

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

PREFACE TO STATE OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES 2012
January 2012

29/1/2012

For 60 years, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been at the forefront of international efforts to protect refugees and to find lasting solutions to their plight. When the first UN High Commissioner for Refugees took office in 1951, a handful of staff occupied four small rooms in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Today, UNHCR is a global organization, with more than 7,000 staff in more than 120 countries working to safeguard the rights and well-being of tens of millions of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people.

In December 2011, 155 Governments met in Geneva to commemorate the anniversaries of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. They confirmed the enduring value and relevance of these instruments.

Despite the hope that the end of the Cold War would bring an end to refugee flows, war and persecution continue to compel people to flee their homes. Global forced displacement reached a 16-year high in 2011 and has become more complex than ever before.

Today, conflict and human rights abuses – the traditional drivers of displacement – are increasingly intertwined with and compounded by other factors, such as population pressure, food insecurity and water scarcity. Many of these factors are in turn related to the relentless advance of climate change. Growing numbers of people are being uprooted by natural disasters.

This edition of *The State of the World's Refugees*, covering the period 2006-2011, provides a detailed analysis of contemporary forced displacement, including insights from UNHCR's field experience. I have met many displaced persons in my travels. I have heard their painful testimony about enforced flight – but also their gratitude at receiving international assistance. Their experiences reinforce my determination to ensure that the United Nations effectively serves the world's powerless and most vulnerable people.

This publication is a tribute to the resilience of refugees and displaced people the world over, and to those who come to their aid. I commend it to all who care about the state of the world's refugees.

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REPLY HAS BEEN SENT TO
UNHCR.



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