



POSITION PAPER

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Secours Islamique France (SIF)

Secours Islamique France (SIF) is an independent, humanitarian, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization. Founded in 1991 in France, SIF is engaged in humanitarian assistance and development aid at the international level, as well as to social assistance in France. Through its operations, SIF responds to the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations, guided by solidarity and respect for human dignity and by the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. SIF is a signatory of IFRC Code of Conduct.



ADVOCACY

OVERCOMING THE INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

As part of its international interventions, Secours Islamique France (SIF) provides assistance to people who have been forced to leave their homes to cope with the impacts of political and security crises or disasters, including those who are displaced within their own country. SIF addresses the basic needs of **internally displaced persons (IDPs)** in terms of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food security and livelihoods, as well as education and promotion of child welfare. Emergency assistance and protection are complemented by interventions aiming at reducing risks and vulnerabilities, building resilience of affected populations, preventing forced displacement and promoting durable solutions.

Through its advocacy, SIF mobilizes and alerts institutions on the situation of vulnerable populations in crisis contexts, requesting to improve aid mechanisms.

This position paper presents internal displacement challenges and provides recommendations to reinforce and accelerate the action to respond to this crisis¹.

2023: A new record for internal displacement

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC),² 46.9 million internal displacements took place in 2023: 20.5 million were due to conflict and violence, and 26.4 million as a consequence of disasters. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for more than 65% of all internal displacements caused by conflict and violence worldwide, with a regional total of 13.5 million, which is 4.5 million more than in 2022³.

¹ Regarding internal displacement due to disasters and the impacts of climate change, a position paper outlining SIF's approach, its actions in Madagascar, Somalia, and Pakistan, as well as recommendations to strengthen and accelerate the response, is available [here](#).

² IDMC's Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024.

³ IDMC's Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023.

At the end of the year, 75.9 million people were still living in internal displacement (68.3 million as a result of conflict and violence, and 7.7 million as a result of disasters). This figure, the highest ever recorded, reflects the protracted nature of displacement, and the failure to provide durable solutions for these IDPs. According to 2014 figures, in approximately 50 countries, IDPs have been living in internal displacement for more than 10 years⁴.

Countries facing conflict-related displacement also often face the challenge of disasters. In 2023, 42 of the 45 countries and territories that experienced new conflict-related internal displacement also experienced new disaster-related internal displacement.

Children and young people are particularly affected by displacement: according to the UNHCR, 40% of forcibly displaced people in 2022 and 2023 were under the age of 18⁵. At the end of 2022, it was estimated that nearly 25.8 million children were internally displaced as a result of violence and conflicts⁶. Weather-related disasters caused 43.1 million internal displacements of children between 2016 and 2021, or around 20,000 child displacements per day⁷.

Percentage of forcibly displaced persons under the age of 18 in 2022 and 2023

40%

Displacements of children due to disasters between 2016 and 2021



The number of IDPs exceeds the number of refugees: according to UNHCR, in 2023, out of the 117.3 million forcibly displaced people, 68.3 million were internally displaced.

The estimated economic impact of internal displacement worldwide for 2021 is \$21 billion⁸. This figure takes into account only the resources needed to cover basic services and compensate for the temporary loss of income during a year of displacement. It does not include long-term or indirect costs; it is therefore significantly underestimated.



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⁴ Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement: Concept Paper on Issues and Challenges before the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

⁵ UNHCR, *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2022*. UNHCR, *Figures at a glance*, 2024.

⁶ UNICEF, *Number of displaced children reaches new high of 43.3 million*.

⁷ UNICEF, *Children displaced in a changing climate*, 2023.

⁸ IDMC's *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022*

The lack of a special legal status as a factor of vulnerability

The two main characteristics that define IDPs are the forced or involuntary nature of their movement, and the fact that such movement takes place within national borders. This definition is descriptive of their situation, rather than legal. From the perspective of international law, internal displacement is a factual situation, **no special status or rights are attributed to IDPs**, who remain citizens or habitual residents of their country and are entitled to protection and assistance on that basis. Their protection is therefore the responsibility of the concerned State.

However, **displacement leads to particular vulnerabilities**. The loss of access to shelter, land, livelihoods, the loss of personal documents, family members and social networks has an impact on the fulfilment of basic rights. Access to basic infrastructures and services is restricted, as well as food security and access to livelihoods. In addition, the impact of internal displacement on one sector affects the others as well, with a cause and consequence effect.

These causal chains of vulnerability lead to specific needs, and a response that is different from what is provided to other communities affected by crises.

IDPs face an **increased risk of discrimination**. On the one hand, if the State does not address their vulnerabilities through specific protection and assistance measures, IDPs may not have access to the same rights and services as other citizens. On the other hand, IDPs may face marginalization or abuse because of their vulnerability, or hostility due to tensions over limited resources, particularly from host communities.

IDPs are not a homogeneous group. The difficulties that they face depend on various factors, such as age, gender, disability and diversity. Children and young people are particularly impacted because of their age and dependency, with reduced access to quality education, food security, health, and increased exposure to protection risks⁹. The immediate impact on them, their families and communities also has medium and long-term repercussions on their well-being.

⁹ *Protection Risks : Explanatory Note | Global Protection Cluster. (2021, 26 octobre).*





To address this crisis, three complementary approaches and actions are needed:

- **To respond to the immediate needs and ensuring the protection of IDPs** during displacement. From the very first days of response, it is necessary to promote programmes that form the **basis for sustainable solutions**.
- **To implement sustainable solutions** by adopting a developmental approach and promoting long-term actions that focus on strengthening public systems and services as a whole. The aim is to reduce progressively the specific needs caused by the displacement, while at the same time ensuring that IDPs enjoy their rights without discrimination due to their situation.
- **To limit the risk of displacement** by tackling its root causes, by reducing fragility and preventing conflict, as well as reducing the risk of disasters and increasing efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Prevention also means ensuring that solutions for people who have already been displaced are genuinely sustainable, and do not lead to further displacement.

The need for a cross-cutting, coordinated and continuous response

Given the chronic and protracted nature of internal displacement, emergency response must be accompanied by actions to prevent new crises and to find durable solutions.

In post-crisis countries, leaving displaced people in a fragile and marginalized situation, with no prospect of a solution to their situation, can have an impact on the reconstruction efforts and on the achievement of sustainable peace. Internal displacement interacts with the structural vulnerabilities of states, exacerbating existing problems or creating new challenges. In addition to being a humanitarian and human rights issue, internal displacement is therefore a complex development challenge. The response must be seen as cross-cutting and integrated with humanitarian, development, peace, human rights, climate change and disaster risk reduction efforts, ensuring a continuous action. These responses must ensure the inclusion and participation of IDPs in the planning and decision-making processes, and recognize them as part of the solution.

The needs of IDPs depend on the phase of displacement they are experiencing, each one having its own specificities and requiring an adapted response.

A durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.¹⁰

¹⁰ *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, 2010.*



ZOOM ON PAKISTAN, ORAKZAI

Supporting returns and preventing the risks of forced displacements triggered by disasters

In Orakzai region of Pakistan, SIF has been working for several years to support the integration of returnees who fled due to the conflict, by strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene services and livelihoods. The region is also particularly vulnerable to climate change, with increased disaster risks (droughts, floods, etc.). Based on surveys conducted at community level that revealed a lack of knowledge to cope with these impacts, SIF is implementing actions to build community resilience and prevent future internal displacement: trainings on climate change and disaster risk reduction are organized for communities and government institutions. Technical support is also being provided to Orakzai district officials to develop a disaster management plan.



ZOOM ON SOMALIA, KISMAYO

Combining emergency assistance, resilience building and conflict prevention

SIF supports communities affected by protracted conflicts and disasters (floods, droughts) in Jubaland State in Somalia, to improve their livelihood and resilience. These crises have resulted in significant internal displacement from the hinterland to Kismayo, requiring an emergency humanitarian response for IDPs who have lost most of their resources. The lack of access to basic services, including water, food and health care, impacts the population's capacity to recover and their resilience to further shocks. SIF targets IDPs, host communities and returnees from the refugee camps in Kenya with simultaneous humanitarian and development interventions. In addition, inter and intra-community conflict prevention actions are implemented, in order to strengthen the social cohesion of these communities.

Key international frameworks on internal displacement

[Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement \(1998\)](#): reaffirm the rights of IDPs according to International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law; recall the primary responsibility of the State concerned by the displacement to protect the population, mentioning as well the support role of the international community.

[IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons \(2010\)](#): clarifies the concept of “durable solutions” and supports States and other actors to ensure their implementation.

[2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(2015\)](#): recognizes the need to address internal displacement as part of sustainable development policies and programs, and lists IDPs as one of the most vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind.

[Report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement \(2021\)](#): presents policy, operational, coordination and funding recommendations to accelerate the response of all stakeholders to internal displacement.

[United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement \(2022\)](#): follows up on the report of the High-Level Panel, presents the action plan for responding to internal displacement at the level of the UN system.

[IASC Policy on Protection of Internally Displaced Persons \(2024\)](#): based on the 1999 policy, defines the responsibilities of national authorities and humanitarian actors in ensuring the protection of IDPs.

Increased international mobilization, a driver for action for all

While States have the primary role of preventing displacement, protecting IDPs under their jurisdiction and providing durable solutions to their situation, greater international solidarity is needed. In most cases, displacement takes place in fragile States that have been weakened by crises and are unable to respond to the emergency, or that themselves may have caused.

While the number of IDPs far exceeds the number of refugees, this phenomenon has long been absent from international discussions. Since 2019, important initiatives have been launched at the United Nations level to advance collective commitments on this crisis. Key steps include the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement in September 2021, the development of a United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and the work of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement to steer its implementation and initiate the necessary political and practical reforms. In march 2024, an an independent review commissioned by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee specifically analyzed the humanitarian response to internal displacement.

The processes underway at international level represent an opportunity for France to take greater account of internal displacement in its diplomatic action, as well as its development aid policy.

Although France has policies and strategies to contribute to prevention, assistance and sustainable solutions to internal displacement, this issue only appears to a limited extent in the relevant documents and mechanisms, often merged with forced displacement or linked to cross-border displacement. The absence of any specific reference to IDPs presents a major risk that their situation will be overshadowed by other issues, that they will be de-prioritised and that the responses provided will fail to take account of their specific needs.

SIF's recommendations :

- **To recognize IDPs as a distinct group to ensure an adequate and relevant response**

It is urgent to increase the visibility of internal displacement in policies, strategies and programs, and to strengthen the consideration of IDPs as a separate and unique category. This means recognizing the specificity of internal displacement in human mobility issues, not overshadowing the situation of IDPs by that of refugees, nor dissolving it into the broader category of forced displacement. Its distinct character, as well as the specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks of IDPs, especially children and young people, must be recognized in order to provide the most relevant response.

It is recommended to implement initiatives that raise awareness on these specificities for all actors contributing to the response, and to support projects aiming at improving knowledge through data collection on the triggers, patterns and impacts of internal displacement.

It is not about prioritizing them over other communities impacted by crises, but about ensuring a relevant response, countering their "invisibility" and the risk of leaving them behind.

- **To ensure a cross-cutting, coordinated and continuous response mobilizing all concerned actors**

To recognize the cross-cutting nature of internal displacement and ensure an integrated response with humanitarian, development, peace, human rights, climate change and disaster risk reduction efforts. Specific mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate the exchange and coordination of these communities, to promote the integration of their different contributions to the response, and to develop transversal frameworks and strategies.



This cross-cutting approach needs to be operationalized to ensure the mobilization of these sectors and their contribution to the response, in line with their own mandate and expertise. It is essential to support initiatives that promote this strategy, integrating actions to prevent and reduce the risks of displacement with the emergency response and the implementation of sustainable solutions.

- **To ensure the participation of IDPs, affected communities and civil society in the response**

Participation is a key human rights principle. Steps must be taken to ensure that IDPs, affected communities and civil society organizations are able to actively, freely and meaningfully participate in decision-making processes at the local, national and international levels.

IDPs should contribute to the response initiatives and mechanisms, in order to be no longer seen only as recipients of humanitarian assistance, but more proactively mobilized and involved as full agents of the response.

We encourage a strong involvement of civil society at all levels in order to ensure that its specific expertise and operational experience is valued in the collective response.

- **To support international efforts to improve the response**

To actively engage in ongoing international efforts to respond to internal displacement, including supporting the reforms of the United Nations system initiated by the work of the Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement. .

It is urgent to maintain the mobilization of the international community. It is about stepping up the engagements and ensuring that internal displacement is visible on the agenda of all relevant international fora, including humanitarian, development, peace, human rights, climate change and disaster risk reduction events. This will foster promoting qualitative approaches and the mobilization of means to address the drivers of forced displacements, and to support the concerned States to accompany these displacements in the respect of the rights and dignity of the IDPs and to implement solutions, with the objective of sustainable development.



Regarding [internal displacement](#) due to [disasters](#) and the impacts of [climate change](#), a [position paper](#) highlighting SIF's approach, its actions in [Madagascar](#), [Somalia](#), and [Pakistan](#), as well as recommendations to strengthen and accelerate the response, is available [here](#)



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