

Worldwide displacement of people at all-time high: UNHCR

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Geneva: The number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million, which was at the highest level since records began, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a report on Thursday.

Wars, conflicts and persecution have forced more people than at any other time since records began to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere, according to the UN refugee agency's annual "Global Trends Report: World at War".

"We are witnessing a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before," UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres was quoted as saying.

The number of people forcibly displaced worldwide was 51.2 million in 2013 and 37.5 million a decade ago, the report pointed out.

"The increase represents the biggest leap ever seen in a single year," the report said as it warned the situation was "likely to worsen still further".

"Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. If this were the population of a country, it would be the world's 24th biggest," the UN refugee agency report added.

The main reason for the acceleration, the report pointed out, has been the war in Syria -- "now the world's single-largest driver of displacement".

"Every day last year on average 42,500 people became refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced, a four-fold increase in just four years," it said.

The UNHCR report detailed how in region after region, the number of refugees and internally displaced people is on the rise.

It said: "In the past five years, at least 15 conflicts have erupted or reignited: eight in Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, northeastern Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and this year in Burundi); three in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, and Yemen); one in Europe (Ukraine); and three in Asia (Kyrgyzstan, and in several areas of Myanmar and Pakistan)."

"Few of these crises have been resolved and most still generate new displacement," the report noted, adding that over half the world's refugees are children.

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