

Human Migration
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Humans have always moved. What's new is the existence of borders and a complex system of international and national laws purporting to regulate movement. Included in alphabetical order here are some-not all-definitions that may help any discussion of human migration.

1951 Refugee Convention: This defines refugee and outlines rights as well as States' legal protection obligations. The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. The original Convention only applied to refugees in Europe before 1 January 1951.

Asylum-seeker: An individual who claims specific and life-threatening persecution in their country and who seeks protection in another country. The receiving country imposes its own rules on who might qualify for asylum and under what terms. In the US, claims are heard by immigration judges. Applicants are not guaranteed a lawyer.

Displaced people: individuals or groups displaced from their homes because of natural disaster or violence and who have not crossed an international border. No treaty protects them, but the UN has developed guiding principles member nations can adopt.

Freedom of movement: All humans have the right to freedom of movement within the territory of their own country and to choose one's residence; the right to leave any country; and the right to return to one's own country. There is no right to enter a second country where the person has no citizenship.

Migrant: An umbrella term reflecting the common understanding of a person who moves away from a place for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; smuggled migrants; those who migrate for better economic opportunities; and those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.

Refugee: Under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Additional Protocol, a refugee is someone or groups of people fleeing due to well-founded fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or national disaster. The 1967 Additional Protocol removes the time and geographical limitations of the 1951 treaty. There are additional legal instruments that apply in Africa, Latin America and the European Union.

Stateless person: A person who is not considered a national by any State. Examples include some Palestinians and Tibetans.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS): A temporary authorization given by the US Congress to nationals of designated countries to remain within the United States. The status allows persons to live and work in the United States for limited times.