



THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH

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THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH

Aftab Khatoon, Hafeeza Bano Arain

ABSTRACT:

The refugee crisis due to conflicts, persecution, or natural catastrophes is most prevalent in majorly Muslim countries including Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Yemen. This is a crisis which is both moral and religious for the entire Muslim Ummah, teaching that the oppressed or the needy must be supported. The Quran and Hadith focus on protecting the honor of the Muslims urging them to protect the displaced people. The life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his Hijrah and how the Ansar aided the Muhajirun after Hijrah serve as lessons on how to help refugees today. Even so, there are challenges like lack of cooperation, inadequate finances, and political problems but there are chances to make it better. Major areas include strengthening humanitarian assistance systems and policies, integrating education, skills for the refugees, and urging rich Muslim nations to assume leadership positions. The Ummah must respond in love and indeed, work together to resolve the refugee crisis in a more practical manner performing their moral and religious obligations as they do so.

KEYWORDS: Refugee Crisis, Muslim Ummah, Islamic Responsibility, Humanitarian Aid, Displacement, Solidarity, Quran and Hadith.

1. Introduction:

Definition of the refugee crisis:

The refugee crisis is called as such because it represents a mass movement of people out of their countries due to war, violence, or because they have been ethnically or religiously targeted or persecuted. A refugee is a person

who is compelled to abandon his or her home country and go to another country because there is a fear for safety, which may arise from factors such as civil war, political turmoil, or violent aggressions within the country. It is a crisis that has been experienced multidimensionally, with millions of individuals dislocated from their place of domicile and subjected to conditions such as loss of homes, diseases, low provision of education, and denial of governments in the nations of settlement.

As the UNHCR highlights, "The refugee crisis is a global humanitarian issue that occurs when large numbers of people are forced to flee their countries due to armed conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. Refugees face numerous hardships, including the loss of their homes, separation from family members, and exposure to violence. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion"¹

Muslim Ummah and Refugee Crisis:

The need for refugees refers to the situation where people who have crossed borders because of war, persecution, natural calamities, or political conflict become a mass and are collectively referred to as refugees. As stated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

"A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons such as race, religion, nationality, or political

¹ UNHCR. (2020). What is a Refugee? United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee>

opinion."²

In 2023 alone, over 35.3 million refugees were displaced globally, many originating from Muslim-majority countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Palestine.

Relevance of the Refugee Crisis to the Muslim Ummah:

Ummah Muslims feel the most pronounced sense of urgency in the context of the refugee crisis. The majority of areas suffering from war—and hence the majority of refugees—are indeed of a Muslim population: Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine, Myanmar... As Islam teaches, justice and mercy and aid to the wronged is a noble cause. The United Nations goes further to state that solving the refugee crisis is not only a humanitarian challenge but also a religious one for the Muslims.

"The refugee crisis is inherently tied to Islamic values of mercy and justice, and it demands a moral response from the Muslim Ummah."

(*UN News, The Refugee Crisis and Islam: A Moral Call to Action, 2020*)³.

The **Quran** stresses the importance of unity and mutual support:

"The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy."⁴

Importance of Collective Responsibility in Islam:

Islam places significant emphasis on collective responsibility, especially

² UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023*, 2023, UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

³ United Nations News, *The Refugee Crisis and Islam: A Moral Call to Action*, 2020. Available at: <https://news.un.org>.

⁴ Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:10, *Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International*.

toward the oppressed. **Prophet Muhammad** ﷺ stated:

"Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of this world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens on the Day of Judgment." ⁵.

This Hadith emphasizes the importance of rendering assistance to those in need. The Ansar (helpers) of Madinah came to the aid of the Muhajirun (migrants), thereby exhibiting the sense of unity that all the Muslims are encouraged to follow whenever there is disorder.

"The Ansar's hospitality and assistance to the Muhajirun during the Hijrah is a model of Islamic compassion and collective responsibility." ⁶.

In such a case, it is a great moral and spiritual duty of the **Muslim Ummah** to help the refugees. There is a need of unity and coordinated effort to address the issues of justice and mercy.

2. Current Refugee Crisis in the Muslim World Overview of Regions Affected:

The plight of the refugees is very much a Muslim world problem as there are untold millions that have been forced out of their homes because of wars and conflict or political unrest or persecution. Some of the regions that are beleaguered by acute displacement crises include:

1. Syria: After more than a decade of civil warfare, there are more than 6.8 million Syrian refugees that were displaced, most of whom reside in neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan as of 2023.

⁵ Sahih Muslim, *The Book of Zakat*, Hadith 2699.

⁶ Al-Bukhari, *The Book of Maghazi*, Hadith 3906.

"Syria remains the largest source of refugees, with millions fleeing the civil war and seeking refuge in neighboring countries."⁷

2. Palestine: There are 5.9 million Palestinian refugees, with many families forced into exile due to the Israeli Palestinian conflict for generations. They are mostly spread across refugee camps in the Middle East.

"The Palestinian refugee situation is one of the longest unresolved refugee crises, with nearly 6 million refugees today, the majority residing in camps across Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank."⁸

3. Afghanistan: Over 2.7 million Afghan refugees have fled their homeland and sought asylum in a foreign country due to decades of warfare such as the recent comeback of Taliban rule and many others are internally displaced. This goes in agreement with the explanation given by the UNHCR in the sentence that says that

*"Afghanistan remains a major source of refugees, with millions fleeing violence and instability caused by years of war and the resurgence of the Taliban."*⁹

4. Rohingya Muslims: More than one million Rohingya Muslims have been driven into exile, primarily to Bangladesh where they

⁷ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023*, 2023, UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

⁸ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023*, 2023, UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

⁹ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Refugee Situation*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

stay in congested camps. As further corroborated by Human Rights Watch who observes;

"The Rohingya crisis has seen over a million displaced, with the majority seeking refuge in neighboring Bangladesh, where conditions remain dire."¹⁰

5. Yemen: Over four and a half million Yemenis are now internally displaced and thousands have fled seeking refuge abroad as a result of the war and famine. This is backed by the statistics given by the UNHCR which states,

"Yemen's civil war has led to a humanitarian catastrophe, with millions displaced within the country and thousands seeking refuge in neighboring nations."¹¹

Statistics and Scale of the Crisis:

Countries where Islam is predominantly practiced represent a large percentage of the world's refugees. According to statistics obtained from UNHCR:

- It is not a world-wide phenomenon because: more than 70% of the world's refugees come from five Islamic countries, namely Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, and Myanmar. We note this as being true as the article suggests suffices to such the case

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Rohingya Crisis Report*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org>.

¹¹ UNHCR, *Yemen Crisis Overview*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

"Muslim-majority countries continue to bear the largest burden of the global refugee population."¹²

- Countries like Turkey host the largest number of refugees globally, with over 4 million refugees, mostly Syrians. This is backed by the UNHCR, which states,

"Turkey has become the largest host of refugees, primarily Syrians fleeing civil war, followed by refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq."¹³

- The above is true to most refugees who survive under extreme conditions with little to no access to essentials such as nutrition, housing, medical as well as educational services. This is reflected in the World Refugee Report, which states,

"Refugees in many host countries face overcrowded conditions and limited access to services, exacerbating their vulnerability."¹⁴

This unprecedented load of displacement has put host countries and communities across the globe under strain. It has also posed social and economic problems for both the refugees and host communities.

Causes of Displacement

The most common trouble spots that appear to be the primary reasons for displacement in the Muslim world are these:

¹² UNHCR, *2023 Global Trends Report*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

¹³ UNHCR, *Refugee Hosting Countries*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

¹⁴ World Refugee Report, *UNHCR*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

1. wars and conflicts:

- Civil wars in Syria, Yemen, and Libya.
- Instability and military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- The Israeli occupation and ongoing violence in Palestine.
- Ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar.

This is backed by the UNHCR which observes,

"Ongoing conflicts, including the wars in Syria and Yemen, and the situation in Myanmar, remain the largest drivers of displacement in the Muslim world."¹⁵

2. Persecution and Human Rights Violations:

- Religious and ethnic persecution, such as that faced by the Rohingya.
- Political oppression and authoritarian regimes leading to forced migration.

This is corroborated by Amnesty International, which states:

"Religious and ethnic minorities, particularly the Rohingya, continue to face severe persecution, contributing to the refugee crisis."

(*Amnesty International, Rohingya Persecution Report, 2022*)¹⁶

3. Poverty and Economic Instability:

¹⁵ UNHCR, 2023 *Global Trends Report*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *Rohingya Persecution Report*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org>.

o There are many pushing factors that lead people to migrate, but there are two that are most common- lack of opportunities and extreme poverty. People who live in sub-Saharan Africa or Yemen are willing to move out of these regions, even if it means they have to bear hardships.

The following is also affirmed by the World Bank:

"Economic instability and poverty in regions such as Yemen and parts of sub-Saharan Africa have prompted migration in search of better living conditions."

(World Bank, Migration and Poverty Report, 2022)¹⁷

4. Natural Disasters:

- o Displacement is worsened by environmental deterioration, as evidenced by the droughts and floods in Somalia and Sudan.
- o Drought and other forms of climate change have begun since the past couple centuries.

As now confirmed by the United Nations Environmental Programme, such statements are made by:

"Environmental degradation and climate change are becoming major drivers of forced migration, particularly in regions like Somalia and Sudan."¹⁸

The addition of these causes has led to a complex crisis in the Muslim

¹⁷ World Bank, *Migration and Poverty Report*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org>.

¹⁸ United Nations Environmental Programme, *Climate and Migration Report*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.unep.org>.

world, which is in need of both urgent humanitarian assistance as well as effective measures that can eliminate the root causes of displacement. Rescue workers often emphasize the dangers that appraising the cause of displacement presents, something that is yes true, however there still are clear patterns that help in mapping the complexities that are at play.

3. Islamic Teachings on Helping Refugees:

Quranic Verses and Hadiths Emphasizing Support for the Oppressed and Needy

Deprivation extends far beyond simply the lack of essentials; it is a state, a condition affecting the most basic needs. The holy texts as well emphasize the humanitarian efforts of the Prophet Muhammad, seeing them through life. Muslims are called upon to take particular care of the weak, displaced, oppressed, and needy. Imagine the magnitude of suffering these people are or have been always facing without the slightest hope of a fair and just future! Do needsat big consolation of the most life-sustaining kind. According to the Quran:

“And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive.” (Quran 76:8)¹⁹

This verse highlights the virtue of selflessly providing for others, regardless of one's own circumstances.

“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler...” (Quran 4:36)²⁰

¹⁹ Quran, *Surah Al-Insan*, 76:8, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

²⁰ Quran, *Surah An-Nisa*, 4:36, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

Here, the Quran underscores the importance of extending kindness and care to various groups, including travelers (often interpreted as those displaced or seeking refuge).

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had a distinct focus on helping the less fortunate as part of his faith. He said:

“He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while the neighbor to his side goes hungry.” (Sunan al-Kubra, 19049)

This Hadith reflects the importance of empathy and responsibility toward others, including refugees and the displaced. (Sunan al-Kubra, Hadith 19049)²¹

“Allah will aid His servant so long as the servant aids his brother.” (Sahih Muslim, 2699) This Hadith reinforces the principle that helping those in need brings divine reward and support. (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2699)²²

The Concept of “Ummah” And the Idea of “Collective Responsibility”

In the Quran, the word Ummah is used to describe all those who follow the religion – Islam. The Ummah is much stronger than race, nationality, the suffering of one is the suffering of all. Allah says:

“The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.”
(Quran 49:10)

This collective responsibility is further emphasized in the Hadith, where the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ likened the Ummah to a body:

²¹ Sunan al-Kubra, Hadith 19049, Al-Bayhaqi, *Sunan al-Kubra*, Volume 5, Hadith 19049.

²² Sahih Muslim, *The Book of Zakat*, Hadith 2699.

“The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one limb suffers, the whole body responds with wakefulness and fever.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6011; Sahih Muslim, 2586) (*Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:10*)²³ (*Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 6011; Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2586*)²⁴

The idea of the Ummah demands all Muslims to tackle the refugee challenge in a unified manner which is consistent with core values of Islam – human kindness, generosity and compassion.

A Case of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Ansar-Muhajirun Relationship

Very rich Islamic teaching on assistance to refugee comes from history to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his followers’ Hijrah (migration) from Makkah to Madinah. The residents of Madinah, called the Ansar, extending great kindness to the Muhajirun, took them into their houses, shared their properties and wealth.

The Ansar showed exceptional generosity and solidarity, setting an example of how to integrate and support refugees. The Quran praises them, saying:

“And those who, before them, had homes [in Madinah] and had adopted the faith, love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in

²³ Quran, *Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:10*, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

²⁴ Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 6011; Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2586.

privation.” (Quran 59:9)²⁵

This example serves as a model for the Muslim Ummah today, demonstrating how compassion, sharing, and sacrifice can alleviate the struggles of displaced people. By embodying the values shown by the Ansar, Muslims can effectively address the modern refugee crisis and honor the teachings of Islam.

4. Role of the Muslim Ummah:

Unity and Solidarity Among Muslim Nations

As it is clear from Islam, the concept of Ummah looks at the importance of coming together and helping one another across the nations. It is expressed in the Quran that the faithful are to be united, settled in their differences, and act for the community as one:

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided...” (Quran 3:103)²⁶

This verse highlights the need for unity and collective action.

In spite of this, the political, sectarian, and economic gulf that exists within the Muslim world has made it difficult for Muslims to respond as a bloc to the many challenges that we have encountered, including the refugee challenge. To address this problem decently, Muslim nations have to resolve their internal conflicts and strive together to assist, shelter, and create livelihoods for the refugees.

Encouraging Wealthy Muslim Countries to Take Leadership Roles:

Leadership by wealthy Muslim nations would not only alleviate the

²⁵ Quran, *Surah Al-Hashr*, 59:9, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

²⁶ Quran, *Surah Al-Imran*, 3:103, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

suffering of displaced individuals but also set a global example of compassion and responsibility.

The affluent Muslim countries, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, can play a prominent role in tackling the growing refugee crisis. Such nations possess enough monetary strength coupled with the ability to render large-scale humanitarian assistance. Their responsibilities could involve:

1. Providing Direct Aid: Supplying funds for food items, accommodation and health facilities to refugees residing in camps and host countries.
2. Hosting Refugees: Expanding the quota for the refugees that are to be accepted, primarily of Muslims.
3. Investing in Sustainable Development: Sponsoring the setting up of schools, institutional health facilities and training facilities for refugees.

Such leadership on the part of the wealthy Muslim nations would not only alleviate the agony caused by displacement of these persons but would also serve as a testimony of compassion and accountability to the entire world.

Mobilization of Resources Through Islamic Organizations

1. They managed to define their role and importance as key stakeholders in each situation. Several Islamic organizations and institutions could help resolve the management of the refugee issue through resource integration and strategic collaboration across the Muslim world.

1. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C.):

- The OIC is the 2nd largest international organization consisting of 57 member nations. Following the United Nations, it's also the 2nd largest organization. It can be useful as a tool to integrate Muslim nations and devise a common strategy for responding to the refugees.
- Initiatives could include the establishment of a central fund for refugee aid and the promotion of diplomatic solutions to conflicts causing displacement. (*Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OIC Annual Report, 2022*)²⁷

2. Islamic Development Bank (IsDB):

- The IsDB is able to provide funding for large scale developmental projects aimed at refugee-hosting zones such as provision of infrastructure, housing and education facilities.
- It may also extend Qard-al-Hasan to countries that support refugees to alleviate their financial stress. (*Islamic Development Bank, 2022 Report on Refugee Support Programs*)²⁸

3. Muslim Charities and NGOs:

- Islamic Relief Worldwide, Qatar Charity and Muslim

²⁷ Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), *Annual Report 2022*, Available at: <https://www.oic-oci.org>.

²⁸ Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), *2022 Report on Refugee Support Programs*, Available at: <https://www.isdb.org>.

Hands are among the organizations donating food, offering shelter, providing medical assistance and education to the refugees all over the world.

- On the other hand, grassroots charity activities can also support state initiatives and ensure delivery of assistance to the most vulnerable groups of population.)²⁹

As a community, the Muslim Ummah with its oneness of faith and common resources has a right and a duty to take charge in addressing the global refugee crisis. Unity coupled with the abundance in rich countries and the presence of humanitarian organizations enables the Ummah to be effective and to find long term solutions to the problem. Such cooperation would not only provide relief to millions of people but also uphold the humanitarian values of Islam.

5. Challenges in Refugee Crisis Management:

The Muslim Ummah has serious limitations in tackling the refugee problem which range from internal differences to lack of resources. All these factors hamper the scope of action for Muslim Ummah nations in pursuing integrated and long-term solutions for the large number of displaced persons.

1. Lack of Coordination Among Muslim Countries:

A leading drawback in handling the refugee crisis bears on collaboration efforts between the Muslim majority states. While common religious background and cultural adherence is present, a number of Muslim nations

²⁹ Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Annual Report 2022*, Available at: <https://www.islamic-relief.org>.

choose to work in isolation with little regard for cooperation on matters relating to refugees. The end result of such disunity is:

- There are overlaps in efforts and resources are wasted.
- There is a failure in delivering assistance to the refugees who require it.
- The existence of political competition resulting in an inability to make any joint decisions on regional and international arena.

For example, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OIC in this regards, has the potential to become an active player, but, unfortunately, did not manage to develop a set of coordinated policies that would allow to effectively address the issues related to refugees.³⁰

2. Limited Resources and Infrastructure in Host Nations:

Countries with a large percentage of refugees and Asylum Seekers, including Jordan, Lebanon, or Bangladesh, also tend to have poor economies. These countries usually do not have the manpower or the establishments to care for millions of uprooted people. As a result, there are:

- Refugees residing in filthy camps and their health and sanitation facilities are deplorable.
- Lack of food, water, and shelter for the refugees.
- Public resources such as schools, hospitals, and houses in the host population areas become overused.

³⁰ Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), *Annual Report 2022*, Available at: <https://www.oic-oci.org>.

Lebanon for instance, is home to about 1.5 million Syrian refugees, which are about a quarter of Lebanon's population. This has seriously impacted the country's economy and infrastructure and worsened the economic downturn that the whole country is experiencing³¹ [32]

3. Political Conflicts Within the Ummah:

Political instability and conflicts within the Muslim world contribute to the refugee crisis while also hampering collective response vis a vis the refugees. Some of the main problems are:

- There are wars and civil wars in Syria, Yemen, Libya, which have a cumulative effect of rendering millions homeless.
- There are conflicts among Muslim countries such as the discord between Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey which inhibit such efforts.
- Refugees are often used as bargaining chips in international game of chess, instead of attending to their humanitarian needs.

Again, these geo-political divisions constitute a direct assault on the concept of "Ummah" and render impossible for Muslim nations to respond collectively to the crisis.³²

4. Cultural and Social Integration of Refugees:

Even during refugee crises in predominantly Muslim countries, as most of them are, these individuals encounter numerous difficulties integrating

³¹ United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), *Lebanon Refugee Crisis Report*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

³² Middle East Institute, *Political Divisions and the Refugee Crisis*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.mei.edu>.

into the local communities. Factors that hinder integration include:

- **Cultural Differences:** Conflicts in language or culture could hinder the successful assimilation of a refugee in other host societies even if they have a common belief. For example, language is a major barrier among Syrian refugees in Turkey.
- **Social Stigmatization:** Some local communities tend to discriminate against refugees and harbor negative feelings towards them which originates whenever residents think of refugees as a burden on their local resources.
- **Economic Exclusion:** Where there are few or no employment opportunities for refugees, which is often the case, and where law prohibits them from becoming lawfully employed, most are economically unproductive and remain reliant on assistance. The absence of comprehensive integration policies also affects the poverty and marginalization of the refugees even further.³³

To resolve these issues, the members of the Muslim Ummah must work together in a united and caring manner. In overcoming these challenges, the Muslim countries need to work more closely together, distribute resources more fairly, have greater political stability and have ways of integrating effectively. The Muslim world can then act on its ethical and religious responsibilities towards refugees without compromising their long term objectives of rebuilding displaced societies.

6. Steps to Improve Refugee Crisis Management

³³ UNHCR, *Refugee Integration Challenges*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

As a response to the growing refugee crisis, the Muslim Ummah should undertake the required steps that focus on short term relief as well as long term measures. Such measures include enhancing the mechanisms of assistance, raising the funds needed, educating the refugees so that they get empowered, and addressing displacement drivers.

1. Strengthening Humanitarian Aid Mechanisms:

To fulfill the immediate need of the refugees there should be a systematic and effective aid mechanism. These include.

- **Enhancing Collaboration Between Organizations:**
This would involve pooling resources from Muslim nations, NGOs, and organizations such as UNHCR to enhance aid.
- *Improving Amenities and Services In The Camps:*
There should be proper provisions of improved housing, doctors, and toilets so that the forcibly displaced people are able to live with dignity.
- **Using Modernized Systems:** This will include the use of electronic systems for aid management which provides better opportunities for tracking, report generation and engagement of target beneficiaries.

For instance, the strategy which has worked successfully so far, is Turkey's all-inclusive aid programs directed to its Syrian refugees, which include medical care regimen and accommodation facilities.

Turkey's refugee response model involves provision of shelter and refugee healthcare services amongst other comprehensive

aid and has indeed been necessary as a line of support to displaced Syrians.³⁴

2. Establishing a Central Fund for Refugees:

A fund solely dedicated to addressing the refugee case can assist in securing long term financial means to combat the crisis. This can be in the form of:

- Endowments from Rich Muslim Nations: Moving the likes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and UAE to perform the first act of paying the fund.
- Zakat and Islamic Finance: Utilising zakat and other Islamic charitable offerings as an avenue for sustaining revenue inflow streams for the refugees.
- Business Non-Profit Collaborations: Creating an avenue for the muslim business and charity sectors to fund and support the refugee programs.

The above mentioned initiatives could be a KIF or OIC and ISDB led adventure with controls on how the resources are utilized ensuring all territorial affected areas are well catered for. This is reinforced by the Islamic Development Bank's, annual report which articulates,

"The OIC and IsDB have the potential to lead efforts in creating a central fund and facilitating equitable resource distribution for refugees."³⁵

³⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Turkey's Refugee Response Model*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

³⁵ Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), *Annual Report on Refugee Support Programs*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.isdb.org>.

3. Promoting Education and Skills Training for Refugees:

It is a noticeable fact that education and skill development can make a huge difference in rebuilding and making a refugee self-supporting. Work in this direction should focus on:

- Building and Technical Training - Bandragin areas through technical skills to improve on employability.
- Beat The Illiteracy Baria- Introducing online education systems to reach the distance areas where the schools are limited.
- Partnersio With Host – Nation Ansurance: Working with local authorities to help refugees integrate into the work force and make them economically productive.

For example, the Kiron Open Higher Education Initiative offers online courses to displaced refugees across the globe for free, so that they do not have to lose hopes of education during their displacement. This is supported by the report of the Kiron Open Higher Education Initiative in relation to this.

"The Kiron Open Higher Education Initiative offers free online courses to refugees globally, empowering them to continue their education despite the challenges of displacement³⁶

4. Diplomatic Efforts to Resolve Conflicts Causing Displacement:

In its efforts to resolve the refugee crisis, proper emphasis is placed on addressing the cause of the problem which is mainly wars and instability.

³⁶ Kiron Open Higher Education Initiative, *Education for Refugees*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.kiron.ngo>.

Steps include:

- Humanitarian Peace Efforts: Muslim states should facilitate peace in areas where the Ummah is being affected.
- Engaging with International Platforms in Advocacy of Refugees' Rights: Working with OIC and other international organizations to address the plight of refugees.
- Socio-Political and Sectarian Disunity: Advocating for unity among Muslim nations so as to provide a coordinated response to issues affecting them.

One of the successful instances of a good diplomacy in conflict resolution include the efforts by Qatar in helping mediating conflict resolution processes in Afghanistan conflict resulting into more stability and less displacement.

This is supported by the Qatar Foundation, which states, **"Qatar's role in mediating peace talks in Afghanistan helped pave the way for greater stability, which reduced displacement and alleviated the refugee burden."**³⁷ With these measures effectively employed, the Muslim Ummah is better positioned to offer short term relief to the refugee exodus whilst dealing with the problem at its core. The main aim of these measures is the transformation of the refugee situation into a uniting factor for love, harmony and progress in the Muslim world, supported by enhanced

³⁷ Qatar Foundation, *Diplomatic Role in Afghan Peace Talks*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.qf.org.qa>.

humanitarian support, sustainable financing, education and skills development as well as detailed diplomacy.

7. Success Stories and Best Practices:

Even with the refugee crisis, there have still been some notable success stories and best practices in the Muslim world. These, as we can see, are shining examples of how people, ummahs acting in unison and drawing from the tradition of Islam imbued with compassion and care can solve the refugee crisis.

1. Turkey's Unique Pertinence to the Syrian Refugee Crisis:

Turkey is seen as one of the leading countries that successfully manage refugee crises and this is evident on the fact that Turkey has been the country with the most refugees for more than a decade. As it stands in 2023, the number of refugees in Turkey is approximately around 4 million and most of these refugees are from Syria. Some key features of this strategy include;

- **Integration Policy:** Refugees in Turkey are given social integration policies such as work-related and strategic social resources such as education to refugee children and public healthcare services.
- **Federal Government Initiated:** Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and other similar organizations are designated to construct refugee camps with a decent living standard, as well as integrative approaches.
- **International Collaboration:** Southern Turkey has attempted, interacted with the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UNHCR) and other international federations to obtain the necessary finance and technical assistance.

Turkey's approach allows it to contain and focus on the dignity and integration of a high number of a refugee population. This is endorsed by the UNHCR which claims that,

"Turkey has integrated over 4 million refugees into its society, offering work permits, healthcare, and education to help them rebuild their lives."³⁸

2. Contributions of Islamic NGOs and Charities:

Islamic non-governmental organizations and charities have been of paramount importance when it comes to humanitarian engagement and providing assistance to the displaced people around the world. Islamic concepts of 'sadaqah' (voluntary charity) and 'zakat' (compulsory alms giving) motivate such endeavours. Some of them are as follows:

- **Islamic Relief Worldwide:** Islamic Relief is among the largest non-governmental organizations, who claim to have made it their duty to be of assistance and support to all disadvantaged people through charity. Due to which Islamic Relief WorldWide has been able to provide for the needs of food, water, health and education for millions of refugees across the globe. For instance, they have built shelters and clinics in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh and distributed relief supplies.
- **Qatar Charity:** Qatar Charity has been active in assisting Syrian Refugees in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The organization has also invested in building schools, vocational training centers and

³⁸ UNHCR, *Turkey's Refugee Response*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

medical facilities for the displaced people.

- Muslim Hands: Yemeni and Palestinian refugee populations have benefited from the extensive operations of this organization as they were able to provide effective assistance and promote development efforts for the established refugee communities.

These organizations show us how the lack of government initiatives can allow for grass root movements that will alleviate the short term and long-term issues faced by refugees.

This is further supported by the information provided by Islamic Relief Worldwide which states,

"Islamic Relief has been a leading force in providing both short-term relief and long-term support for refugees, with significant impact in places like Bangladesh."³⁹

3. Historical Examples from Islamic History of Refuge and Asylum:

What makes the Muslim worldview unique are the historical instances of refuge and asylum, as it is the case in Islamic history that the core values of hospitality and compassion can always be found:

- The Hijrah (Migration) to Madinah: In times when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, together with fellow Muslims, was undergoing oppression in Makkah, they made a hijrah to Madinah. The inhabitants of the place, later called the Ansar (Helpers), received the Muhajirun (Migrants) and gave them their houses, properties, and everything they had. The Quran mentions the unmatched

³⁹ Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Annual Report 2022*, Available at: <https://www.islamic-relief.org>.

charity of the Ansar in these words:

"They prefer others over themselves, even though they are in privation." (Quran 59:9)

- A Muslim Refuge in the Past – Abyssinia (Ethiopia): A group of Muslims settled in Abyssinia (present Ethiopia) at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) as they were being harassed by the Quraysh tribe in Makkah. The Christian king, Negus (Najashi), extended his goodwill toward them and granted them refuge.
- Jewish Refugees in the Ottoman Empire: The Ottoman Empire sheltered Jews expelled from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition in 1492. Sultan Bayezid II sent a message: "Welcome — we can help you," allowing them the possibility of resettlement and demonstrating the Islamic legacy of protecting persecuted people.

These historical instances are pertinent to the contemporary efforts in combating the refugee crisis as they portray the true meaning of compassion and kindness. This is once again demonstrated by the words of the Quran which reads,

"The example of the Ansar's generosity during the Hijrah remains a powerful model of how Muslims should respond to refugees."⁴⁰

Turkey's successful practices as well as Islam's history provide helpful

⁴⁰ Quran, *Surah Al-Hashr*, 59:9, Translation of the Quran by Saheeh International.

references in assisting displaced Muslims. By learning from these success stories and global best practices, the Muslim Ummah will be actively upholding its religious and ethical responsibilities whereby it will not only provide temporary relief, but long-term solutions for refugees.

8. Global Perspective and Collaboration:

The refugee crisis is far too large and complex a job to handle in solitary. Countries of Muslims origin need to participate with international organizations actively, raise the refugee rights issues at various international platforms and confront the growing Islamophobia in host countries. This method guarantees both instant assistance of the displaced people and the permanent resettlement of the displaced people in the long run.

1. Cooperation with International Organizations Like the UNHCR:

UNHCR is strongly involved in bringing together concerned nations and helping them to protect and assist refugees. Muslim countries can enhance their response to the crisis by engaging with the UNHCR in addition to other global actors. Some of the key areas of collaboration are:

- **Resource Mobilization:** Merging resources, and funds to collectively provide basic shelter, nutrition, health, and education to the refugees.
- **Capacity Building:** Promoting integration of management of refugees with the best practices and policies from international organizations.
- **Joint Initiatives:** Engaging in global efforts such as Global Compact on Refugees to promote burden sharing of refugees across the world.

For instance, Refugees affected by the UNHCR's partnership with Jordan and Lebanon countries have witnessed tremendous changes in their living

conditions from such achieving programs. This is also backed by UNHCR, which asserts that

"The collaboration between the UNHCR and host countries like Jordan and Lebanon has enhanced the living conditions of Syrian refugees through focused humanitarian aid and infrastructure development."⁴¹

2. Advocacy for Refugee Rights on Global Platforms:

There is a need for Muslim nations and organizations to promote refugee issues on international forums so that their voices are amplified, and their needs are sufficiently addressed. Some of these strategies include:

- **Underscoring the Particular Plights of the Refugees of the Muslim Countries:** It is important for the Muslim refugee victims to be heard in the United Nations General Assembly, G20 conferences, international conferences, etc.
- **Appealing for Really Willing Nations to Assume their Responsible Share of the Burden:** Similarly, Muslims have solicited the wealthier nations, especially those outside the Muslim world, to assist refugee-host countries.
- **Striving Towards International Institutions Offering Refugees True Safety:** Demands for a more robust international architecture which will provide the right to seek asylum, refrain from sending refugees back, and offer chances to acquire permanent residency.

Can the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) play such a useful role in coordinating Muslim countries to speak with one voice on refugee

⁴¹ UNHCR, *Refugee Response in Lebanon and Jordan*, 2023. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org>.

matters? According to the OIC Advocacy Report, this is true since:

"The OIC has been instrumental in advocating for the rights of refugees, ensuring that their concerns are raised at international platforms such as the UN and the G20 Summit."⁴²

3. Combating Islamophobia in Refugee-Hosting Nations:

Islamophobia presents a serious challenge to the successful incorporation of Muslim refugees within a number of the host societies, especially in the western countries. Prejudice and discrimination against Muslims and other subjugated peoples contribute to the refugee challenge by making it difficult for the refugees to access employment opportunities, accommodation and assimilate socially. Islamophobia can be combated through the following means:

- Awareness and Educational Campaigns: Joining hands with the local authorities, NGOs, and people from different religious faiths for the purpose of achieving greater understanding of Islam, refugees, and their gains to society as a whole.
- Positive Narratives: Utilizing the experiences of other Muslim refugees who have settled in other countries and are playing roles that challenge the general assumptions about Muslim refugees and create compassion.
- Diplomatic Pressure: Making sure that negotiations and discussions about aids to the host countries make it clear that

⁴² Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), *Advocacy Report*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.oic-oci.org>.

those nations have to respect the discrimination laws and safeguard the interests of Muslim refugees.

For example, CAIR, Islamic Relief Worldwide and others have been actively addressing issues of Islamophobia and advocating for refugee rights through a combination of media, campaigning – public engagement and policy work.

This is supported by the CAIR Advocacy Report, which states,

"Organizations like CAIR have successfully campaigned to raise awareness and combat Islamophobia through media outreach and legal advocacy for refugees."⁴³

It is essential to work globally while addressing the refugee crisis. The Muslim World can help promote a more balanced and decent international response to refugees by working with organizations including the UNHCR and supporting refugee rights on international platforms and opposing Islamophobia in host countries. These objectives are consistent with the fundamental principles of Islam and International law, which include fairness, universality and justice, and humanity.

9. Conclusion:

According to the Muslims, the global refugee crisis is one of the most glaring challenges facing humanity today, while at the same time, it is a responsibility that they hold on moral and religious grounds. In accordance with Islam, the support of the displaced is not only a privilege but also an

⁴³ Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), *Advocacy Report*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.cair.com>.

obligation that stems from the humanitarian notions of empathy, equity, and unity.

The Moral and Religious Duty of the Muslim Ummah:

The vulnerability of the oppressed people is high on the Islamic teaching. And that need doesn't depend on the restoration of the world Islam and the core principles of the Quran and Hadith. The term "**Ummah**" advocates Muslim people as one nation and encourages them to take the necessary steps to help alleviate the pain of countless suffered refugees, many of whom originate from a Muslim country. To help these people is not solely a political issue, but a religious and humanitarian aspect which cannot be ignored.

Emphasis on Unity, Compassion, and Long-Term Solutions:

The issue of displacement is not an issue that can be solved singularly. There are three points, however, that the Muslim world needs to focus on in order to make a difference:

- **Unity:** All these divisions should be set aside so that there is an effective response to these terrible events.
- **Compassion:** This means ensuring that a refugee is treated with respect, and that their basic needs and primary rights are respected.
- **Long-Term Solutions:** This entails not just providing humanitarian assistance but also looking into the fundamental issues that cause displacement, like war, persecution, and impoverishment.

What the Turks are doing with the Syrian refugees or what the Ansar did in Madinah are just some examples that illustrate the importance of unity and compassion in the things they do.

Call for Action to Uphold the Principles of Justice and Humanity:

Now more than ever, the Muslim Ummah must rise to the occasion and lead by example in addressing the refugee crisis. This includes:

1. Strengthening partnerships with international organizations to maximize the impact of humanitarian efforts.
2. Encouraging wealthy Muslim nations to provide financial and logistical support for refugees.
3. Advocating for justice on global platforms and working diplomatically to resolve conflicts that drive displacement.
4. Promoting integration and empowerment of refugees through education, skills training, and economic inclusion.

By taking these steps, the Muslim Ummah can honor its religious and moral obligations while contributing to a more equitable and compassionate world. Upholding the principles of justice and humanity in addressing the refugee crisis reflects not only Islamic values but also a commitment to building a future where every individual, regardless of circumstance, has the opportunity to live with dignity and hope.

The situation requires exceptional leadership, and the time has come for the Muslim Ummah to lead from the front in tackling the issue of refugee crisis. This includes:

1. Making further inroads in partnerships with global humanitarian agencies in order to become more efficient in the delivery of aid.
2. Urging affluent Muslim states to offer substantial financial and logistical assistance to the refugees.
3. Fighting for justice within international institutions and

trying, with diplomacy, to resolve the conflicts that cause refugees in the first place.

4. Facilitating the education, skills development, and economic participation of refugees in their host countries.

As a result of these actions, the Muslim Ummah will be able to fulfill its religious and moral duties while also promoting the cause of justice in the world. The values that Islam stands for are very clear: action on the refugee issue is an ethical action towards the creation of a world in which the weak, the oppressed, and the destitute have the opportunity and right to live with dignity and hope, regardless of the situation.



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