

## Assessment of 2022 Africa Refugees Seeking Asylums in Nigeria under UNHCR'S Mandate

Taiwo Philip Orebiyi<sup>1</sup>, Abdullahi Adamu<sup>2</sup> and Charles Omotola Olusanya<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, National Open University  
(NOUN)

Abuja, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, National Open University (NOUN)

Abuja, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author: [torebiyi@noun.edu.ng](mailto:torebiyi@noun.edu.ng)

### Abstracts

*This study examined the 2022 Africa Refugees Seeking Asylums in Nigeria Under UNHCR's Mandate. Secondary data was sourced from UNHCR websites with a data frame on 2022 Africa refugees under UNHCR's mandate seeking asylums in Nigeria. Data captured states in Africa from where displacement originated and concurrently seeking asylum in Nigeria. Pearson correlation and frequency counts were used for the statistical analysis. Findings show that Pearson correlation coefficient of the relationship between UNHCR refugees and asylum seekers in Nigeria is 0.74 which implies that there is a positive relationship between refugees under UNHCR's mandate and asylum-seekers in Nigeria. Likewise, Central Africa from where Cameroon (CMR) is a member has highest number of refugees seeking asylum in Nigeria. Nigeria has shown a commendable gesture in the context of diplomatic relations guaranteeing freedom of movement for refugees and giving them the right to work under the law. Efforts should be intensified to create a strong synergy between the government and other stakeholders in providing sustainable system for asylum seekers in Nigeria. Likewise, asylum seekers should be guided on the process of coming into Nigeria. Further studies should therefore focus on asylum in other Africa states.*

**Keywords:** Asylums, Displacement, Refugees, States, UNHCR  
**Introduction**

The increase in migration that has been observed in Africa since the middle of the 2010s is the result of immediate and structural reasons that are placing numerous pressures on African residents, prompting individuals and families to decide to change their lives and leave their homes<sup>1</sup> Migration, whether voluntary or forced, has always been a feature of both the individual and communal behaviours of humans<sup>2</sup>. It is worth noting that voluntary migration is intentional while forced migration is driven by emergency forces. However, forced migration is a more general and complicated problem. Forced displacement has been defined as the relocation of refugees and internally displaced people as a result of violence and natural disasters<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, forced displacement and migration have been a part of human history, and it was at its worst during World Wars I and II in the 20th century<sup>4</sup>. But since the end of World War II, the way conflicts happen in different places has changed. Now, intranational conflicts are more common than international ones. Nevertheless, the population of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and other people who have been forced to leave their homes has continued to rise.

Accordingly, the population that has been forcibly displaced is divided into four subgroups: First, refugees are people who are accepted as needing protection under UN conventions, protocols, and UNHCR laws. Asylum seekers refer to persons who have formally sought international protection, albeit their claims for refugee status remain pending adjudication. They have yet to traverse a boundary separating nations. Other people who need international protection are those who are outside of their country or territory of origin, usually because they were forced to move across international borders. These people have not been reported as asylum seekers, refugees, or people in situations similar to refugees, but they are likely in need of international protection, such as protection from being sent back against their will and irregular access to basic services.

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy, Williams. *Drivers of Displacement in Africa Shifting Borders*. Centre for Strategic Studies, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Sasha, Brown & Gilmartin, Mary. Migration and mobilities. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 8. 21, 2020

<sup>3</sup> Counter, M. 'La doble condición': Landmine victims, forced displacement, and disability in Colombia's Magdalena medio. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19.4, 448–472, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 65 million people are now displaced forcefully due to political persecution and armed conflict worldwide<sup>5</sup>. Since 2008, environmental disasters have caused an extra 22.5 million internal displacements annually on average. The most frequently stated figure for this is 15 million annually. OCHA Services (2022) reported that in 2021, thirty-two (32) armed confrontations were reported worldwide, a small reduction from the previous year. Africa had the most conflicts (15), followed by Asia (nine), the Middle East (five), Europe (two), and America (one)<sup>6</sup>. High-intensity armed conflicts contributed to over 53% of all instances worldwide for the first time in a decade.

Likewise, from OCHA Service report, as of 2021, at least 18 of the 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa were engaged in some form of ongoing armed conflict. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan were all states that had armed wars with a high level of severity. Six states comprising Benin, Burundi, Chad, Kenya, Madagascar, and Uganda, all had conflicts on a subnational level that were of a low intensity. Eleven of these 18 states suffered greater number of fatalities connected to war in the year 2021 compared to the year 2020, with the overall rise at around 19%<sup>7</sup>.

In the year 2022, violent conflicts and military coups continued to plague the continent of Africa. Although, there were certain successes on the part of a number of nations in terms of bolstering democratic institutions across the continent. The internationalisation of internal armed conflicts, especially civil wars, is a worrying trend in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>8</sup>. This region has become coveted ground for geopolitical struggle between major powers and for increased middle power infiltration during the past ten years. In the year 2022, six regions in Africa have been identified as conflict-prone areas, namely Libya, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Northern

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<sup>5</sup>UNHCR, Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons, *E/CN.4/S*, 2005

<sup>6</sup> OCHA Service. *Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding Format Analysis*, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ian, Davis. *Armed conflict and peace processes in sub-Saharan Africa.*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI Yearbook, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Adem, Kassie Abebe. *Africa Is Beset with Coups and Conflicts: How the Trend Can Be Reversed*, *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 2022.

Mozambique, Ethiopia, as well as the north-west and south-west portions of Cameroon<sup>9</sup>

Based on the Global Peace Index 2022 released by the Institute for Economics and Peace, it is observed that five out of the ten nations with the lowest levels of peace worldwide are located within the Africa continent. These are Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. Furthermore, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Somalia have been identified as being among the top ten nations globally that have witnessed the most devastating effect of terrorism. Several coups took place in some African countries between 2020 and 2022, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali (on two occasions), and Sudan. Moreover, unsuccessful coups were attempted in the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, and Madagascar.

At the same time, intercommunal violence intensified in some parts of the continent. The anglophone separatist insurgency that had been going on in Cameroon's south-west and north-west regions, as well as the protracted insurgency in the north, have remained persistent. As government forces in the Central African Republic (CAR), supported by Russian private military companies (PMCs) and Rwandan troops, attempted to retake territory that was held by armed groups, the country's security situation grew even more precarious. Nine of the 22 governments that make up East Africa were actively engaged in armed conflict in the year 2021. Of these, five in particular — Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan — were suffering either a continuation of or a rapid escalation in large-scale armed violence. Because of the violence, more than 9.6 million people have been forced to flee from their homes within the country, and more than 4.7 million have been forced to seek asylum in other countries.

According to UNHCR report, the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin witnessed an increase in violence and lawlessness as radical Islamist organisations (local and international) extended their activities and influence into coastal nations. In the Great Lakes Region, where relations between the DRC and Rwanda drastically deteriorated due to the ongoing conflict in the eastern DRC, interstate tensions erupted once more. Given

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<sup>9</sup> IEP. 'Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism', 2022.

the numerous regional and identity-based conflicts occurring elsewhere in the nation, Ethiopia's tenuous cease-fire between the central government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is believed to be very shaky. Likewise, the Horn of Africa, notably Somalia, experienced one of its worst droughts in memory. This situation puts more pressure on the recently elected President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to deal with the nation's escalating humanitarian problems and violence.

Regional attempts to solve some problems in Africa by 2022 have not had enough political will and leadership. This has made quite a number of people stuck in war with nowhere to go. According to UNHCR and Global index for Terrorism, at least 15 armed wars, including those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mali, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan, have involved mistreatment of civilians by military forces of the government or non-state armed groups. In the meantime, armed battles, repression, violence between groups, poverty, and natural factors have forced people to leave their homes in many parts of Africa. In Eritrea and Cameroon, asylum seekers who were sent back against their will have been unjustly detained and abused.

The UNHCR submits that this never-ending flow of refugees has had the most effect on countries in the developing world. Over the years, the UNHCR in Nigeria has responded to the influx of asylum-seekers, particularly in border states such as Cross River, Benue, Ogun, and Taraba, by registering and assisting them in collaboration with the government. With the assistance of UNHCR, Nigeria is a generous host nation that permits refugees to travel freely and operate legally. They receive the same primary health treatment as citizens, and their children are permitted to attend local institutions. The government also provided refugee settlements with land. As part of the collaborative humanitarian response, the UNHCR prioritises protection, shelter, and non-food items such as comfort for IDPs in Nigeria. In addition to supporting water, sanitation, health, and education as priority areas, UNHCR Nigeria also provides financial assistance and assistance with self-sufficiency.

It is against this background that this study examined the 2022 Africa refugees under UNHCR's mandate seeking asylums in Nigeria.

## Materials and Methods

The data used was sourced from UNHCR Websites, which is the official database for refugees' movement (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download>). The data frame was on conflict-induced migrations and asylum in Nigeria in 2022. Data captured states in Africa from where displacement originated and those seeking asylum in Nigeria. Statistical Package for Social Sciences software was used for the statistical analysis in which Pearson correlation and frequency counts were used.

## Results

Below is the analysis of Refugees under UNHCR's mandate and Asylum Seekers in Nigeria ,2022. The table below examined the extent of refugees under UNHCR and asylum seekers in Nigeria from States in Africa.

### Regional Analysis of Refugees under UNHCR's mandate and Asylum Seekers in Nigeria ,2022

		Country of Origin	Refugees under UNHCR's mandate	Asylum seekers in Nigeria
2022	<b>Central Africa</b>	Central African Rep. (CAF)	921	232
2022		Chad (TCD)	89	31
2022		Cameroon (CMR)	86,731	279
2022		Congo (COG)	5	5
2022		Dem. Rep. of the Congo (COD)	667	97
			<b>88413</b>	<b>644</b>
2022	<b>East Africa</b>	Ethiopia (ETH)	8	5
			<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
2022	<b>North Africa</b>	Egypt (EGY)	0	9
2022		Eritrea (ERI)	41	12
2022		Libya (LBY)	5	5
2022		Sudan (SDN)	53	11

			<b>99</b>	<b>37</b>
2022	<b>West Africa</b>	Benin Republic (BEN)	5	0
2022		Ghana (GHA)	5	5
2022		Guinea- Bissau (GNB)	5	0
2022		Guinea (GIN)	18	5
2022		Cote d'Ivoire (CIV)	134	5
2022		Liberia (LBR)	11	0
2022		Mali (MLI)	145	29
2022		Niger (NER)	1,439	0
2022		Sierra Leone (SLE)	23	0
2022		Togo (TGO)	27	5
			<b>49</b>	<b>1812</b>

**Correlation Coefficients,  $r = 0.74$**

**Source:** <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download>

From the table above on refugees seeking asylum in Nigeria, findings show that Cameroon (CMR) has the highest number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate (86,731) followed by Central African Rep. (232), Democratic Republic of Congo (667), Chad (89) and Congo (5). Likewise, Ethiopia (ETH) from East Africa has 8 while in the North Africa represented by Sudan (53) with the highest refugees followed by Eritrea (41), and Libya with 41 refugees under UNHCR mandates. Similarly, West Africa Niger producing 1,439, followed by Mali (145) Cote d'Ivoire (134) among others. On the basis of region, from the regional analysis, Central Africa has the highest volumes of refugees of 88413 followed by West Africa (1812), North Africa (99) and East Africa has the lowest (8) with refugees under UNHCR's mandate.

On the other hand, the table shows that Cameroon (CMR) from Central Africa has the highest number of Asylum-seekers in Nigeria (279) followed by Central African Republic (921), Democratic Republic of Congo (97),

Chad 31) and Congo (5). Similarly, Ethiopia from East Africa has 5 while the North Africa represented by Eritrea (12) with the highest followed by Sudan (11), and Libya with 5 asylum seekers in Nigeria. West Africa has Mali producing 29 followed by Ghana (5), Guinea (5), Cote d'Ivoire (5), with no asylum seekers from Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone. On the basis of region, West Africa has 1812 followed by Central Africa (644), North Africa (37) and East Africa as the lowest (5) asylum seekers in Nigeria.

Moreover, Pearson correlation coefficient between UNHCR refugees and asylum seekers in Nigeria is 0.74. It thus implies that there is a positive relationship between refugees under UNHCR's mandate and asylum seekers in Nigeria. Accordingly, increase in refugees under UNHCR's mandate will automatically leads to increase in asylum seekers in Nigeria. On the contrary, decrease in refugees under UNHCR's mandate will equally leads to decrease in asylum seekers in Nigeria. The implication of the findings is that there is a strong relationship between refugees under UNHCR's and asylum seekers in Nigeria. In other word, increase in refugees under UNHCR's automatically energises the number of asylum seekers in Nigeria.

### **Discussion**

African nations persistently encounter substantial obstacles related to forced relocation, mostly stemming from prolonged and intensifying wars, violence, and insecurity. These issues are further compounded by the influence of climate change, which exacerbates shortage of food and malnutrition.

There is no doubt that the frequent occurrence of conflicts in 2022 in Central Africa has captured the attentions of UNHCR. In that year, the region of West and Central Africa accommodated a total of 11.2 million individuals who were forcibly displaced or became stateless. This population consisted of 7.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 1.6 million individuals seeking asylum, and 931,200 individuals who were stateless with nowhere to go. A total of 1.1 million individuals experienced forced displacement as a result of armed conflicts, instability, and breaches of human rights. This figure includes 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Mali, as well as 138,000 refugees originating from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, and Sudan. In the midst of a multifaceted political and operational context,

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) effectively addressed a number of emergent situations.

These included the crisis in the far north region of Cameroon, which resulted in the displacement of numerous individuals who sought refuge in Chad. Additionally, UNHCR responded to the influx of Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad, as well as the displacement of refugees from Burkina Faso to Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo in the Gulf of Guinea. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided assistance to governments in order to address the requirements of recently displaced refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), with a particular focus on safeguarding, housing, and essential relief supplies. The focus of UNHCR's efforts in the Central Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and CAR crises revolved around the principle of safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of individuals. The Project 21, an inter-agency protection monitoring system, was enhanced and expanded to encompass Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger.

The primary factors contributing to relocation in the Central African Republic (CAR) are military operations conducted by the Central African Armed Forces and their allied forces against non-state armed groups, with concerns of potential human rights violations perpetrated by conflicting parties. Certain communities possess the ability to anticipate the imminent occurrence of conflict and then relocate to more secure regions as a preemptive action. In recent months, a series of publications such as UNHCR reports have consistently highlighted the prevalent issue of excessive use of force and ongoing violations and abuses of human rights. This encompasses several forms of human rights breaches, including conflict-related sexual violence, grave crimes against minors, the military's utilisation of educational and healthcare facilities as weapons of abuse, stigmatisation of ethnic and religious minorities, disproportionate use of force by all offenders, and countless violations of the law.

Likewise, Cameroonian refugee of both genders and different ages are officially documented as refugees in Nigerian states of Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Benue, Cross River, Enugu, and Taraba. UNHCR distributed educational materials to around 1,600 pupils from both refugees and host communities in the states of Benue, Cross River, and Taraba.

With the assistance of the UNHCR, Nigeria has demonstrated a commendable level of hospitality by granting refugees the freedom of movement and the legal right to engage in gainful employment. Migrants are provided with access to primary healthcare services on par with that of the host country's citizens, and their children are eligible to attend local educational institutions.

In addition, the government allocated land for the establishment of villages for refugees. The UNHCR's efforts in Nigeria are primarily directed to the protection, shelter, and provision of household goods such as blankets. These are integral components of the collaborative humanitarian response. In addition to prioritising water, sanitation, health, and education, UNHCR Nigeria also offers livelihood support for the purpose of fostering self-reliance, as well as providing monetary assistance.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

African nations persistently encounter substantial obstacles related to forced relocation, mostly stemming from prolonged and intensifying wars, violence, and insecurity. There is no doubt that the frequent occurrence of conflicts in 2022 from Africa has captured the attention of UNHCR. With the assistance of the UNHCR, Nigeria has demonstrated a commendable level of hospitality by granting refugees the freedom of movement and the legal right to engage in gainful employment. In addition, UNHCR Nigeria also offers livelihood support for the purpose of fostering self-reliance. Efforts should be intensified to create a strong synergy between the government and other stakeholders in providing a sustainable system for asylum in Nigeria. Further studies should therefore focus on asylum in other Africa states with evaluation of their impacts on the socioeconomic factors.

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