ACADEMIA | Letters

# *An Analysis of Implications of COVID-19 on Forcible Displaced Persons (FDPs)*

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**Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most devastating disaster we have encountered in recent years, while we were using the term of greatest disaster for Syrian refugees just before this pandemic. The COVID-19 epidemic continues worldwide, increasing its speed with deepening socio-economic impacts along with direct impacts on people's health. Undoubtedly, refugees, asylum seekers and forcibly displaced persons are among the most affected by this process. At least 134 countries worldwide, most of them low-and middle-income countries, are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic while also hosting millions of international displaced people. Forced displaced persons (FDPs) were more exposed to both the sanitary and economic effects of the virus-related crisis. At this point, this study aims to produce a regional analysis of how the forcibly displaced population is affected in the face of the policies implemented by the governments to minimise the effects of Covid-19.

**Keyword:** Forcible Displaced Persons, Covid-19, Pandemic, Migration, Refugees

## 1. Forcible Displaced Persons in Numbers

There are 79.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 45.7 million internally displaced people, 26 million refugees, 4.2 million asylum seekers, and 4.2 million stateless people (UNHCR, 2021). When we look at these figures, we see that about 1% of the world's population is on the move. The more painful point is that about 60% of these people just come from 5 countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. The following figure demonstrated the total number of displaced people during the first half of 2020.

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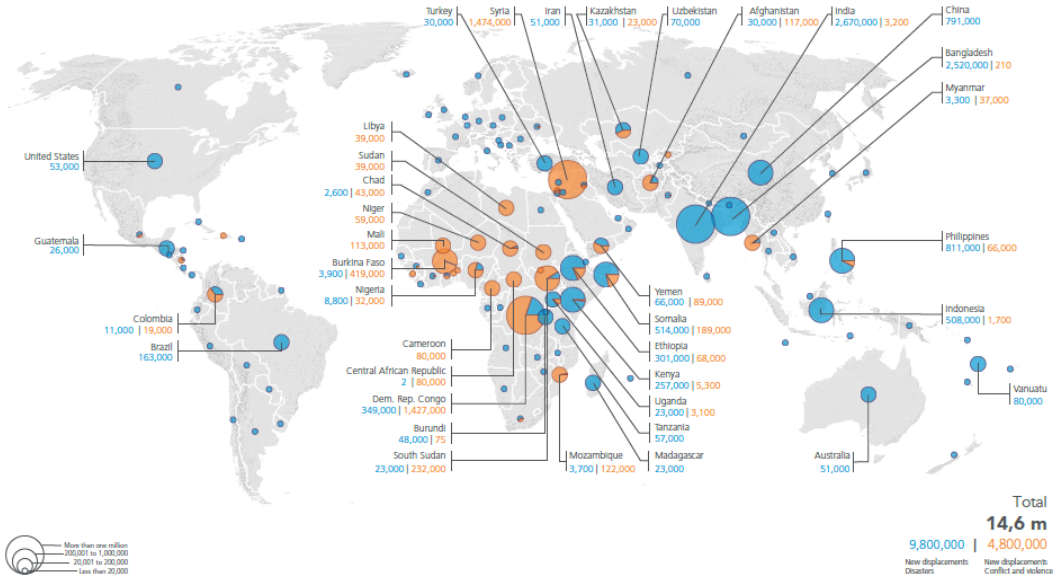



Figure1: New Displacements by Conflict, Violence and Disasters in the First Half of 2020
Source: The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2020)

Most of these people live, especially in neighbouring countries. But the number of people staying in the camps also cannot be underestimated. People in refugee camps were already having difficulty accessing protective elements such as water, cleaning, hand sanitiser. The situation of people living in urban areas is not different. Factors contributing to low living standards for these people include lack of space, poor health facilities, high population density and low levels of education (Kabir et al., 2020).

Despite all the difficulties, a much more difficult process has emerged for these displaced people, especially with the covid-19 epidemic. These people, who already have limited opportunities, have come under greater threat and at many points have been deprived of the services they should receive, especially under normal conditions (Atar, 2021). In this case, it has made them even more vulnerable, and displacement is one of today's major humanitarian and development challenges. Therefore, the host countries should continue to ensure these vulnerable people are borne in mind when producing policies affecting them. Considering all these together, this article aims to draw attention to the lives of displaced people in this process and consider what actions should be taken by the national or international community.


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## 2. Analyses of The Effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Forcibly Displaced Persons

Almost all of the world has taken action to fight the virus, and at this point, many measures have tightened, like restrictions on movement, social distancing, public health measures, governance and socio-economic measures, lockdown etc. However, people continue to be forcibly displaced while all this is happening and those are some basic reasons why we need to understand how those people are handling this unexpected period.

### a. Border Closure

Access to territory is a basic right for those people, however, it has been a great challenge for FDPs during this period since many countries have applied border closure to prevent the spread of the virus. Closing borders can deny displaced people and people seeking a safe place the right to asylum in the international arena, but it causes them to be returned to danger (Alio et al., 2020). For example, people who were forced to leave Venezuela were forced to return to their former settlements due to the closures imposed in the areas where they lived. This law violates the principle of not forcibly repatriating refugees in many countries. Besides, some countries have rejected access to asylum practices, while others have suspended processes to deliver refugees or other forms of protection.

### b. Access to Healthcare

The right to health is recognized as a human right in the international arena (Jamar, 1994). But unfortunately, in many parts of the world, people cannot access the right to health at the desired level. This situation can become even more unbearable, especially for people living in other countries. Because these people do not have health insurance, they benefit from health services at a paid rate or a limited rate provided by the states. These people, who had to work to cover their health expenses, had difficulty finding work under normal conditions, while in the covid-19 period, they were unfortunately completely deprived of these opportunities. Life conditions, which are difficult due to restrictions or complete closures, become even more difficult.

### c. Prevention, Testing, and Treatment

As mentioned above, access to healthcare is a huge challenge for those people. The socio-economic conditions of migrants like health insecurity and lack of income have been nega-


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tively affected by the individual measures to be taken against Covid-19 (Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2020). These people usually do not have health insurance, especially because they cannot obtain a legal residence permit in the country in which they are located. Also, in some cases, they do not apply to medical institutions even if it is necessary because they are afraid of their status. In addition, it becomes impossible for migrants living in camps to take measures of social distance which makes the situation worse. All of this affects the way people are protected from this virus or receive treatment. It is necessary to conduct a test to find out if they are infected by the virus, but fees are required for testing at many points in it. Unfortunately, it is complicated to talk about this in many other regions. Turkey, which hosted the most refugees in the world, gives Syrians the right to be tested and have a right to treatment with its policy under temporary protection.

### d. Basic Needs and Shelter

When thinking of people who have been forcibly displaced or categorized as a refugee, it ought to be considered that they live in sub-human conditions. One of the reasons why it is like this is due to the endless ambition of human beings. Millions of people live in hunger and poverty, and we are focused on our pleasure (Pogge, 2007). I am not even talking about basic rights such as education, health, travel; there are a million people who have nowhere to live with clean water, bread, and shelter. It is inconceivable that these people would resist such a pandemic. It is not their will that they are forced to other lands, where these people deserve a life where their basic needs are met, where they feel safe, and where they can live without fear. Therefore, it is necessary to provide all the opportunities that are the requirements of humane life.

## 3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Many countries are taking measures to prevent the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, some countries take long-term steps, while others produce short-term solutions. In fact, the measures taken show that this crisis is not temporary, but a deep deterioration that can change human mobility in the near and long term. People on the move are the people who are most negatively affected by this process. For this reason, this process should be examined in detail and policies should be produced in this direction.

The World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration recommend eight priority actions to mitigate the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on mobile and displaced populations and remittance-dependent households (IOM and WFP, 2020).


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1. Ensure migrants facing acute hardship can Access humanitarian assistance in order to meet their food and other essential needs.

2. Safeguard assistance is provided to the displaced and their host communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs, as well as migrants in crises and those in mixed flows.

3. It is expected to ensure secure access to critical services and inclusive information for all displaced populations.

4. Recognize the positive contributions of migrants and diaspora and promote their inclusion in social protection systems.

5. Facilitate the flow of remittances as an essential financial service that supports the response to and recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

6. Promote necessary adjustments to national legal frameworks and ensure access to legal services.

7. In the wake of COVID-19, programs should be organised to combat xenophobia, stigma and discrimination against people on the move.

8. Improve data and analysis to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on mobility, remittances and food security dynamics in a better way.

In order to protect the rights of displaced people in this way and to promote health priorities, it is necessary to cooperate internationally and fully implement the above-mentioned policies. In this way, these displaced people can be least affected by the pandemic by using a systematic and regular health service.

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