

The 1951 Refugee Convention



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The 1951 Refugee Convention is the key legal document that forms the basis of our work. Signed by 144 State parties, it defines the term ‘refugee’ and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.

The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.

UNHCR serves as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with us in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.

[Read the Refugee Convention](#)



1951 Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Travaux préparatoires)

[The Refugee Convention, 1951: The Travaux préparatoires analysed with a Commentary by Dr. Paul Weis](#)

1990

[Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons: Summary Record of the Thirty-fifth Meeting](#)

3 Dec 1951

[Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons: Summary Record of the Thirty-fourth Meeting](#)

30 Nov 1951

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