

World Refugee Day: Borders, Asylum, and International Law

Bloom's Level: Analyze

Standard:

C3.D2.Civ.14.9-12 — Understanding Human Rights and Responsibilities

NCSS.9.GC.1 — Global Interdependence

TEKS §113.44(d)(16)(B) — Changes in American Culture and Policies

STUDENT EDITION



Millions of displaced people worldwide — including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons — are forced to leave their homes due to conflict or persecution, making displacement one of today's most urgent global challenges.

World Refugee Day: Borders, Asylum, and International Law

When Home Becomes Impossible

Imagine waking up one morning and discovering that staying in your home country means risking your life. Your neighborhood has become a war zone, or your government has targeted you because of your religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs. You have no choice but to leave — but where do you go, and who is legally obligated to help you?



Millions of displaced people worldwide — including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons — are forced to leave their homes due to conflict or persecution, making displacement one of today's most urgent global challenges.

This is the reality for more than **100 million people** worldwide, according to United Nations estimates — the highest number of displaced people recorded since World War II. Importantly, this figure includes refugees, asylum seekers, and **internally displaced persons (IDPs)** — people who have been forced from their homes but remain within their own country's borders. The number of people who meet the strict legal definition of "refugee" under international law is significantly lower, though still in the tens of millions. On World Refugee Day, observed every June 20, the global community pauses to examine this crisis. But understanding it requires more than sympathy; it requires analytical tools. What does international law actually say? How do we differentiate between a refugee and an asylum seeker? And how does the U.S. system work in practice?

The Legal Foundation: The 1951 Refugee Convention

After the devastation of World War II, the international community recognized that millions of displaced Europeans needed legal protection. In response, the United Nations created the **1951 Refugee Convention**, a landmark international treaty that remains the cornerstone of refugee law today.

The Convention established a precise legal definition: a **refugee** is a person who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on **race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group**. This definition is deliberately specific — not everyone fleeing hardship qualifies under international law.

One of the Convention's most critical principles is **non-refoulement** (pronounced non-reh-foo-MAHN), a French legal term meaning that no country may return a refugee to a place where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This principle is considered binding even on countries that have not formally signed the Convention.

By 2024, **149 countries** had signed the Convention or its 1967 Protocol, which expanded protections beyond Europe. Examine this carefully: signing the treaty creates legal obligations, but enforcement mechanisms are limited. Countries interpret and apply these rules differently, which is a central tension in global refugee policy.

Comparing Key Terms: Refugee vs. Asylum Seeker vs. Migrant

Students often encounter these terms used interchangeably in news coverage, but they carry distinct legal meanings. Organizing these differences is essential for evaluating policy debates accurately.

Term	Definition	Legal Status
Refugee	Recognized under international law; fled persecution	Formal legal protection
Asylum Seeker	Has applied for refugee status; awaiting a decision	Temporary, pending review
Migrant	Moved for economic, family, or other reasons	No automatic protection
Internally Displaced Person (IDP)	Forced from home but remains within their own country	No international refugee protections

An **asylum seeker** is someone who has arrived in another country and formally requested protection — but has not yet received a legal decision. They may

ultimately be recognized as a refugee, or their claim may be denied. During this waiting period, their legal status is uncertain.

A **migrant**, by contrast, moves voluntarily, often for economic opportunity. While migrants may face hardship, they do not automatically qualify for refugee protections under international law. Conflating these categories — or deliberately blurring them — is a common pattern in political rhetoric that students should learn to identify and examine critically.

An **internally displaced person** occupies a distinct category: unlike refugees, IDPs have not crossed an international border, which means they fall outside the legal framework of the 1951 Convention. This gap in protection is one of the most significant challenges in international humanitarian law.

How the U.S. Asylum Process Works

The United States operates two parallel systems for people seeking protection.

Resettlement is for refugees identified and processed outside the U.S., typically through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The U.S. government sets an annual **refugee admissions ceiling** each year. In fiscal year 2023, the ceiling was set at 125,000, though actual admissions were lower due to processing backlogs.

Asylum is for individuals who arrive at or within U.S. borders and request protection. They must apply within one year of arrival and demonstrate that they meet the legal definition of a refugee. Cases are reviewed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or immigration courts, a process that can take years due to significant backlogs — over 3 million cases were pending in immigration courts as of 2023.

Where Do Refugees Come From?

Examining the data reveals important patterns. In recent years, the largest groups of refugees admitted to the U.S. have come from **the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Burma (Myanmar), Ukraine, and Afghanistan** — countries experiencing ongoing conflict or political repression. This breakdown helps students connect

refugee flows to specific geopolitical events rather than treating displacement as an abstract phenomenon.

Real-World Connections: Policy Debates and Human Rights

The refugee system sits at the intersection of **human rights law, national sovereignty, and domestic politics**. Countries argue over how many refugees they can absorb, how to verify claims, and how to balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations. These are genuine policy tensions without simple answers.

What international law does establish clearly is that **human rights are not optional extras** — they are obligations that governments have formally accepted. Evaluating whether a country's policies align with its legal commitments is a form of civic analysis that students can apply to news stories, political speeches, and policy proposals.

Conclusion: Building an Analytical Vocabulary

Understanding the refugee crisis means more than knowing the numbers. It means being able to **differentiate** between legal categories, **compare** how different countries respond, **examine** the gap between legal obligations and real-world practice, and **organize** complex information to evaluate competing claims.

The 1951 Refugee Convention gave the world a shared legal language for one of humanity's most persistent challenges. Whether that language is honored — and how — is a question that belongs to every informed citizen.

Lesson Objective

In this lesson, you will examine the legal definitions and distinctions between refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and internally displaced persons under international law. You will analyze how the 1951 Refugee Convention establishes human rights obligations for governments and evaluate how the U.S. asylum system reflects — or falls short of — those commitments. By the end, you will be able to break down complex policy debates using precise legal vocabulary and evidence.



Asylum seekers must formally apply for protection and wait — sometimes years — while immigration officials review their cases under international and domestic law.

Standard: C3.D2.Civ.14.9-12 — Understanding Human Rights and Responsibilities; NCSS.9.GC.1 — Global Interdependence; TEKS §113.44(d)(16)(B) — Changes in American Culture and Policies

Bloom's Level: Analyze

Bloom's Goal: Students will analyze the legal frameworks, key distinctions, and real-world tensions surrounding refugee rights and U.S. asylum policy to evaluate how international human rights obligations are applied in practice.

Explanation: Analysis requires students to break down complex systems into their component parts — here, distinguishing legal categories, examining treaty obligations, and identifying gaps between policy and practice. This goes beyond simply recalling facts; students must compare, differentiate, and draw evidence-based conclusions about how human rights law functions in the real world.

Application Questions

Read each question carefully, use evidence from the article to support your response, and think about the deeper connections between international law, human rights, and real-world policy.

1. The article explains that the 1951 Refugee Convention established the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits countries from returning refugees to places where they face serious threats. However, it also notes that enforcement mechanisms are limited and countries interpret these rules differently. Analyze the tension between a country's legal obligations under international law and its claims of national sovereignty. What does this tension reveal about the strengths and weaknesses of international human rights law?

Think about: Consider what it means for a country to sign a treaty — does signing automatically guarantee compliance? Think about who has the power to enforce international agreements and what happens when a country chooses not to follow them.

2. The article distinguishes between refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and warns that 'conflating these categories — or deliberately blurring them — is a common pattern in political rhetoric.' Analyze why these distinctions matter when evaluating a government's immigration or refugee policy. What could be the real-world consequences for individuals if policymakers or the public treat these categories as interchangeable?

Think about: Think about how legal definitions determine who receives protection and who does not. Consider how language used in political speeches or news coverage might shape public opinion and, in turn, influence policy decisions.

3. The article states that 149 countries have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, yet over 100 million people remain displaced worldwide — the highest number since World War II. Analyze what this gap between legal commitments and real-world outcomes suggests about the responsibilities of both governments and individual citizens in protecting human rights. How might civic engagement help close this gap?

Think about: Consider the difference between a government making a legal promise and actually fulfilling it. Think about what tools ordinary citizens have — such as voting, advocacy, or staying informed — to hold governments accountable to their human rights obligations.

Close Reading Passage

Read the following passage carefully. Then answer the five questions below, using evidence from the text to support your responses.

The Legal Foundation: The 1951 Refugee Convention

After the devastation of World War II, the international community recognized that millions of displaced Europeans needed legal protection. In response, the United Nations created the 1951 Refugee Convention, a landmark international treaty that remains the cornerstone of refugee law today. The Convention established a precise legal definition: a refugee is a person who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. This definition is deliberately specific — not everyone fleeing hardship qualifies under international law. One of the Convention's most critical principles is non-refoulement, a French legal term meaning that no country may return a refugee to a place where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This principle is considered binding even on countries that have not formally signed the Convention. By 2024, 149 countries had signed the Convention or its 1967 Protocol, which expanded protections beyond Europe. Signing the treaty creates legal obligations, but enforcement mechanisms are limited. Countries interpret and apply these rules differently, which is a central tension in global refugee policy.

1. According to the passage, what is the legal definition of a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention? Identify at least three specific grounds for persecution listed in the text. **[Comprehension]**

2. What does the principle of non-refoulement require of countries, and why is it significant that it applies even to countries that have not formally signed the Convention? [Comprehension]

3. The passage states that the legal definition of a refugee is "deliberately specific." What can you infer about why the drafters of the Convention chose to make the definition specific rather than broad? What might be the consequences of a broader definition? [Inference]

4. The passage notes that while 149 countries have signed the Convention, "enforcement mechanisms are limited" and countries "interpret and apply these rules differently." What does this suggest about the relationship between international law and actual government behavior? What tension does this create for human rights protection? [Inference]

5. Analyze how the author structures this passage to build the reader's understanding of refugee law. How does the order in which information is presented — historical context, legal definition, key principle, and current status — shape the reader's interpretation of the Convention's importance and limitations?

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Hypotheticals

Read each scenario carefully, then answer both questions using evidence and reasoning from what you have learned.

Scenario 1: A family from a country experiencing severe civil war arrives at the U.S. southern border. They tell border officials that they fled because their village was destroyed and they feared for their lives. However, a government official argues that because they were fleeing general violence rather than persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, they do not qualify as refugees under international law. The family is placed in a detention facility while their case is reviewed, a process that could take several years.

a) Based on the legal definition established by the 1951 Refugee Convention, analyze whether the family's situation would likely qualify them as refugees. What specific factors would an immigration court need to examine?

b) While the family waits for a decision, what is their legal status, and what does the principle of non-refoulement require of the United States government during this time?

Scenario 2: A country that signed the 1951 Refugee Convention announces a new policy: any person who crosses its border without prior authorization will be immediately turned back, regardless of the reason they left their home country. Government leaders argue this policy is necessary to protect national security and manage the number of arrivals. Human rights organizations immediately challenge the policy, arguing it violates the country's obligations under international law. Meanwhile, news outlets describe all people attempting to cross the border as 'migrants,' without distinguishing between refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants.

a) Analyze how this country's new border policy conflicts with the principle of non-refoulement. What specific obligation does signing the 1951 Refugee Convention create for this country?

b) Why is it a problem that news outlets are describing everyone at the border as 'migrants'? Analyze how blurring these legal categories could affect public understanding of the policy debate and the rights of the people involved.

Reflection Questions

Read each question carefully, use the think-about prompt to guide your thinking, and write a thoughtful response using evidence from the article.

1. How does the legal distinction between a refugee, an asylum seeker, and a migrant affect the protections a person can receive under international law?

Think about: Consider how each category is defined differently and what those differences mean for a person's legal rights and safety.

2. The article states that 149 countries have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, yet enforcement mechanisms are limited. What does this gap between legal obligation and real-world practice reveal about how international law actually functions?

Think about: Think about what it means to sign a treaty versus actually following it, and why countries might interpret or apply the same rules differently.

3. Analyze how political rhetoric that blurs the distinction between refugees and migrants could affect public policy and human rights protections.

Think about: Consider who benefits and who is harmed when these legal categories are confused or deliberately mixed together in political debates.

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Primary Source Analysis (DBQ)

Read the primary source excerpt below carefully. Then answer all four questions using evidence from the source and your knowledge of international refugee law and human rights. For each response, identify specific details from the document to support your analysis.

Statement by Eleanor Roosevelt on the Adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention [Speech]

We who have witnessed the devastation of two world wars understand, perhaps better than any generation before us, what it means to be without a country, without protection, without hope. The millions who wander the roads of Europe today — stateless, persecuted, stripped of every right that civilized nations claim to guarantee — are not strangers to us. They are the consequence of our failures and the test of our commitments. This Convention does not ask nations to surrender their sovereignty. It asks only that they honor the most basic obligation of any government that calls itself humane: that no person shall be returned to a place where their life or freedom is in danger. Non-refoulement is not a burden. It is the floor of human decency. I urge every nation represented here to sign, to ratify, and above all, to act — because a treaty that lives only on paper protects no one.

— Eleanor Roosevelt, U.S. Representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, address delivered at the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries, Geneva, Switzerland, July 1951

1. Who is the author of this source, and what was her role at the time it was written? How might her position as a U.S. representative to the United Nations influence the perspective she expresses in this speech? [Sourcing]

2. What historical events does Roosevelt reference as the background for this speech? Using your knowledge of post-World War II history, explain why 1951 was a significant moment for establishing international refugee protections. [Context]

3. Roosevelt states that non-refoulement is "the floor of human decency" rather than a burden on nations. What does this phrase reveal about her argument for why countries should accept the principle of non-refoulement? Cite specific language from the source in your response. [Close Reading]

4. Roosevelt warns that "a treaty that lives only on paper protects no one." How does this concern connect to what you know about the gap between legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and real-world refugee policy today? Use at least one specific example from the lesson article to support your answer. [Corroboration]

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Civic Action Scenario

Read the civic scenario below carefully. Identify the stakeholders listed and consider how each is affected by the situation. Then answer all three questions using evidence, reasoning, and your knowledge of human rights, international law, and civic responsibilities. Write in complete sentences.

Scenario: The city of Riverside has received 500 asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo who arrived at the U.S. border fleeing ethnic violence. Their cases are pending in immigration court, and the process is expected to take two to three years. The city council is debating whether to allocate public funds for housing, legal aid, and language services while the cases are reviewed. Some council members argue the city has a moral and legal obligation to support people fleeing persecution, while others contend that limited local resources should prioritize current residents. Meanwhile, a local advocacy group is organizing a public forum to pressure the council to act, citing the United States' commitments under international refugee law. The council must vote within 30 days, and the decision will set a precedent for how the city handles future asylum cases.

Stakeholders: Asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo awaiting immigration court decisions | Riverside city council members responsible for allocating public funds | Current Riverside residents who rely on city services and pay local taxes | Local refugee advocacy organizations working to protect asylum seekers' rights

1. Analyze how the legal distinction between an asylum seeker and a recognized refugee affects what protections and resources the Congolese individuals in Riverside are legally entitled to under U.S. and international law.

2. Examine the competing responsibilities of the Riverside city council in this scenario. How should local governments balance their obligations to current residents with the human rights responsibilities established by international agreements the U.S. has accepted?

3. Evaluate the role of the local advocacy organization in this civic dilemma. How does civic engagement — such as organizing a public forum — function as a tool for holding governments accountable to their human rights commitments?

Economic Decision Tree

Read the scenario below carefully. Then review the two policy options, including their costs and benefits. Finally, answer the three analysis questions using evidence and reasoning.

Scenario: The United States government must decide how to respond to a dramatic increase in asylum seekers arriving at its southern border. Processing each case requires significant government resources, including immigration judges, legal staff, and detention or housing facilities. With over 3 million cases already pending in immigration courts, policymakers must choose between two approaches. The decision will affect both the federal budget and the country's obligations under international human rights law, including the principle of non-refoulement established in the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Option A: Expand Asylum Processing Capacity

Costs:

- Requires billions of dollars in new federal spending to hire immigration judges, legal staff, and expand facilities.
- Longer processing timelines in the short term as new systems are built and staff are trained.
- Political opposition may make it difficult to pass the necessary funding legislation.

Benefits:

- Ensures the U.S. meets its legal obligations under international law, including the principle of non-refoulement.
- Reduces the backlog of pending cases over time, leading to faster and fairer decisions for asylum seekers.
- Strengthens the U.S. reputation as a global leader in upholding human rights and humanitarian law.

Option B: Restrict Asylum Eligibility and Expedite Removals

Costs:

- May violate the principle of non-refoulement if individuals with valid claims are returned to dangerous conditions.
- Risks damaging U.S. credibility in international human rights forums and straining diplomatic relationships.
- Asylum seekers denied fair hearings may face persecution, raising serious ethical and legal concerns.

Benefits:

- Reduces the immediate financial burden on the immigration court system and federal agencies.
- Decreases the number of pending cases more quickly by limiting who qualifies for a full hearing.
- Allows the government to redirect resources toward other domestic priorities in the short term.

1. Compare the short-term and long-term economic trade-offs of Option A and Option B. Which option do you think is more fiscally responsible over a ten-year period, and why?

2. Analyze how each option aligns with or conflicts with the United States' legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, specifically the principle of non-refoulement. What are the potential consequences if a country fails to honor this obligation?

3. Consider the difference between a refugee, an asylum seeker, and a migrant as defined in international law. How might blurring these distinctions in political rhetoric influence public support for Option A or Option B? Use evidence from the article to support your answer.

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Multiple Choice

Read each question carefully and select the best answer from the choices provided. Each question has only one correct answer.

1. Which of the following best explains why the 1951 Refugee Convention established a precise legal definition of 'refugee' rather than a broad one?
 - A. A precise definition ensures that only those facing specific forms of persecution receive formal legal protections, distinguishing them from economic migrants.
 - B. A precise definition was created to limit the number of countries that would be required to sign the treaty.
 - C. A precise definition was intended to prevent any country from accepting more refugees than it could financially support.
 - D. A precise definition was designed to apply only to European refugees displaced by World War II.
2. Analyze the principle of non-refoulement. Which scenario would most clearly violate this principle?
 - A. A country denies an asylum seeker's application after a full legal review.
 - B. A country deports a recognized refugee back to a nation where they face imprisonment for their political beliefs.
 - C. A country sets a lower annual ceiling for refugee admissions than the previous year.
 - D. A country requires asylum seekers to apply within one year of arrival.

3. A person flees their home country after their village is destroyed in a civil war but does not cross an international border. Based on the article, which category best describes this person, and what is the most significant consequence of that classification?

- A.** Asylum seeker; they must wait years for a legal decision before receiving any protection.
- B.** Refugee; they are entitled to full protections under the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- C.** Internally displaced person; they fall outside the legal framework of the 1951 Convention and lack international refugee protections.
- D.** Migrant; they moved voluntarily and therefore do not qualify for any humanitarian assistance.

4. Why might a political leader deliberately use the term 'migrant' instead of 'refugee' when describing people fleeing persecution? Analyze the likely purpose of this rhetorical choice.

- A.** To accurately reflect international legal definitions and help citizens understand the difference between the two groups.
- B.** To imply that the individuals moved voluntarily for economic reasons, thereby suggesting they have no legal claim to protection.
- C.** To emphasize that the individuals have already been granted asylum and are legally protected.
- D.** To highlight the role of the UNHCR in processing and resettling displaced populations.

5. The article states that 149 countries have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, but notes that 'enforcement mechanisms are limited.' What tension does this fact reveal about international refugee law?

- A. Countries that sign the Convention are required to accept unlimited numbers of refugees, creating economic strain.
- B. The Convention only applies to refugees from Europe, leaving most of the world's displaced people without legal protection.
- C. Countries can formally accept legal obligations under international law while still applying those obligations inconsistently in practice.
- D. The UNHCR has the authority to override national immigration laws whenever a country violates the Convention.

6. Compare the U.S. resettlement process with the U.S. asylum process. Which of the following best describes a key structural difference between the two?

- A. Resettlement involves individuals identified and processed outside the U.S. through the UNHCR, while asylum is requested by individuals who have already arrived at or within U.S. borders.
- B. Resettlement is available only to refugees from countries with which the U.S. has a formal alliance, while asylum is open to anyone.
- C. Resettlement cases are decided by immigration courts, while asylum cases are handled exclusively by the UNHCR.
- D. Resettlement applicants must prove persecution based on political opinion only, while asylum seekers may cite any reason for fleeing.

7. The article notes that over 3 million immigration cases were pending in U.S. courts as of 2023. Analyze how this backlog most directly affects asylum seekers.

- A. It forces asylum seekers to reapply for protection every year until their case is resolved.
- B. It means asylum seekers may wait years in legal uncertainty before receiving a decision on their protection status.
- C. It automatically grants asylum seekers refugee status after a two-year waiting period.
- D. It prevents the U.S. from accepting any new resettlement applications from the UNHCR.

8. Based on the data about where U.S.-admitted refugees come from, what analytical conclusion can best be drawn about the relationship between refugee flows and world events?

- A. Refugee flows are primarily driven by economic inequality between wealthy and developing nations.
- B. Refugee flows are largely random and cannot be connected to specific political or military events.
- C. Refugee flows are closely linked to specific geopolitical events such as armed conflict and political repression in countries of origin.
- D. Refugee flows are determined mainly by geographic proximity to the United States.

9. The article argues that human rights under international law are 'obligations that governments have formally accepted,' not optional extras. Which of the following best supports this claim?

- A. The UNHCR has the power to sanction any country that violates the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- B. When countries sign international treaties like the 1951 Refugee Convention, they legally commit to upholding the rights and protections outlined in those agreements.
- C. Human rights protections are enforced by a global court that can override national laws in all signatory countries.
- D. Countries that violate refugee protections are automatically removed from the United Nations.

10. A student is evaluating a government's claim that it is fully complying with the 1951 Refugee Convention. Which analytical approach, as suggested by the article, would be most effective for assessing this claim?

- A. Accept the government's statement at face value, since signing the Convention is itself proof of compliance.
- B. Focus only on the number of refugees the country has admitted, since admissions data is the sole measure of compliance.
- C. Compare the country's actual policies and practices against the specific legal obligations outlined in the Convention, looking for gaps between commitment and action.
- D. Rely on the UNHCR's annual report as the only valid source for determining whether a country is complying with international law.

Vocabulary

Study each term and its definition below. These words are essential for understanding international refugee law, human rights, and global displacement. As you read and discuss the lesson, pay attention to how each term is used in context and how distinguishing between them helps you analyze policy debates more accurately.

Refugee

A person who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and who has received formal legal protection under international law.

Explain in your own words:

Asylum Seeker

A person who has arrived in another country and formally requested legal protection but has not yet received an official decision on their case.

Explain in your own words:

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

A person who has been forced to leave their home due to conflict, persecution, or disaster but remains within their own country's borders and therefore falls outside international refugee law protections.

Explain in your own words:

Migrant

A person who moves from one place to another, typically for economic opportunity or family reasons, and who does not automatically qualify for refugee protections under international law.

Explain in your own words:

1951 Refugee Convention

A landmark international treaty created by the United Nations after World War II that established the legal definition of a refugee and the obligations countries have to protect them.

Explain in your own words:

Non-refoulement

A core principle of international refugee law stating that no country may return a refugee to a place where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

Explain in your own words:

Persecution

Severe mistreatment or harm inflicted on a person by a government or group because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Explain in your own words:

Refugee Admissions Ceiling

The maximum number of refugees the U.S. government allows to be resettled within the country during a given fiscal year, set annually by the president.

Explain in your own words:

National Sovereignty

The principle that a country has the right to govern itself and control its own borders, which can come into tension with international human rights obligations.

Explain in your own words:

UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international agency responsible for identifying, protecting, and coordinating assistance for refugees around the world.

Explain in your own words:

Exit Ticket

Answer both questions in 2-3 sentences each using evidence from the article. Be specific and use the correct legal terms.

1. Analyze the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker. Why does this legal distinction matter when governments make decisions about who receives protection?

2. The article states that the principle of non-refoulement is considered binding even on countries that have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. What does this reveal about the relationship between international law and national sovereignty, and what tension does it create?



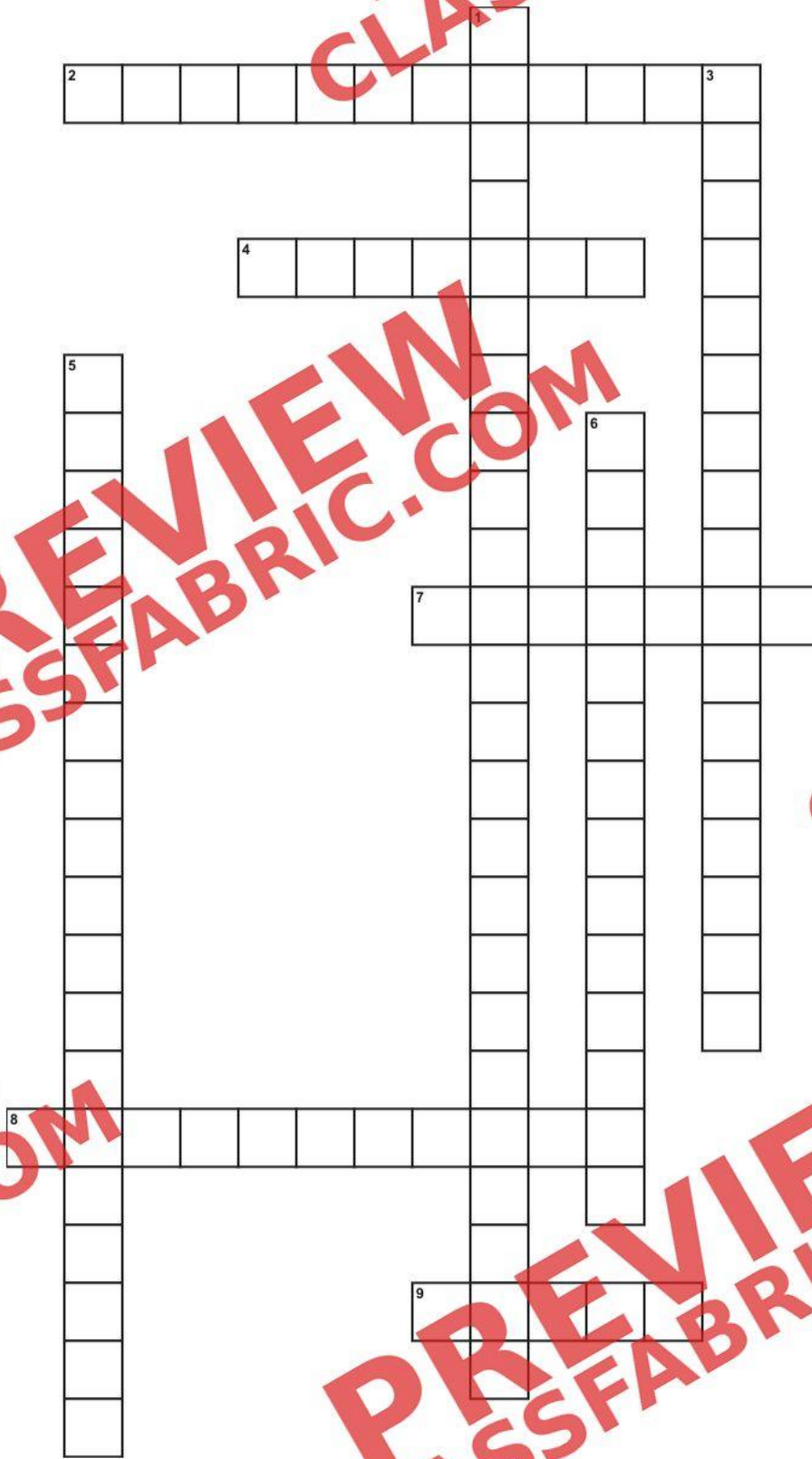
Millions of displaced people worldwide — including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons — are forced to leave their homes due to conflict or persecution, making displacement one of today's most urgent global challenges.



Asylum seekers must formally apply for protection and wait — sometimes years — while immigration officials review their cases under international and domestic law.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



World Refugee Day: Borders, Asylum, and International Law

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

2. A person who has arrived in another country and formally requested legal protection but has not yet received an official decision on their case.
4. A person who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and who has received formal legal protection under international law.
7. A person who moves from one place to another, typically for economic opportunity or family reasons, and who does not automatically qualify for refugee protections under international law.
8. Severe mistreatment or harm inflicted on a person by a government or group because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.
9. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international agency responsible for identifying, protecting, and coordinating assistance for refugees around the world.

DOWN

1. The maximum number of refugees the U.S. government allows to be resettled within the country during a given fiscal year, set annually by the president.
3. A landmark international treaty created by the United Nations after World War II that established the legal definition of a refugee and the obligations countries have to protect them.
5. The principle that a country has the right to govern itself and control its own borders, which can come into tension with international human rights obligations.
6. A core principle of international refugee law stating that no country may return a refugee to a place where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

World Refugee Day: Borders, Asylum, and International Law

WORD SEARCH

U T T U Y G H H S P W V I W I Q K L J R F J E P L
J P G N P E R S E C U T I O N V W M P Y T Z I X Z
E S E H B W S F H G G M A D R W P G I E X B Z Y F
P P M C M T L O F Z F S N K V K U U I X O C U R T
K I Q R H P U U Y H E K Y H F J O L I N C R P E U
U J O I L U D H T U I L V E P S D O B U L E K F A
O D P A O K T X R C U A U Z A C B X J S I F G U W
I O T H U O M X S Z R O P Z D F V H V B A U H G H
H N A J H X V I C C B P M X B Y R P E M B G F E X
Z A O F Z Y K G J F O D T J Z S J S I F U E N E X
L F E K A O V P E V U I I G K S G I Y V U E O W S
W A C K J O L G F A S L Q B R L I R T W C N A Q
K N A T I O N A L S O V E R E I G N T Y W O R S C
V W J U I C P J K I B X W C R H S N S W W N E Q F
S F D S P Q S M W M M O X B J N I S B K A V F B H
C G W J P E J S H Q D G U L H J Y D E R J E O F L
Z Y V T L X T O Y S B R K S W A V U S O M N U K M
J R J L O N U I P X D N C B K U Z O X H W T L M E
X S P Y A K M Z P L X R S K U P R M V V W I E G S
K J X R T M M Q N A S Y L U M S E E K E R O M A F
Y J G F V S C Z U B V H P N U D J L R H G N E F Q
U I G A G K D O X H J U D N R E V F Q K A Y N A C
M Q M E Y B B Y I K E T B W W G Z F D V B V T L Q
L T D O S T E F P F R T G I V V T J K Y Y I Z H W
R E F U G E E A D M I S S I O N S C E I L I N G N

FIND THESE WORDS

UNHCR
Asylum Seeker
Non-refoulement

Refugee
Persecution

Migrant
Refugee Admissions Ceiling

1951 Refugee Convention
National Sovereignty