

The Global Plight of Refugees

According to the latest report by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, more than 1 percent of humanity—some 79.5 million people—was living as forcibly displaced people in 2019, which is almost double the number of displaced people just a decade ago and 10 million more than at the end of 2018. This figure of refugees is almost equal to the population of Germany.

The vast majority of the refugees come from five countries, all of which have either been direct targets for US imperialist aggression and intrigue or are suffering as a result of decades of colonial domination and neocolonial occupation. Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela account for 68 percent of the total. Syria, which has been devastated by a bloody US-instigated civil war for almost a decade, alone accounts for over 13 million displaced people—more than half of its 22 million pre-war populations.

The poorest countries are bearing the brunt of the crisis, as the imperialist powers in North America and Europe seal their borders to refugees, fire on them with heavily-armed, fascistic border guards, or allow them to drown at sea. The UNHCR report notes that 73 percent of people displaced outside of their home country have found refuge in a neighbouring country, i.e. they live in countries that are often as ill-prepared as their war-torn, impoverished homelands to provide for their survival and well-being.

Refugees and displaced people who seek to reach countries in Europe and North America confront brutal repression and the threat of death. In the United States, the Trump administration has established a vast array of internment camps, where desperate and impoverished people fleeing horrendous social conditions in Latin America, including women and children separated from their families, are held in conditions no better than animals. Militarized guards and militias patrol the US-Mexico border, which has become the scene of hundreds of migrant deaths every year.

The European Union has all but abolished the right to asylum and shredded the protections adopted in the Geneva Convention on Refugees, a piece of international law instituted following the unbridled savagery of the Nazi regime. Seven decades later, European governments, with Germany in the lead, are well on the way to resurrecting similarly barbaric practices. Tens of thousands of refugees are confined to hellish concentration camps in Libya and other parts of North Africa, where they are subjected to torture, rape, slavery, and worse by EU-funded militias.

As horrific as the figures are in the UNHCR report, it only accounts for the situation in 2019. It therefore does not take note of the devastating impact of the corona virus crisis, which has dramatically worsened conditions facing refugees and migrant workers on every continent.

Migrants and displaced people typically belong to the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class. They have been hit especially hard by corona virus outbreaks, and largely left to fend for themselves by callously indifferent and often maliciously hostile state authorities from Modi's India to Merkel's Germany and Trump's United States.

In Germany, large numbers of Romanian, Bulgarian and other Eastern European migrant workers are herded into dilapidated buildings often unfit for human habitation and receive poverty wages with no rights or job protections. They have been infected in large numbers in meat packing plants and in the agricultural sector, while many more have been placed under effective police guard in hopelessly overcrowded tower blocks and disused army barracks, which then become hotbeds for the spread of the virus.

In the United States, migrant workers make up a large proportion of the more than 25,000 meat packing workers infected by CoVID-19. Hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants received no assistance during lockdown measures. Trump has launched a series of military-style immigration raids carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement to arbitrarily round up immigrants for detention and removal. In July 2019, Trump launched nationwide raids targeting 2,000 families in 10 major cities for deportation.

Anti-immigrant hatred and national chauvinism have been systematically fanned by the ruling classes in every country to justify their failure to provide decent living for the people and to cover up their attacks on democratic rights.

It is the bounden duty of the working class and democratic forces to support the cause of refugees and displaced people. They must expose the imperialist machinations that caused the displacement of millions of people around the world.

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