Iraqi government has also sought to address the tremendously complicated issue of housing disputes through its Prime Ministerial Orders 101 and 262 which took effect on 1 September 2008, requiring that all squatters vacate IDP and refugee houses in Baghdad or face prosecution under Iraqi anti-terrorism legislation. All IDP squatters are compensated with 300,000 Iraqi dinars per month for 6 months to find alternative housing.¹²⁹ This is a clear attempt to reverse the sectarian cleansing which has taken place in Iraq. So far, there have been few evictions, but this does not necessarily indicate that the housing/property dilemma is less serious than anticipated. Those who are going back are likely to be those who believe that their housing is available to them. People are less likely to return

when they know that an opposing militia or sect has taken over their houses. If and when the pace of returns increases, pressures could well mount and the likelihood of conflict increase. Implementation of the Prime Minister's orders may also result in secondary displacement for some IDPs. For example, 512 IDP families in Rusafa district of Baghdad have been informed that they must vacate their residences.¹³⁰ These percentages give rise to huge numbers of potential property claims by displaced Iraqis and refugees. Given Iraq's record of dealing with the thousands of claims on property disputed during the Hussein regime, it seems likely that post-war property claims could be a complicated and lengthy process.

But the question of providing an adequate standard of living for returnees goes far beyond the provision of transitional assistance to returnees. The returnees will face the same living standards as Iraqis who have not been displaced, although in most cases, they will have fewer resources than those who were not displaced. The returnees, like those who remained in their communities, need employment and access to public services. Unlike those who were not displaced, they are also more likely to need housing.

Data indicate that conditions inside Iraq are slowly improving. According to the World Food Program's Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment in Iraq, many social indicators have slowly but measurably risen from their lowest levels. In particular, education and infrastructure-related indicators have improved.¹³¹ Electricity is

¹²⁵ Abeer Mohammed, "Islamist? You Weren't Here. You Don't Know." *The New York Times*, 8 December 2008. <http://baghdadbureau.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/you-werent-here-you-dont-know/>. Also see Women for Women International, "2008 Iraq Report: Amplifying the Voices of Women in Iraq," March 2008, pp. 31-22.

¹²⁶ Jennifer Utz, "Iraqi Refugees to Government's Return Offer: 'No, Thanks,'" *The Huffington Post*, 5 December 2008. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jennifer-utz/iraqi-refugees-to-governm_b_145895.html.

¹²⁷ IOM, Tabulation Report, "Returnee Monitoring and Needs Assessment," September 2008, p. 36.

¹²⁸ The UN in Damascus reported that in October 68 families received financial aid to return to Iraq—\$100 for each adult and \$50 per child.

¹²⁹ OCHA Humanitarian Update, October 2008, p. 6.

¹³⁰ OCHA, Humanitarian Update, October 2008.

¹³¹ OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Update, no. 2, October 2008, p. 1.

now being generated at about the same rate as before the U.S. invasion (although demand has dramatically increased.)¹³² But humanitarian needs remain extensive. Unemployment remains estimated at 25-40%;¹³³ and as one UN official commented “if you were to take away the swollen public sector jobs, the unemployment rate would skyrocket.”¹³⁵ “Iraqi families confront significant erosion of livelihoods and destruction of public assets, resulting in dismal levels of basic social services. The full scale of the damage is only now becoming visible. With the conflict grudgingly receding, pockets of severe deprivation are emerging.” The outbreak of cholera in August 2008 was partly attributable to the dilapidated state of water and sanitation infrastructure.¹³⁵

If large numbers of Iraqis do return in the coming year, there will be challenges to the United Nations which, as I have discussed earlier,¹³⁶ does not have a good reputation in Iraq due to its involvement with sanctions, Oil-for-Food and weapons inspections. The fact that most of its staff responsible for humanitarian assistance are living outside the country means that the ‘face’ of the UN in Iraq is largely one of Iraqi NGOs. Although UN agencies are gearing up to return to Iraq and to deploy international staff outside the International Zone, this process is by no means certain. The UN will be judged in large part—and its future in Iraq will depend—on its ability to deliver humanitarian assistance. There is an opportunity for the UN to regain some credibility in Iraq through its performance not only in assisting and supporting the return of refugees and IDPs, but in supporting the country’s development plans. The ability of the UN to work closely with and to help support

the development of the capacity of Iraqi ministries will be crucial. The UN cannot and should not see its role as supplanting that of the Iraqi government; unfortunately, there have been cases where this has precisely been the result of UN action in some other countries in the past.¹³⁷

There are also concerns about international funding. With a drawdown of troops and the escalating financial woes, “it seems unlikely that the White House or the Congress will be willing to fund economic reconstruction in Iraq as extravagantly as in the past. Moreover, there will be no surge in American civilian personnel to take up the slack as the military reduces its presence. Simply put, there just aren’t enough Foreign Service Officers in the world to increase significantly the complement already in Iraq.”¹³⁸

Demands will increase for housing. If large numbers of refugees return to Iraq, but are unable to return to their own communities, they will simply add to the already-high numbers of Iraqi IDPs. If there is no transitional housing, the pressure on their communities will increase. But there is a danger that if transitional housing is constructed, it could become permanent. In any event, the Iraqi government has not allocated the necessary funds to provide housing for returnees, and in fact, has cut the budget for such housing.¹³⁹

In every situation of displacement, there are some who cannot go home. In the case of Iraq, religious minorities, former members of the Baath party and those who fought in Saddam Hussein’s army are unlikely to return—and many are also unlikely to

¹³² Kenneth M. Pollack, “Passing the Baton: An Obama Administration Takes on the Challenge of Iraq,” *Right Side News*, 12 December 2008, <http://www.rightsidenews.com/200812122960/editorial/passing-the-baton-an-obama-administration-takes-on-the-challenge-of-iraq.html>.

¹³³ Brookings Institution, Iraq Index, 11 December 2008, p. 42.

¹³⁴ Personal interview with author, December 2008. ¹³⁵ OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Update, No. 2, October 2008, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Ferris, *Looming Crisis*, 2008, pp. 23-25.

¹³⁷ See for example Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke, *Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa*, Nordic African Institute, 2002.

¹³⁸ Kenneth Pollack, “Passing the Baton: An Obama Administration Takes on the Challenge of Iraq,” *Right Side News*, 12 December 2008, <http://www.rightsidenews.com/200812122960/editorial/passing-the-baton-an-obama-administration-takes-on-the-challenge-of-iraq.html>.

¹³⁹ IRIN news report, 6 January 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82209>.

be selected for resettlement. The question of what will happen to those unable to return is a sticky one. As noted above, governments in the region have resisted discussions of local integration, fearing that the temporary Iraqi visitors will become long-stayers. And even with expanded resettlement opportunities, resettlement can meet the needs of only a few Iraqis.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

- 1. Recognize that displacement is more than a humanitarian problem and requires more than a humanitarian solution. Resolving displacement is essential to stabilization and successful nation-building in Iraq and deserves high-level political support from the Iraqi government and the international community.**

Although often overlooked in discussions of peacebuilding/nation-building, finding solutions for Iraq's displaced is crucial for Iraq's future. Nation-building typically includes a number of components: strengthening the police, rule of law, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization, and development.¹⁴⁰ The way in which policies are developed in each of these areas both influences and is affected by displacement.

Ending displacement and building stability and peace are directly related. "If IDPs are not able to recover their land or property or otherwise find solutions allowing them to live decent lives and when they feel that they have suffered injustice, reconciliation becomes more difficult. If durable solutions are not found for IDPs, their potential for contributing to economic reconstruction and rehabilitation is limited and

poverty reduction becomes more difficult."¹⁴¹ On the other hand, resolution of such issues can be a positive force for political reconciliation, social development and economic stability.

It is in the interests of all stakeholders—refugees and IDPs themselves, the government of Iraq, the governments of countries hosting Iraqi refugees, and international organizations—that solutions be found for refugees and IDPs.

Given the scale and complexity of displacement, finding durable solutions will require high-level commitment on the part of the Iraqi government and commitment of far more financial resources from its budget.

The UN must play a central role in facilitating solutions for refugees and in supporting the Iraqi government to implement solutions for IDPs. It is in the best interests of the United States to have the UN play this role. But the UN and all international actors must take seriously the challenge of integrating relief and development. Development actors need to work together with the humanitarians to ensure a smooth transition and unfortunately the track record is not good.

- 2. Develop a comprehensive plan of action which includes support for voluntary return of refugees and IDPs, negotiations with and support for governments in the region to enable those who cannot return to Iraq to remain in the region, and use of resettlement to support local integration.**

The United Nations should take the lead in mobilizing a coordinated response from the international community in support of such a

¹⁴⁰ James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2007.

¹⁴¹ Walter Kälin, *The Great Lakes Protocol on Internally Displaced Persons: Responses and Challenges*, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, September 27, 2008. http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2007/0927_africa_kalin.aspx?rssid=idp.

comprehensive plan. The fact that UN agencies worked together to develop a Consolidated Appeals Process for Iraq is a positive sign in this regard. But in order to be effective, this comprehensive plan needs to be owned by the Iraqi government. Such a plan could provide support for all three durable solutions for refugees and IDPs and specify the actors responsible for the various components.

3. With respect to *return*, Walter Kälin, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, has argued that “in post-conflict situations, successful return of IDPs to their homes and former places of habitual residence require at least the following conditions: that their safety during and after return is guaranteed, that their property is restored and their houses are reconstructed, and that an environment that sustains return is created by the government and the international community.”¹⁴² These three conditions provide a ‘to-do’ list for both the Iraqi government and the international community:

- **Guarantee the safety of returnees.** In addition to improving overall security and ensuring additional protection for returnees, monitoring of the return process is essential. In other situations where refugees and IDPs are returning to communities where there remains a potential for violence, both national and international human rights and humanitarian organizations have provided critical oversight/monitoring of returnees. But the security situation in Iraq is such that a large-scale deployment of international human rights monitors to the areas in which returnees are living is unlikely. Iraqi national NGOs

and the brand-new Independent High Commission for Human Rights could play a particularly important role here, but they need support.

It should be noted that there is a fundamental contradiction in asserting that a) the security situation has improved sufficiently for refugees and IDPs to return to communities from which they fled in fear, but b) that it isn’t safe enough for international monitors to verify that they are safe.

- **Return or compensate the displaced for property lost.** Although data are scanty, estimates are that a significant percentage of the homes left behind by refugees or IDPs are either occupied by others or have been destroyed or seriously damaged. It is thus likely that there will be huge numbers of potential property claims; given Iraq’s record of dealing with the tens of thousands of claims on property disputed during the Hussein regime, it seems likely that post-2003 property claims could be a complicated and lengthy process. Decisions on property claims should be carried out as part of a broader national reconciliation process and compensation/restitution processes should be designed to be flexible.
- **Create an environment where returns can be sustained.** This task is, of course, essential to Iraq’s overall postwar future. Return is more expensive and requires more political commitment than assisting refugees and IDPs where they are.

A second part of a comprehensive plan of action would be negotiations with governments

¹⁴² Walter Kälin, “Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons: An Essential Dimension of Peacebuilding,” Presentation to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Working Group on Lessons Learned, 13 March 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2008/0313_internal_displacement_kalin.aspx?p=1.

hosting large numbers of refugees. Even as security conditions in Iraq improve, host governments and the international humanitarian community should resist pressures to decrease assistance to refugees. Central to international refugee law and to the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* is the principle that return must be voluntary. People must have a choice of alternatives. It is not a voluntary decision when people return because food distribution has been cut off in the camps or when displaced people cannot survive where they are. If refugees and IDPs are returning to Iraq because they cannot survive in their conditions of displacement, it is an indictment of the humanitarian response, not a cause for celebration.

While governments in the region are understandably reluctant to consider local integration as a policy option, they should be encouraged to allow those Iraqis who are unable to return to Iraq to remain—and to work—in their countries.¹⁴³ They are likely to be more willing to consider this possibility if it is conceived as part of a comprehensive plan in which other governments—notably the United States—agree to accept more Iraqis for resettlement.

In this respect, resettlement should be considered both as a means of offering protection to individual Iraqis and as a way of supporting Iraqis to remain in the region. In Southeast Asia in the 1980s, the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees provided a framework in which return, local integration, and resettlement were combined to resolve the long-standing Indochinese refugee situation.

4. Finally, pay attention to displacement in northern Iraq. While most of the Iraqi refugees and displaced are from Baghdad and the three northern provinces have been fairly stable, two factors in particular deserve sustained attention: debates around the eventual future of Kirkuk and the situation in Mosul where minorities, in particular, Christians were displaced in late 2008. In both cases, there are real possibilities that more people will be displaced. And in both cases, solutions for those who have already been displaced are tied to fundamental issues of respect for minority rights and their role in Iraq's future.

Displacement in Iraq has a long history. The Ba'athist regime used forced resettlement to punish political opponents and attempt to reshape the country's demographic geography. Its brutal Arabization campaign, for example, sought to diminish or eradicate Kurdish power in the North and its policy of draining the southern marshes displaced hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.¹⁴⁴ In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, over 300,000 Iraqis returned to their country, hoping to re-establish their lives and to recover their property. But displacement since 2003, and particularly since the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in February 2006, has been massive. Although security in Iraq has improved over the past year, the situation is far from stable. Economic and social conditions, while improving, are inadequate to meet the needs of the population. Of particular concern for the displaced are scarce employment opportunities, a shortage of housing, and the fact that public institutions have not yet demonstrated the capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to their needs.

¹⁴³ <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/iraqi-refugees-plan-ongoing-support-unstable-region>.

¹⁴⁴ "An IDP Case Study... The Marshlands of Southern Iraq," The AMAR International Charitable Foundation London Conference, March 2006: Internally Displaced Persons—An Ongoing Dialogue, p. 8. http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/Files/events/2006/0301_iraq/20060301_iraq.pdf.

Finding solutions for the millions of Iraqi IDPs and refugees will require an enormous commitment of time, money, and energy on the part of the Iraqi government and other concerned actors. But the alternative scenario of a protracted Iraqi refugee situation in the region and of millions of displaced Iraqis within the country is unacceptable—unacceptable for millions of people whose lives are in limbo, for governments hosting the refugees, humanitarian organizations trying to raise funds to support them, and for the future political stability of Iraq.

APPENDIX

DISPLACEMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

OIC Member Country	Party to the '51 Convention or '67 Protocol	Percentage of population that is Muslim CIA Factbook	Number of refugees and asylum seekers hosted by state USCRI, World Refugee Survey 2008 (as of 31 Dec. 2007)	Number of refugees originating from the state UNHCR Global Trends 2007	Number of IDPs IDMC, Dec. 2007 Global Statistics
Afghanistan	Yes	99%	n/a	1,909,911	over 200,000
Albania	Yes	70%	n/a	15,340	n/a
Algeria	Yes	99%	95,700	10,615	undetermined
Azerbaijan	Yes	93%	2,800	15,436	572,531
Bahrain	No	81%	n/a	73	n/a
Bangladesh	No	83%	177,600	10,243	500,000
Benin	Yes	24%	8,400	265	n/a
Brunei-Darussalam	No	67%	n/a	2	n/a
Burkina-Faso	Yes	50%	n/a	554	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	Yes	40%	7,400	78,273	124,958
Cameroon	Yes	20%	97,400	11,508	n/a
Cote d'Ivoire	Yes	39%	26,400	22,232	621,000
Chad	Yes	53%	294,100	55,722	185,901
Comoros	No	99%	n/a	96	n/a
Djibouti	Yes	99%	8,000	648	n/a
Egypt	Yes	90%	165,100	6,799	n/a
Eritrea	No	50%	6,800	208,743	32,000
Gabon	Yes	1%	12,700	116	n/a
Gambia	Yes	90%	14,300	1,267	n/a
Guinea	Yes	85%	29,300	8,278	*19,000
Guinea-Bissau	Yes	45%	8,300	1,028	*undetermined
Guyana	No	10%	n/a	677	n/a
Indonesia	No	86%	n/a	20,230	150,000-250,000
Iran	Yes	98%	1,003,100	68,397	n/a
Iraq	No	97%	44,800	2,279,247	2,778,000
Jordan	No	92%	617,100	1,786	n/a
Kazakhstan	Yes	47%	4,500	5,235	n/a
Kuwait	No	85%	51,000	746	n/a
Kyrgyzstan	Yes	75%	n/a	2,254	n/a
Lebanon	No	60%	325,800	13,093	90,000-390,000
Libya	No	97%	16,400	1,954	n/a
Malaysia	No	60%	164,400	615	n/a
Maldives	No	100%	n/a	17	n/a
Mali	Yes	90%	12,800	994	n/a
Mauritania	Yes	99%	30,500	33,108	n/a

OIC Member Country	Party to the '51 Convention or '67 Protocol	Percentage of population that is Muslim CIA Factbook	Number of refugees and asylum seekers hosted by state USCRI, World Refugee Survey 2008 (as of 31 Dec. 2007)	Number of refugees originating from the state UNHCR Global Trends 2007	Number of IDPs IDMC, Dec. 2007 Global Statistics
Morocco	Yes	99%	n/a	4,039	n/a
Mozambique	Yes	18%	n/a	222	n/a
Niger	Yes	80%	15,700	827	n/a
Nigeria	Yes	50%	9,600	13,902	*undetermined
Oman	No	75%	n/a	43	n/a
Pakistan	No	97%	1,877,800	31,857	undetermined
Palestine	n/a	84%	Gaza: 1,047,200; WB: 745,000	** (under UNHCR mandate only) 335, 219	24,500-115,000
Qatar	No	78%	n/a	62	n/a
Saudi Arabia	No	100%	288,000	753	n/a
Senegal	Yes	94%	23,800	15,896	10,000 - 70,000
Sierre Leone	Yes	60%	17,200	32,127	n/a
Somalia	Yes	100%	2,200	455,357	1,100,000
Sudan	Yes	70%	310,500	523,032	6,000,000
Suriname	Yes	20%	n/a	63	n/a
Syria	No	90%	1,852,300	13,668	433,000
Tajikistan	Yes	90%	n/a	541	n/a
Togo	Yes	20%	6,900	22,501	1,500
Tunisia	Yes	98%	n/a	2,505	n/a
Turkey	Yes	100%	18,000	221,939	954,000-1,200,000
Turkmenistan	Yes	89%	n/a	678	undetermined
Uganda	Yes	12%	235,800	21,341	921,000
United Arab Emirates	No	96%	n/a	308	n/a
Uzbekistan	No	89%	n/a	5,663	3,400
Yemen	Yes	99%	124,600	1,631	25,000 - 35,000
TOTAL			9,799,300	7,946,657	

Column 1: See http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/member_states.asp for the list of OIC member states. *Bosnia and Herzegovina is an observer.

Column 2: See UNHCR, "States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol". <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b73b0d63.pdf>

Column 3: Figures are consistent with those in the 2008 US-Islamic World Forum publication, *Human Development in the Muslim World* (Hady Amr et al). http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/Files/rc/papers/2008/02_islamic_world_amr/02_islamic_world_amr.pdf

Column 4: See USCRI's World Refugee Survey 2008. <http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=2114&subm=179&area>About%20Refugees>

Column 5: See UNHCR Global Trends 2007, Table 2 (established 3 June 2008). ** There are over 4.6 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate. These estimates include only people with recognized refugee status. In other publications, the numbers include asylum-seekers and persons in "refugee-like conditions" and may therefore be higher. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics.html>

Column 6: See IDMC, Dec. 2007 Global Statistics. Asterisk indicates that the number was not included in the Global statistics, but appeared on the IDMC country page. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpPages\)/22FB1D4E2B196DAA802570BB005E787C?OpenDocument&count=1000](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpPages)/22FB1D4E2B196DAA802570BB005E787C?OpenDocument&count=1000)

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS*

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE discussed the dire situations of Iraqi and Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), which in 2007 together accounted for almost half of UNHCR's global refugee population. In both sessions, participants discussed not only the humanitarian, but also the political, security and economic aspects of the refugee crisis, and there was broad consensus that it was an inherently political crisis and therefore requires a political solution. The first session focused on the particular challenges Iraqi refugees continue to face and how this has affected the country's post-war reconstruction in general. The second session focused on Afghan refugees and how their return must be addressed in the context of a new, comprehensive U.S. policy to stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan.

SESSION I

Current estimates indicate that 15-20% of the Iraqi population remains displaced. Although the pace of internal displacement has decreased as violence levels diminished, conditions for those in exile are actually worsening. As people run out of money and wear out their welcomes as guests, they often become desperate and vulnerable to exploitation, which can result in human trafficking

and prostitution. Studies indicate that the longer and farther refugees are from their homes, the less likely they are to return at all. For those who have reentered Iraq, the vast majority of them remain internally displaced for a variety of reasons, including the lack of a legal framework for refugees to regain their property. It is clear that the refugee crisis is a political issue requiring an immediate political solution.

Several participants used the phrase "human dignity" when referring to the humiliation suffered by those forced to leave their homes. One called the process a "violation of God's image." Many expressed their belief that the international coalition responsible for launching the Iraq war should bear the burden of aid and sustainable repatriation, instead of smaller countries like Syria and Jordan.

Other participants made clear that humanitarian "band-aids" to the refugee problem in Iraq will not ultimately be sufficient to ensure lasting political stability and progress. There was general agreement that it was of paramount importance to help refugees return home, rather than promoting any type of "permanent displacement," but this has to be done using a comprehensive, effective strategy. As one panelist remarked, "it's not just an issue of money, but creative solutions." Some suggested

* Summary author: Alexandra Raphael

that serious efforts to repatriate Iraqi refugees must be taken not only by the United States, but also the UN, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Arab League, and other international organizations.

SESSION II

The return of displaced Afghan nationals remains incredibly problematic. Afghanistan still suffers greatly from violence and economic instability, and with at least 4.5 million refugees inside and outside the country, displacement remains a grave issue. One panelist noted that although neighboring countries have been hospitable, there is no comprehensive framework for dealing with the crisis. Within Afghanistan itself, there are no agencies equipped to assist with repatriation, and the courts have no real mechanism for resolving property disputes. Similarly, the Bush administration largely ignored the issue of refugees when it undertook the war in Afghanistan, and international organizations have paid little attention to the problem.

Participants also discussed the issue of a broader U.S. strategy in Afghanistan because, as one panelist noted, without an improvement in domestic

security and economy, it is unlikely the refugee situation will improve. The panelist suggested that the new U.S. strategy put forth by Obama has three main elements: a doubling of American forces; a “civilian or developmental surge”; and an effort to make clear that the ultimate U.S. goal is to find a viable “hand off” strategy which leaves a more stable Afghanistan in the hands of its own security forces. The presentation of this strategy raised concerns and questions from participants: Will this number of U.S. troops and Afghan security forces be enough? Shouldn’t we be concerned about civilian casualties that might result from increased troops? What about a focus on education and development?

Participants agreed that the refugee crisis must be addressed immediately, but could not be done in an isolated manner. Rather, it had to be addressed in the context of a comprehensive policy to stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan. The volatile political climate in Pakistan is reinforced by the presence of Afghan refugees, which increases competition for jobs and resources and encourages extremist recruitment in refugee camps. Any sustainable solution to rehabilitate these refugees will only result after careful consideration of all of the elements involved.

PROJECT ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD

THE PROJECT ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;
- A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;
- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the United States and the Muslim world;

- An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cultural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;
- A Science and Technology Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the United States and the Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;
- A “Bridging the Divide” Initiative which explores the role of Muslim communities in the West;
- A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project’s findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution’s original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, and the Institute for Social Policy Understanding. Partners include American University, the USC Center for Public Diplomacy, Unity Productions Foundation, Americans for Informed Democracy, America Abroad Media, and The Gallup Organization.

THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's Director of Research. Joining them is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Tamara Cofman Wittes, a

specialist on political reform in the Arab world who directs the Project on Middle East Democracy and Development; Bruce Riedel, who served as a senior advisor to three Presidents on the Middle East and South Asia at the National Security Council during a twenty-nine year career in the CIA, a specialist on counterterrorism; Suzanne Maloney, a former senior State Department official who focuses on Iran and economic development; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Hady Amr, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel L. Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Brookings Vice President Carlos Pascual.

The Saban Center is undertaking path-breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Persian Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.

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