

## EDITORIAL

### Persistent Crises: Developments and Impacts<sup>1</sup>

*Ralf Roßkopf<sup>2</sup>*

Ongoing humanitarian and refugee crises are the unfortunate reason for the publication of this journal, the Quarterly on Refugee Problems (QRP) – and are actually affecting its publication schedule. While the readership is steadily growing and the journal is now indexed in Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and erih+, issues 4/2025–2/2026 could not be published with the usual reliability due to the Middle East conflict. Unfortunately, the conflict has personally affected the Editor-in-Chief, who, in the midst of crisis management, had to prioritize maintaining university operations at the German Jordanian University. We regret these circumstances and ask for your understanding regarding the missed issues.

While disillusionment is already setting in in light of our own personal experiences, it is also generally unsatisfactory that the number of refugees in 2025 fell slightly for the first time in years (from 129.9 million in 2024 to 129.4 million in 2025), while the number of returnees rose (from 1.6 million in 2024 to 4.4 million) (UNHCR 2026b). This is because, in addition to ongoing and new crises, there is an unprecedented erosion of refugee protection and humanitarian aid due to defunding. As the UNHCR notes:

“[R]efugees are facing a more restrictive protection environment, with rising reports of refoulement and detention, and reduced access to asylum, education, health care and adequate housing. These trends reflect restrictive policies, funding gaps and growing pressure on host-country systems. [...]

Only 37% of the \$10.604 billion operational budget was funded, resulting in a global funding shortfall of \$6.7 billion – the biggest in UNHCR’s recent history. Reduced funding limited the capacity of humanitarian actors and left fewer resources to support already stretched national services and communities affected by displacement. [...]

Funding reductions forced UNHCR to scale back or stop critical protection and solutions-related activities for IDPs in many countries. These included community-based interventions, gender-based violence response, legal aid and mobile outreach. Further cuts could halt or reverse progress made through stronger legal frameworks and field-level protection work, leaving IDPs more exposed to violence, exploitation and other protection risks.” (UNHCR 2026).

Even more alarming and intolerable – especially given the international community’s widespread inaction and silence – is the situation facing UNRWA, whose services are not only threatened by systematic defunding, but whose staff and structures are also under

---

<sup>1</sup> This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) and was accepted for publication on 15/09/2026.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ralf Roßkopf is editor-in-chief of QRP and a professor of law in the Faculty Applied Social Sciences at the Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt, Germany and Vice President of the German Jordanian University.

threat from direct acts of violence and are being increasingly and literally wiped out. UN Secretary-General António Guterres summarized the situation as follows:

"I am appalled by continuing efforts to marginalize and undermine UNRWA.

Through disinformation. Smear campaigns. Legislative actions. Operational restrictions. Diplomatic roadblocks. And more.

Those actions threaten the wellbeing of millions of Palestinians.

And they endanger the dedicated women and men working for UNRWA.

Since October 2023, more than 390 of our dear colleagues in Gaza have been killed.

I will never forget their sacrifice.

Many others have been physically injured or left with the trauma and anguish of losing so many loved ones.

Every single one of the Agency's premises in the Strip has been damaged or destroyed.

For nearly 18 months, none of the international personnel have been allowed to enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

And earlier this year, its headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem were unlawfully seized in a striking and unacceptable violation of United Nations privileges and immunities.

I condemn these actions in the strongest terms – and call for adherence to international law.

All UN premises are inviolable.

And the International Court of Justice has clearly recalled the obligations of Israel in relation to the presence and activities of the United Nations, including UNRWA.

No organization can replace or substitute the Agency's capacity and mandate" (UN Secretary-General, 2026).

These are the circumstances that, in this issue of the *Quarterly on Refugee Problems*, prompt us to examine developments ranging from the origins of refugee protection and law, through its practical implementation and the key players involved, to the discussion of its further development aimed at closing gaps in protection - always with the hope that, sometime in the future, mankind will abandon its madness, recall basic humanitarian principles, and make this journal once and forever obsolete.

## References

- UNHCR (2026b). *World Refugee Day 2025: Messaging*. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/global-report-2025.pdf>
- UN Secretary-General (2026, June 30). The Secretary-General Remarks to the General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/secretary-general-remarks-general-assembly-ad-hoc-committee>