



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2003/NGO/206
17 March 2003

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-ninth session
Item 14 (c) of the provisional agenda

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS:
MASS EXODUSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Written statement* submitted by Norwegian Refugee Council, a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2003]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Responsible states should protect Internally Displaced People (IDPs), seek durable solutions for their problems and refrain from displacing their people

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and its Global IDP Project are deeply concerned that some 25 million people are internally displaced due to war and conflict, amounting to a global human rights crisis. In some 50 states, IDPs are denied their basic rights to shelter, food, medicine, education and livelihoods. Most IDPs are women and children who face high rates of physical attack, torture, sexual exploitation and forced labour. In worst cases, IDPs suffer attacks at all stages of displacement.

The Commission on Human Rights should urge States to:

Take action to protect IDPs

Many states have committed to increasing protection for IDPs, but still fail to do so in practice. Some governments neglect to act because they see IDPs as belonging to opposing political groupings, thereby discriminating against them for their ethnicity or religion. Such states should not misuse notions of sovereignty and national security to escape international censure. Governments have the prime responsibility and duty for protecting IDPs; they must protect IDPs from attack, uphold their rights without discrimination, and ensure they receive humanitarian assistance.

Seek durable solutions for IDPs

Increased stability in over half of the world's conflict-affected states has brought new prospects of durable solutions for large numbers of displaced people. In Angola, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, for example, civilian populations have been displaced for protracted periods, often for over a decade. Commitment from national governments, non-state actors and the international community to providing solutions is welcome, but they must not contemplate forcing IDPs to return or resettle. Authorities should only declare an end to displacement when displaced people can return or resettle voluntarily in conditions of safety and dignity. Any forcible solution falls short of accepted international standards, and is unlikely to be durable.

Prevent further displacement

A small number of states have continued to directly displace large numbers of people, in disregard for human rights, as authorities pursue military strategies, ethnic wars and take control of natural resources. Governments that arbitrarily displace people should account for their actions to the Commission, and take immediate action to improve protection, uphold rights and prevent new displacement. These governments must also explain why they deny aid to vulnerable people once displaced, causing high rates of unnecessary mortality and morbidity, also in disregard for their citizens' rights.