

IN SEARCH OF SAFETY

CHILDREN AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE



Today, many thousands of people are risking their lives to reach Europe. They want to find a safe place to live. In 2015, more than 1 million women, men and children arrived in Europe by land or sea – many crossed dangerous seas in unsafe boats. People are calling this a refugee and migrant crisis.

Asylum seekers and refugees

Imagine you are living in a country where your life and your family's lives are in danger and the only way to stay safe is to leave. You would be leaving behind everything you took for granted in life – your school, your friends, members of your family, your home.

These are some of the reasons you might have to leave.



War or fighting between different groups of people.



You are being treated unfairly (discriminated against) because of your race, religion, gender, sexuality or other status.



Your family doesn't agree with the government and speaking out has put your life in danger.

Leaving your country because of these reasons would mean you are an asylum seeker. Later you might become a refugee.

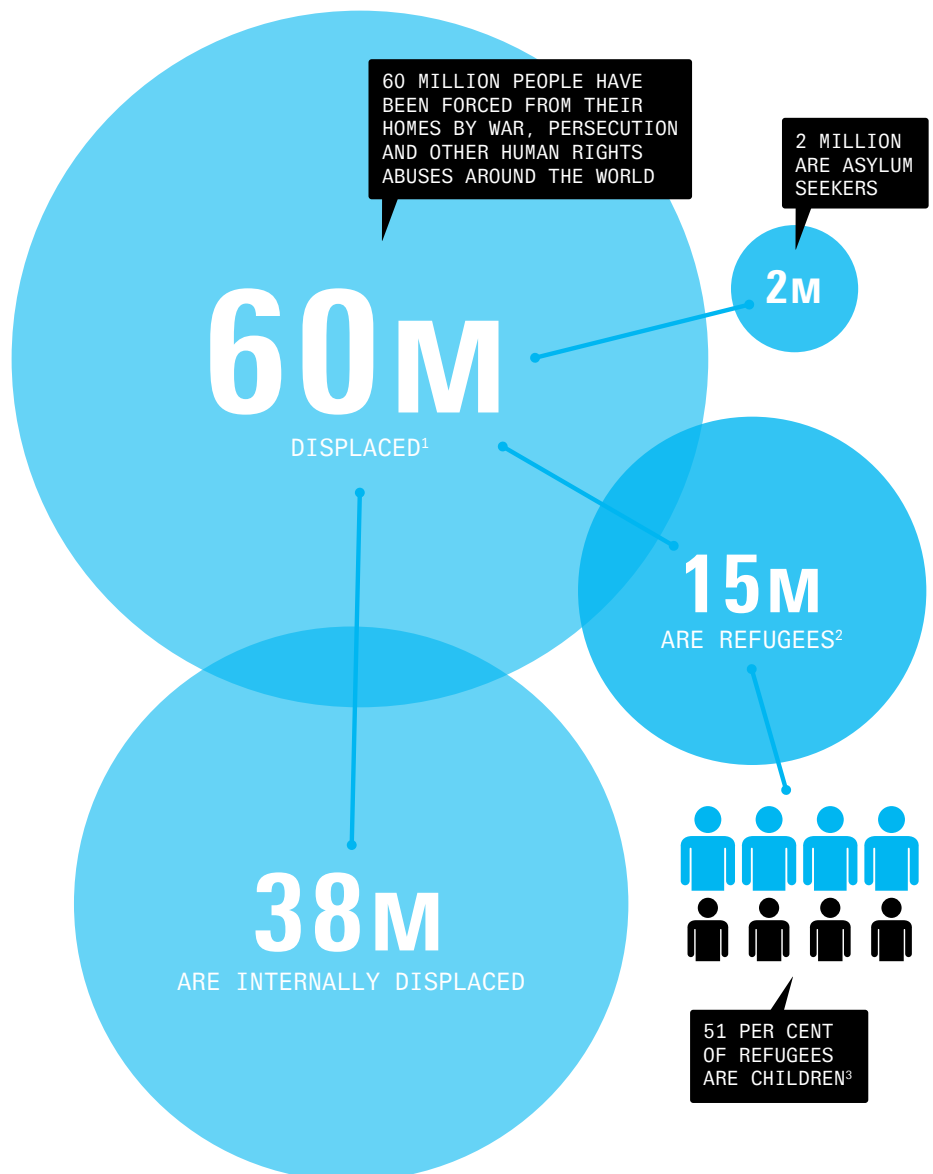
There is an international agreement between countries about protecting people who flee their country because of persecution (this means they are treated cruelly or unfairly for reasons linked to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion). It's called the Refugee Convention and was agreed just after the end of World War 2 in 1951.

Migrants

Some people leave their homes and move to another region or country, not because they fear for their life or are being persecuted, but because they want a better life for them and their families. These people are known as migrants. People choose to move for many different reasons, including to find work, to get education and to join family members. People also move because the situation at home can be difficult – due to things like poverty, unemployment, lack of schools, violence or other hardships – with little chance of a good life for them and their families.

Internally displaced people

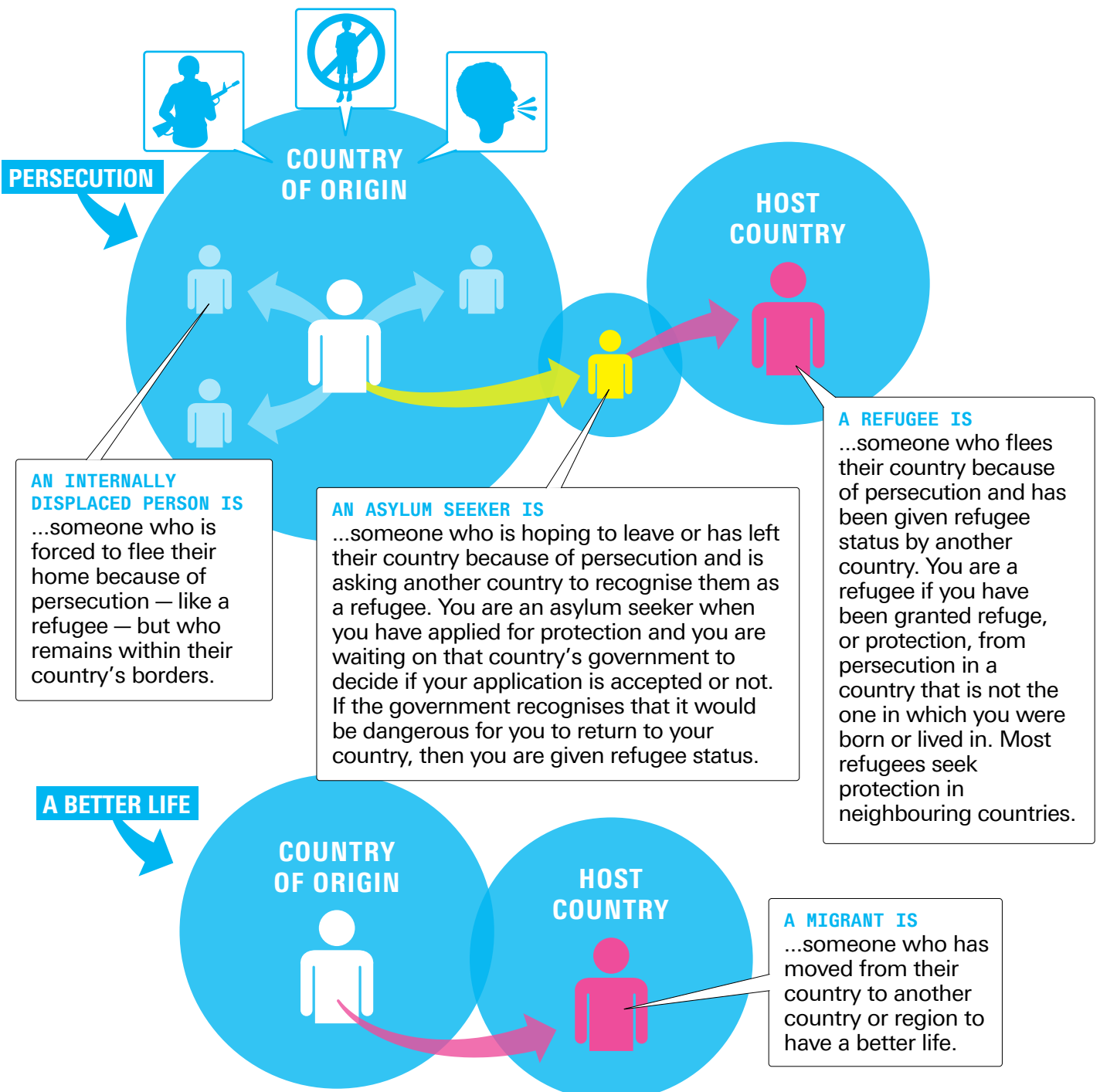
When we hear about conflicts happening around the world, like the war in Syria, we often hear of millions of people who are 'internally displaced'. Although they are escaping for similar reasons as refugees, internally displaced people are not legally called refugees because they haven't gone to another country. But they still face the same challenges of having their world and lives turned upside down and they may have moved several times within their own country.



¹ UNHCR's Mid Year Trends 2015 report: <http://www.unhcr.org/56701b969.html>
² There are over 15 million refugees under the UN Refugee Agency mandate and another 5.1 million Palestinian refugees registered by another special UN agency.
³ Based on the latest estimate from 2014

What do the words mean?

Refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people and migrants are ALL people, but the words have different meanings.

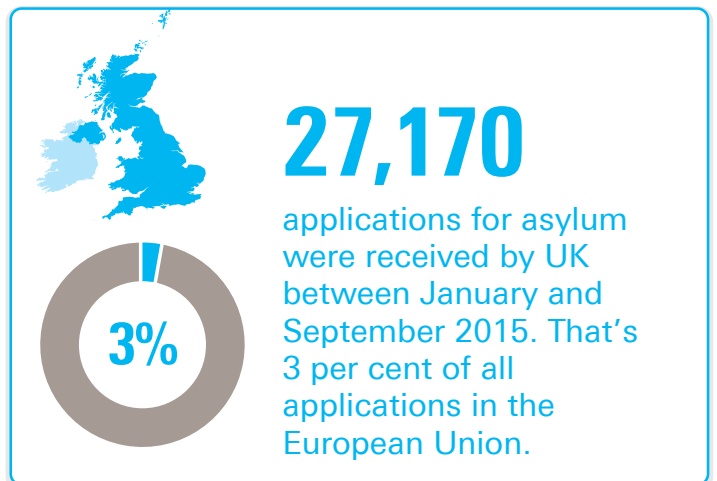
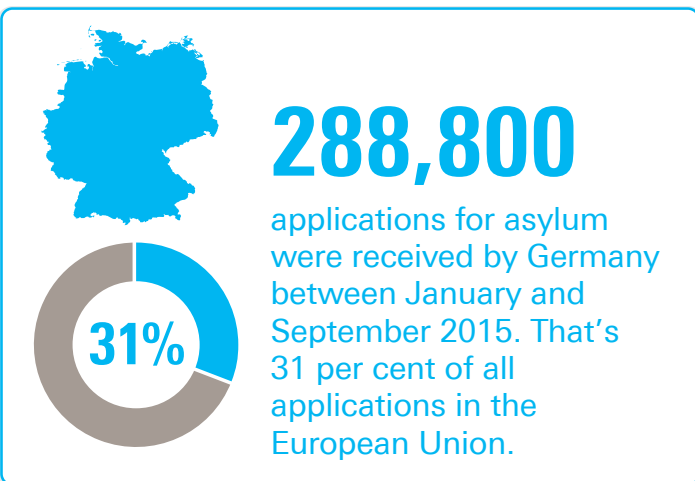




TODAY'S REFUGEES

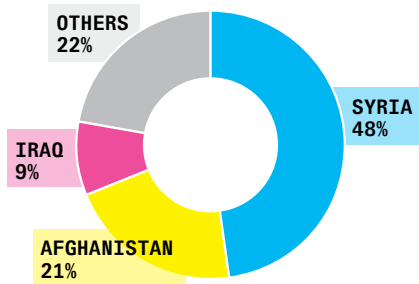
In 2015, more than 1 million refugees and migrants reached Europe via sea or land – one in four of them were children. That's nearly four times more than the number of people who arrived in Europe the previous year (just

over 280,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe in 2014 via the same routes). The Mediterranean Sea is the most used route. Thousands of people have died trying to cross seas to get into Europe.

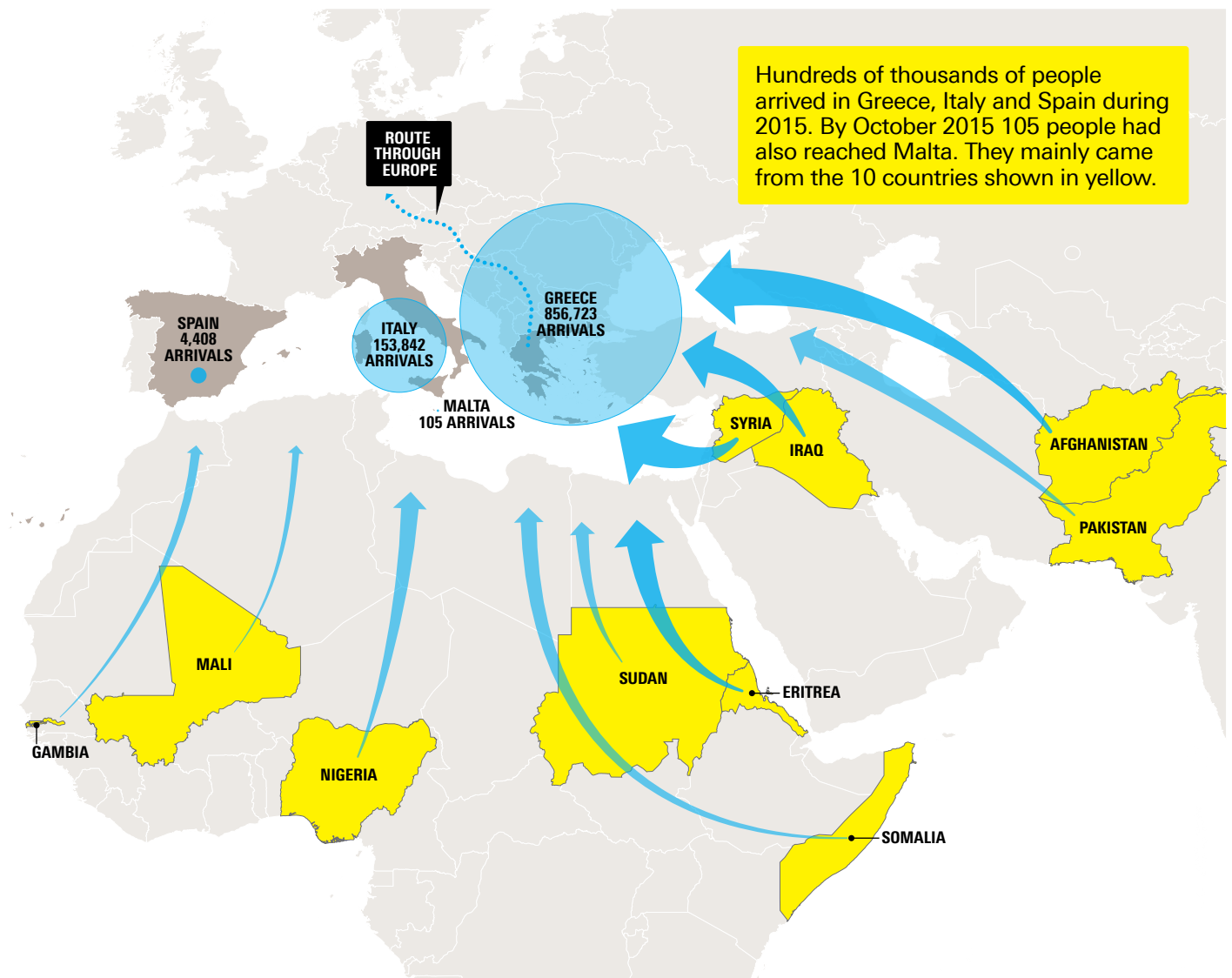


WHERE ARE PEOPLE COMING FROM?

Nearly 80 per cent of all the people who came to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 were from three countries:



They are fleeing years of war, persecution and violence and want a safe life for them and their families. Most of the time, people flee to neighbouring countries. For example, most Syrian refugees are in Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon. But life there can be difficult: many live in poverty and are not allowed to work, and thousands of children don't have schools to go. And with the war still raging in Syria, there is little hope of going home so many people see coming to Europe as their only chance of having a normal life.





Fleeing Syria

Half the population of Syria has been forced to leave their homes because of the war that started in 2011. The situation in Syria is complicated. Many have left their homes because of fighting between the government and people opposed to the government. Daesh (also known in the UK as IS, ISIS or 'Islamic State') is also fighting in the region and has seized large areas of Syria and Iraq, making life even more dangerous for children, women and men.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CRISIS SITUATIONS

All children are entitled to all the rights set out on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), even in times of humanitarian emergencies, such as war. Article 22 of the UNCRC gives additional rights to children who are refugees or seeking refugee status. Other articles give special protection to children affected by war and conflict (including articles 38 and 39).

UNICEF'S WORK

Unicef protects children in danger, wherever and whenever they need us. We respond to around 300 emergencies for children every year. In an emergency we provide life-saving food, medicine and water and we keep children safe and help them to continue their education and get their lives back to normal.

In Europe, Unicef is working with governments to make sure that the needs of refugee children come first when decisions are made about them. In some countries we also help refugees by doing things like providing winter clothes and setting up child friendly spaces for when children are held up at border crossings.

11M Over 11 million Syrians have been forced to leave their homes because of the war