

# A record 110 million people worldwide are now forcibly displaced: **UN**

Some 110 million people have had to flee their homes because of conflict, persecution, or human rights violations, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said. The war in Sudan, which has displaced nearly 2 million people since April, is but the latest in a long list of crises that has led to the record-breaking figure.

"It's quite an indictment on the state of our world," Filippo Grandi, who leads the U.N. refugee agency, told reporters in Geneva ahead of the publication Wednesday of UNHCR's Global Trends Report for 2022.

Last year alone, an additional 19 million people were forcibly displaced including more than 11 million who fled war in Ukraine in what became the fastest and largest displacement of people since World War II.

"We are constantly confronted with emergencies," Grandi said. Last year the agency recorded 35 emergencies, three to four times more than in previous years. "Very few make

your headlines," Grandi added, arguing that the war in Sudan fell off most front pages after Western citizens were evacuated. Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Myanmar were also responsible for displacing more than 1 million people within each country in 2022.

The majority of the displaced globally have sought refuge within their nation's borders. One-third of them - 35 million - have fled to other countries, making them refugees, according to the UNHCR report. Most refugees are hosted by low to middle-income countries in Asia and Africa, not rich countries in Europe or North America, Grandi said.

Turkey currently hosts the most refugees with 3.8 million people, mostly Syrians who fled the war, followed by Iran with 3.4 million refugees, mostly Afghans. But there are also 5.7 million Ukrainian refugees scattered across countries in Europe and beyond. The number of stateless people has also risen in 2022



● XAVIER BOURGOIS/UNHCR

to 4.4 million, according to UNHCR data, but this is believed to be an underestimate.

Regarding asylum claims, the U.S. was the country to receive the most new applications in 2022 with 730,400 claims. It's also the nation with the largest backlog in its asylum system, Grandi said.

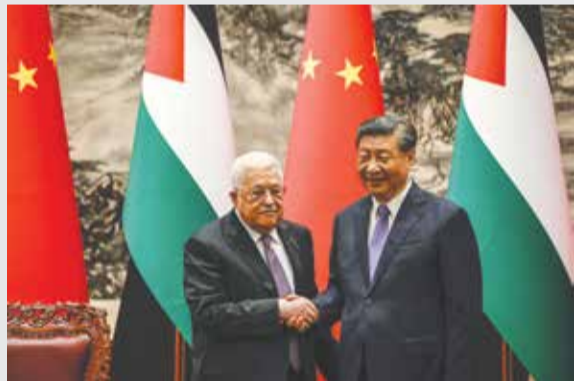
"One of the things that

needs to be done is reforming that asylum system so that it becomes more rapid, more efficient," he said.

The United States, Spain and Canada recently announced plans to create asylum processing centers in Latin America with the goal of reducing the number of people who trek their way north to the Mexico-U.S. border.

As the number of asylum-seekers grows, so have the challenges facing them. "We see pushbacks. We see tougher and tougher immigration or refugee admission rules. We see in many countries the criminalization of immigrants and refugees, blaming them for everything that has happened," Grandi said.

## Xi calls for a Palestinian state to become 'full member' of UN



Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday his call for a state of Palestine to become a "full member" of the United Nations, state

media reported. Xi expressed Beijing's position during a summit with Arab countries in Saudi Arabia in December, although the latest call comes as the Asian power-

house works to strengthen its role as mediator in the Middle East, AFP reported. Xi met Abbas during the December trip and pledged to "work for an early, just and durable solution to the Palestinian issue".

Beijing has since positioned itself as a mediator in the Middle East, brokering the restoration in March of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"China supports Palestine in becoming a full member State of the United Nations," Xi said during a meeting with Abbas in Beijing, according to Chinese state broadcaster

CCTV.

"The fundamental way out of the Palestinian issue lies in the establishment of an independent Palestinian State," he said.

Abbas will be in the Chinese capital until Friday, his fifth official visit to the world's second-largest economy.

Xi told Abbas at a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People that China was "ready to strengthen coordination and cooperation with the Palestinian side".

"Today, we will jointly announce the establishment of a China-Palestine strategic partnership, which

will be an important milestone in the history of bilateral relations," Xi said. Abbas arrived in Beijing on Monday to hold talks with top Chinese leaders including Xi and Premier Li Qiang.

Beijing has sought to boost its ties in the Middle East, challenging US influence - efforts that have sparked unease in Washington.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called long-time Palestinian leader Abbas an "old and good friend of the Chinese people" during a regular media briefing last week.



China's President Xi Jinping (R) shakes hands with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on June 14, 2023. ● JADE GAO/POOL/AFP

## At least 78 drown in Greece's deadliest migrant shipwreck this year

At least 78 people died and dozens are feared missing off the coast of southern Greece after a fishing boat carrying migrants capsized and sank, authorities said Wednesday.

A large search and rescue operation was launched in the area. Authorities said 104 people have been rescued so far following the nighttime incident some 75 kilometers (46 miles) southwest of Greece's southern Peloponnese region, according to AP.

Four of the survivors were hospitalized with symptoms of hypothermia. It was unclear how many passengers might remain missing at sea after the Greek coast guard reported 78 dead.

Six coast guard vessels, a navy frigate, a military transport plane,

an air force helicopter, several private vessels and a drone from the European Union border protection agency, Frontex, were taking part in the ongoing search.

The Italy-bound boat is believed to have sailed from the Tobruk area in eastern Libya. The Italian coast guard first alerted Greek authorities and Frontex about the approaching vessel on Tuesday. Libyan authorities have launched a major crackdown on migrants earlier this month across eastern Libya. Activists have said several thousand migrants, including Egyptians, Syrians, Sudanese and Pakistanis, have been detained. Libyan authorities deported many Egyptians to their home country through a land crossing point. In western Libya, authorities have

raided migrant hubs in the capital, Tripoli, and other towns over the past few weeks. At least 1,800 migrants were detained and taken to government-run detention centers, according to the UN refugee agency.

Mediterranean smugglers are increasingly taking larger boats into international waters off the Greek mainland to try to avoid local coast guard patrols.

On Sunday, 90 migrants on a US-flagged yacht were rescued in the area after they made a distress call.

Separately Wednesday, a yacht with 81 migrants on board was towed to a port on the south coast of Greece's island of Crete after authorities received a distress call.



A migrant is transferred by rescue personnel, following a rescue operation, after their boat capsized at open sea, in Kalamata, Greece, on June 14, 2023. ● REUTERS

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Lebanon's Parliament fails to elect president for 12th time



AL JAZEERA - Lebanon's Parliament fails to elect president for 12th time. The main competition was between Jihad Azour, a former finance minister and senior official with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Sleiman Frangieh, leader of the Marada party whose family has a long history in Lebanese politics.

#### Erdogan: No change in Turkey's stance on Sweden's NATO membership

AP - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that NATO should not bet on his country approving Sweden's application to join the Western military alliance before a July summit because the Nordic nation has not fully addressed his security concerns.

Sweden and Finland applied for membership together following Russia's military operation in Ukraine last year. Finland became NATO's 31st member in April after the Turkish Parliament ratified its request, but Turkey has held off approving Sweden's bid.

NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time the leaders of member nations meet for a summit in Lithuania's capital on July 11-12.

#### Medvedev: Russia now free to destroy enemies' undersea cables

REUTERS - Russia's Deputy Head of the Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said there was no reason for Moscow not to destroy its enemies' undersea communication cables given what he said was Western complicity in the Nord Stream pipeline blasts on Sept. 26 last year.

It is still unclear exactly what happened to Nord Stream, a multibillion-dollar project that carried Russian gas to Germany. In recent months, US newspapers have reported that the CIA knew of a Ukrainian plot to attack the pipelines.