

Title of Event: CAREFMS Webinar: UNHCR's Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2025 Report

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Toplines:

- Global displacement is at record levels, driven by longer, more complex wars and the combined effects of war and terrorism.
- Displacement is concentrated in six countries, led by Sudan, followed by Ukraine, the DRC, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Syria.
- The Americas host 1 in 5 displaced people globally, largely due to the Venezuelan refugee crisis.
- Canada faces growing refugee system challenges, including sponsorship pauses, new medical co-pay requirements, and major processing backlogs.
- There is increasing emphasis on addressing the root causes of displacement, particularly war and organized political violence, rather than relying solely on humanitarian responses.

Presenter(s):

- Aziz Rahman, Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Tracy Maulfair, Representative in Canada for UNHCR
- Maureen Silcoff, Immigration and Refugee Lawyer
- James Simeon, Professor, York University

Key Points:

- **Tracy Maulfair, Representative in Canada for UNHCR**
 - **UNHCR's Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2025 Report Findings**
 - The Americas is the largest host region for displaced people globally, hosting approximately 1 in 5 displaced people worldwide, even before accounting for the Venezuelan displacement crisis.
 - More than 6 million people from Venezuela are currently in need of international protection, with 97% of this displaced population hosted in Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - Within the broader Americas context, Canada remains a significant resettlement country, welcoming 38,800 refugees through resettlement and complementary pathways in 2025.
 - UNHCR Canada's newly released "[Refugees Are Good for Canada](#)" report highlights refugees' contributions to the workforce and essential services, while global resettlement needs continue to grow, with 2.4 million refugees projected to require resettlement in 2027.
- **Maureen Silcoff, Immigration and Refugee Lawyer**
 - **Refugee Resettlement and Health Care**
 - Maureen Silcoff discussed recent policy changes affecting refugee access to settlement and healthcare supports in Canada, highlighting concerns about increasing barriers for refugees navigating the system.

- Changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) have introduced new financial barriers for eligible beneficiaries, including government-assisted refugees (GARs).
 - These changes include a 30% co-payment for supplemental services such as prosthetics, mobility aids, mental health support, and dental care, as well as a \$4 fee for eligible prescriptions.
 - Mental health treatments covered under the IFHP have also been limited to 10 sessions per year, creating additional constraints on access to healthcare support for refugees.
- **Asylum System Pressures and Legislative Changes**
 - Canada's refugee system faces significant delays, with nearly 300,000 refugee claims pending before the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).
 - Additionally, asylum claims submitted more than one year after an individual's first entry into Canada are no longer referred to the IRB for a full refugee hearing, with this rule applying retroactively to arrivals after June 24, 2020.
 - Claimants affected by this one-year ineligibility rule are instead assessed through a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), which evaluates whether removal would expose them to persecution or serious harm.
 - Individuals may submit new evidence, access legal counsel, and may be eligible to maintain or apply for open work permits while awaiting a decision.
 - If a PRRA application is denied, individuals may seek judicial review before the Federal Court of Canada. In exceptional circumstances, they may also apply for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) grounds.
- **Processing Delays and Family Reunification**
 - Privately sponsored refugee programs (groups of five and community sponsors) have been paused until December 31, 2026, while Humanitarian and compassionate applications face processing delays of 10 to 50 years.
 - Family reunification applications can take up to five years to process.
 - Resettled refugees from countries such as Afghanistan with de facto family members are reportedly being screened out without a valid legal basis.
- **James Simeon, York University**
 - **Pervasiveness of War or Protracted Armed Conflict in the World Today**
 - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates there are approximately 130 active armed conflicts worldwide, double the number 15 years ago, reflecting a structural shift toward longer and more complex wars involving 60 countries and approximately 120 non-state armed groups.
 - Major conflicts in 2026 include:
 - The Russia–Ukraine War (approximately 10 million displaced)

- Sudan (over 12 million displaced amid famine conditions)
- The Gaza and wider Middle East conflict (approximately 3.9 million displaced)
- The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (over 9 million displaced)
- Myanmar's civil war (approximately 3.5 million displaced)
- Potential escalation zones include the Sahel, Haiti, Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, and Red Sea shipping routes
- War drives forced displacement through violence, persecution, and the collapse of essential services such as food, water, and healthcare, while modern conflicts increasingly involve the deliberate targeting of civilians.
- Terrorism is closely linked to protracted armed conflict, with most terrorist incidents occurring in conflict-affected regions. Nearly 70% of terrorism-related deaths occur in Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, making Sub-Saharan Africa the current global epicentre of terrorism.
- War and terrorism are deeply interconnected drivers of forced displacement; while war fosters the instability and grievances that fuel terrorism, terrorism accelerates displacement by inciting fear, targeting civilians, and contributing to extreme violence such as ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- **Global Trends in Forced Displacement and International Responses**
 - Around 1 in 70 people globally (approximately 1.4% of the world's population) is forcibly displaced, with over two-thirds of displacement driven by organized political violence or prolonged armed conflict.
 - Major displacement situations include Syria, with approximately 4.9 million refugees, and Afghanistan, with about 3.7 million refugees, most of whom are hosted in neighbouring countries experiencing ongoing instability.
 - The UNHCR identifies three durable solutions to displacement: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.
 - However, these approaches are often viewed as addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes of displacement, leading to calls for stronger international coordination to prevent and resolve conflicts driving forced migration.
 - There are currently 11 UN peacekeeping operations, many operating in major refugee-producing regions. Modern peacekeeping has expanded beyond ceasefire monitoring to include civilian protection, support for political solutions, and long-term peacebuilding, although concerns remain about their effectiveness in addressing terrorism and reducing displacement.