

A simple adaptation of the UN and other Refugee Treaties and Conventions will make the world a better place for refugees

The UN Refugee Convention contributes to the asylum migration related problems in the EU and to the often deplorable reception of refugees worldwide. This article explains how the 'flaw' in the Convention that causes this can be quite simply removed, and, if embraced and taken up in other Refugee Laws, Treaties and Conventions, the enormous positive effects this will have on refugees worldwide.

The core of the [UN Refugee Convention](#) is the 'non-refoulement' principle, which states that refugees cannot be sent against their will to an area where they would be at risk. Hence, a country cannot simply send an asylum seeker to another country. Consider the difficulties England faced in deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda and [the opposition from the EU to Italy's attempts to house asylum seekers in Albania](#). This is because the reception of refugees in many countries is deemed insufficiently safe by institutions like the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). However, for refugees who flee to such a country themselves, that country meets the non-refoulement principle as people were not sent to that country against their will. This applies to 85% of the world's refugees. These are the refugees who do not have the money to travel to a wealthy country. They live in often deplorable and sometimes unsafe conditions in nearby, usually poor countries in their own region. The UN Refugee Convention does recommend that countries that cannot adequately accommodate refugees receive help from other countries, but it does not mandate this. In practice therefore, such assistance is often insufficient. Meanwhile, asylum seekers who do have the money and energy to travel to a Western country are well received there and usually eventually obtain the nationality of that country. Without changes, this situation will deteriorate further in the not too far future as leading reports from the [UN](#) and the [IPCC](#) predict that refugee flows worldwide will become much larger in the coming decades due to climate change and (related) wars.

It is therefore crucial to develop better refugee conventions and build a robust infrastructure for the reception, accommodation and resettlement of (climate) refugees worldwide. This can be achieved by removing the non-binding nature of the UN Refugee Convention. If a poor country cannot adequately fulfil refugee rights, other countries must come to its aid. And if, as a result of this rule, refugee rights are sufficiently fulfilled in many reception locations in different regions, deals can be made for regional reception, and asylum seekers can be sent to such locations. The motivation for wealthy countries to pay for this will be great; it prevents asylum seekers from coming to them, because refugees will then choose to travel to nearby reception locations in their own region, as they know they will otherwise ultimately be sent there anyway. They will then also no longer need to undertake expensive, dangerous, and often deadly journeys. People coming from safe areas, pretending to be asylum seekers, but actually seeking welfare in rich countries, will stay at home, as they know they will ultimately end up in reception locations in their own region, where their hopes for greater prosperity will not be realized. The result will be that those who do not really need to flee for their lives will stay where they are and those who do need to flee, can and will travel to and seek safe and proper accommodation in a nearby country. Safety in locations where asylum seekers are accommodated can be realized in different ways. One possibility is to send in UN military to protect such locations as is already done in cases where existing refugee camps need protection. Such peacekeeping missions will however, only be successful if the peacekeepers get sufficient mandate to properly protect these locations, with a license to shoot if necessary. This will require proper deals with the involved countries and the readiness of the international community to provide such mandates to peacekeeping forces. Another option, is to set up accommodation for asylum seekers in safe countries, possibly with extra guarantees of the involved governments to ensure safety for the asylum seekers. Foundation Connect International conducted [an initial assessment of countries that may be suitable for the accommodation of asylum seekers in different regions](#) with the general safety of countries being one criterion. Countries like Zambia came out of this initial assessment as

possible safe havens for asylum seekers. In addition, it will probably be necessary to redefine 'safe' in this respect. For instance, according to the ECHR currently hardly any country on earth fulfils all safety criteria for asylum seekers sufficiently.

Therefore, to become effective, the proposed adaptation of the UN Refugee Convention, entitling poor countries to assistance by rich countries with proper accommodation of asylum seekers, will also need to be embraced by and embedded in other national and international refugee treaties, laws and conventions. As for the populations of the EU, they are behind such adaptations. Safe accommodation in the region is the strongly preferred solution for the reception of asylum seekers among the Dutch and also other EU populations. For instance, Ipsos, a high level consultancy bureau, conducted a [survey in 2022](#) for Foundation Connect International, to assess which of seven possible options to solve migration related problems was preferred among 3,000 Dutch citizens of different political preference. The result was that, fairly equally divided among left and right wing voters, the option to properly and safely accommodate asylum seekers in their own regions including seeking for asylum in the receiving countries, was favoured by nearly 70% and, may be of more importance, rejected by only 12% of the respondents. Other recent surveys conducted in the Netherlands and in other EU countries point in the same direction.

In addition to proper reception of asylum seekers in their own regions, there is also a need to help refugees return to their own country once it is safe and to help people to combat poverty, so this significant cause of migration is reduced and people can build a happy life. Rich countries can assist effectively by funding return programs and making the proper reception of returnees a condition for aid and trade by and with the EU. Since the reception of asylum seekers in Western countries is on average 50 times more expensive than in poor countries, part of the saved money can be used for and will be enough to cover the cost for such interventions as was calculated by Foundation Connect International in its [Key Point Migration](#) (footnotes 18 and 23; Dutch document).

If the adaptations are introduced, wealthy countries will take their responsibility, funding and assisting poor countries for the accommodation of asylum seekers in these countries and receiving refugees from their own region themselves. And refugees worldwide will all be safely and properly accommodated in nearby countries. Hence, no longer will one refugee come to stay in a paradise because he or she had the money to travel to a wealthy country, against ten others, who did not have that money, and need to survive in squalor somewhere in their own region.

(1,199 words)

Bio

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